



March/April 2013



## PRIMARY SCHOOL CHOICES:

Towards the end of March you will be informed by the Royal Borough of your child's next school - their primary school. Please be sensitive to other families who may not have their choice of school or even any school place. If you are in this position firstly call the Admissions team at RBKC in order to find out what options you have. Then talk with us please.

This is a big transition for each child and you as an adult. Like all changes can be made easier and more effective if you manage it carefully. Of course some children are more sensitive than others and thus may need more preparations than more easy-going children.

- If you haven't visited the school you are offered with your child try and arrange a visit to get a sense of the layout and where things are like the toilets, the playground and try to meet your child's teacher if possible.
- Gradually start to talk through the pattern of the day with your child and make sure he/she knows that you will leave them there as you do here. Help him/her to really start to see themselves at the school via talk about uniform, a school bag, lunch etc.
- Think things through and build on similarities between COA and the school such as sharing's/assembly, snack time/playtime/ lunch time, stories etc.
- A week before school starts start the new bedtime/get up routine as this will help to prevent rushing and stressing everyone. If the school requires you to use public transport have a practice run to work out timings so you are on time.
- Don't do things for your child that they can do for themselves such as putting on and taking off their coat, hanging it up, packing their bag.
- If they are to have packed lunch have a few practices at home to make sure they can open things for themselves. Ensure it is a healthy lunch too.
- Help your child to be flexible by giving him/her different options rather than the option he/she always wants.
- Do not try to convince your child that they will have fun at school. Just make sure he/she knows the teacher's name and who will be collecting them.
- Be PROACTIVE and not reactive when you are waiting for things to go wrong.



### **LEARNING TO COUNT IS NOT AS EASY AS 1, 2, and 3:**

Young children grasp the true concept of counting only if they are taught to understand the number value of groups of objects. Learning to recite number words is not the same as understanding the cardinal principle-that the size of a set of objects is determined by the last number reached when counting the set.

Research in 2011 has shown that children who are exposed to larger numbers from 4 to 10 improve their mathematical comprehension. So count baked beans on a plate, buttons on a cardigan or Smarties shared out between a few children. It will help!



### **LEARNING AT HOME HELPS:**

Research in the USA in 2011 has shown that children who take part in literacy activities, such as shared book reading prove that it is never too late to help your child by reading to them, talking with them, pointing and labelling objects and engaging in their play. It is not about expensive toys and books-these can be borrowed from libraries or made from cardboard boxes but the role-modelling that they see you provide. So please borrow a story sack, maths game or science box now! Make everyday tasks part of learning e.g., pairing up socks to go into the washing machine, cooking, music, letters and numbers in the environment and in shops and supermarkets. Give your child some real reasons for writing, reading and counting such as making and writing cards and lists, looking at adverts, signs and comics, sharing out biscuits or fruit, laying cutlery at the table, dressing themselves, tidying up their own toys etc.



### **GOODBYE AND HELLO:**

We say farewell and good luck to Char Evans at the end of this term as she moves on to new experiences and opportunities. She will complete her Newly Qualified Teacher training elsewhere in order to widen her experience. However, I am very pleased to tell you that in her place will be Alex Kelly who has been working at COA for two teams supporting a child with individual needs.

We have also appointed Shakira Meziani to be a third 1-1 learning partner for our children with statements of special needs. As the children are now familiar and secure at COA we will start the SEN merry go round where a range of staff work with these children thus giving them access to wider experiences, challenges and opportunities and giving staff wider opportunities and keeping on their toes.

The governors have informed me that they have appointed Julie Coackley to be Head of Centre. Congratulations! Julie will start work at COA on May 13<sup>th</sup>.



## THE FUTURE OF QUALITY NURSERY SCHOOL PROVISION AND SCHOOL READINESS:

At present I have no more news about the future of COA except to say that funding for both the nursery school and children's centre is secure for one more year. With the recession and public sector saving culture it seems highly likely that we will continue to really '*watch our weight and slim down*' next academic year. However, this will not be at the cost of the children who are our capitol and '*education* (to quote Horace Mann, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century American reformer) *is the great equaliser of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery.*'

Whilst the nations finances are in a shocking state the system that provides the very best opportunities to find a way out of poverty is education and it starts early by helping young children become more resilient, more self-confident and aspirational. It is our ambition that all children fulfil their fullest potential by entering primary school better able to benefit from what it offers by us intervening early and growing children with a real thirst for learning.

This does not mean that they will all have the same skills and strengths or rates of progress.

Child development is unique to each individual but evidence shows that most children under the age of six develop their physical and socio-emotional areas first before their cognitive areas.

Thus we are concentrating on developing each child's strengths whilst targeting areas to develop for life -long learning. Look at their profile and see the evidence for the areas of learning where they are comfortable and then look at their targets as these are the areas we are encouraging them to focus upon and move forward with your help. Remember to celebrate their progress as it is the process of learning at this age which matters rather than the end product. So although you may want them to read early, draw like an artist or be a young gymnast, they will do it at their speed and in their way. We cannot microwave them to go faster all we can do is encourage, support and guide alongside providing activities which inspire them to learn more and activities which extend their interests and desires.

I was given the opportunity recently by the National Association of Headteachers to meet Elizabeth Truss MP who is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Education and child care). We discussed many areas of importance including:

- The need to increase provision of extended services on site in more schools from 8-6 as well holiday care.
- A single Ofsted inspection system for all schools, children's centres and extended day/year provision
- Creating 'gold standard' qualifications for all qualified early years teachers and support staff
- Improved assessment from 3-11 years, linked up progression and the role of play in learning
- The National Funding Formula which will reduce funding to schools in London by spreading money more equally across the country.

I am also going to an important meeting at the National Children's Bureau where the future of children's centres will be discussed. This advocacy role is something I am keen to continue once I retire from being Headteacher. Young children have no clear rights and we all need to speak up for them and their futures.



#### **THANK YOU:**

Many thanks, to all the families who grew bulbs which have recently been judged by the London Children's Flower Society. They looked wonderful!

If anyone is buying plants or seeds over the next couple of months please buy a few extra for COA. We are about to start another big focus on growing in the garden so every little helps!



#### **FAREWELL AND ADIEU:**

This is my final COA newsletter and as I ponder the future in my last few weeks I am evaluating what I have achieved over the last 17 years, remembering the children and families, staff and other colleagues I have had the privilege to meet alongside my next steps. COA has been the highlight of my teaching career and yet it is also the catalyst for my continuing journey. I will be doing some consultancy and public speaking, completing my book 'Adventure, Risk and Challenge in the Early Years', possibly taking up a PhD to do further research into early years, learning British Sign Language and generally having more flexible time to be with family and friends and go on holiday in term time! We are getting a puppy-a Black Golden Doodle (part Poodle and part Golden Retriever) called Dexter so I also plan to get fitter and healthier. Commuting and long working days have taken their toll.

I am going to miss COA in so many ways. The collegueship and sense of priority for young children's play and learning are passionate and have underpinned so many opportunities I have been given. Just observing the progress the children have made since they started in September in all sorts of ways-such as Forest School, being a great audience for the staff performance of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, showing care and concern for one another, developing so many skills and advancing their knowledge and understanding. Well done children -you are set to do so well by the time you leave us in July. You will continue to be my inspiration! Red Nose Day saw adults and children enjoying a beautifully organised COA Olympics (thank you Chris) which raised £644.09. This is a truly great achievement by children and adults. I cannot remember a more comfortable day at school in my warm night dress and slippers!!



Finally, I want to say a very sincere thank you to all the adults I have worked with-parents, external professionals from health, social services, education etc., the governing body and last but not least the special COA team. You make COA what it is -VERY, VERY SPECIAL!



#### **GIVING YOUR CHILD INDEPENDENCE:**

We enjoyed a very good staff training day recently focused upon Physical Development. The feedback from staff was inspiring and it was also great fun and gave us some quality time together as early years practitioners. It covered areas such as child development and the movements and activities which babies and young children need to experience in order to develop strong healthy bodies. Since then the staff have already put their learning into practice with the children. This should benefit each and every child.

However, we have noticed how many children are carried into or out of nursery as well as how many come in buggies and cars. Whilst sometimes these transport modes are essential a healthy three or four year old will benefit from using their feet and legs as much as possible physically as well as it being important to their health and well-being too.

#### **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS:**

I recently received a lovely letter from West London Churches Homeless Concern thanking COA for the massive £504.66 we raised by singing Christmas songs in the dark garden. With a staggering 43% increase in rough sleeping in London and a very cold year we know that this fundraising genuinely made a real difference helping homeless men and women in our community.

## **SCHOOL SWAP**

Do you want to:

**save money?**

**de-clutter?**

**fundraise?**

**save the planet?**

**Or do you just hate waste?**

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes", then

### **School Swap is for you!**

I am the mother of two young children (both of whom attended and loved their very special time at Chelsea Open Air) and am extremely concerned about the affect the crippling government cuts are having on our nurseries and schools.

School Swap has been created to enable YOU to cut the cost of being a parent whilst raising much needed money for our nursery and primary schools.

### **So what exactly is School Swap?**

In a nutshell, School Swap is two websites in one - one for primary school children (who can have great fun swapping their unwanted books and dvds with other children, in a safe environment) and one for the parents who can sell a wider variety of family-related items which are no longer needed, but are not yet ready for the bin, to parents right across the borough.

As we parents know, the development and growth rate of young children is so fast that the usefulness of that never ending stream of (at the time) very necessary babywares, toys, books, DVDs, clothes, school uniform etc. is short-lived. This puts a huge strain on the finances of the average household. Now, those parents of older pupils, who no longer need those bicycles or plastic scooters, can pass them on to those with younger children who do and those parents can, in turn, pass their buggies to the parents of new-born babies. The opportunities to save money and recycle are endless.

Whilst School Swap was originally created for school children only, the Parents' swapsite was included to meet the demands of the parents who also wanted a local swapsite, with the same advantages as the children's. They wanted that cost-free and effortless delivery and to be able to interact and deal with like-minded parents in their own



community rather than some distant stranger. **And** they wanted to feel they were giving back or contributing to their own community.

School Swap has been designed with the thrifty, time-pressed parent in mind. It is simple, quick and easy to use and postage fees and trips to the post office are a thing of the past, as are delivery times or whole days spent, waiting in for that courier.

### Here's how the parent's part works:

- Parents upload details of their unwanted items on the School Swap website and specify the amount of money they want for each.
- The swap happens by another parent clicking and reserving the desired item - both parties then receive contact details for the other and the parents then organise the physical exchange of the cash and the swap item. The swap has been completed.

This exchange of goods may be outside the school gates, at the local coffee shop or at any mutually convenient time and location. These exchanges will also help parents form new networks and build stronger ties within our community.

There are no registration or subscriptions fees for using School Swap and all swaps are on a "no sale, no fee" basis. The only cost of selling an item on School Swap is a commission of 10% of the sale price, paid from the money received by the seller. In turn, School Swap will donate part of the commission received to your child's nursery or a primary school participating in the School Swap project.

So, by de-cluttering and saving money recycling unwanted items on School Swap, you could also contribute to the fundraising efforts of your child's nursery or primary school **AND** just imagine the amount of energy, pollution, manufacturing processes and packaging the parents of all the nurseries in the borough could cut by swapping instead of buying.

The School Swap website is due to be launched next term, so, what are you waiting for, start sorting and **SWAP BEFORE YOU SHOP!**

**(If you require any further information on the above article, or if you would like to propose your child's school for its own School Swap site, please contact Tracey Gardner on 0777 5612653)**



### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:**

Thursday March 21<sup>st</sup>: I Know Why it's Yum Mum!

Thursday March 28<sup>th</sup>: End of Term with all part-timers in from 9-11:30a.m. and all full-timers from 9am to 1p.m. prompt please.

Please note: There will only be holiday club from Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> to Friday April 12<sup>th</sup>  
**BOOK NOW!**

Summer Term starts Monday April 15<sup>th</sup> as normal. Please note there is **NO STAFF TRAINING DAY**.

Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup>: Dad's group from 10-12 noon

Monday May 6<sup>th</sup> **BANK HOLIDAY-COA CLOSED**

Monday May 13<sup>th</sup>: Julie-your new Head of Centre starts.

Saturday May 25<sup>th</sup>- Friday May 31<sup>st</sup> Half Term holiday with holiday club available.

Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup>: Dad's group 10-12noon.

Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup>: **Parent/keyworker 1-1 meetings**. Please look out for the sign up list in the main entrance area to book you meeting with your child's keyworker. Nursery closed.

Wednesday June 19<sup>th</sup>: Farm Day-the mobile farm comes to nursery. Not suitable for pregnant mothers.

Friday June 21<sup>st</sup>: Getting ready for nursery or school workshop with Speech and Language Therapist Faye Summers

Wednesday July 3<sup>rd</sup>- Open Day 9:30-3-please book a day off work/study in order to join in. More details later.

Wednesday July 24<sup>th</sup>: End of term. Leavers Sharing 10:30a.m. Book places for the summer holiday cub.



# Newsletter