

Spring Term Newsletter

This is a difficult time for all of us, but we are delighted that Carousel can remain open for the care and education of all our children, which we believe is of fundamental importance for their development. We will seek to fill these next few months with fun and enjoyable distractions, for children, parents and staff, and we look forward to better times ahead.

Focus Article: Children's Behaviour

Children's behaviour is always a topic that attracts a lot of interest. Following the first lockdown in spring, we noticed a few behavioural differences in some of our children. None of these caused any serious concern, but it prompted us to arrange some behaviour training that the whole team received in the autumn term. We want to share with you some of the relevant knowledge we gained from this training.

Parents often want to know how best to manage children's challenging behaviour when it occurs, and there are a range of strategies to do so. However, one of the most effective strategies is to understand why it is happening in the first place, and therefore prevent it.

Small children are very sensitive to change, and it can have an impact on their behaviour. This could include major (and unavoidable) life changes such as moving house, the arrival of a new baby or a divorce. However, small changes such as moving bedrooms or disruption to the daily routine can also be very upsetting for a young child. Being aware of upcoming changes and telling your child about them beforehand can prepare them for the upheaval. Simply appreciating that your young child is not handling the change as well as you can help to understand why their behaviour may have altered from the norm.

As adults, we plan our days and fit a lot into them, whether this be at home or at nursery. We expect young children to fit in with these plans and go at our pace, but we need to adjust our expectations of young children. Allowing a child more time and going at their pace when you can is a great way of reducing everyone's stress and avoiding emotional outbursts. This could include allowing extra time on a walk to the shops so that your child can count every car on the way, or allowing more time to read a story before bed in case they want to read five!

Giving children fair warning of transition is also a good strategy for avoiding tantrums. You may know that you are going to leave the playground in ten minutes, but your child has no idea and a sudden end to their fun is very difficult for them to understand. This can be applied to lots of situations where you need your child to transition from one activity to another.

Tantrums and biting are two very common behavioural concerns. There are multiple reasons why young children do both of these things, but often it is owing to their inability to communicate their feelings. Even young children who have a full grasp of language cannot fully control their emotions. So they may lash out by biting the person who is annoying them, or by throwing themselves on the floor. In such a situation an adult should seek to calm the child and not get frustrated themselves. Getting down on a child's level, maintaining eye contact and using a soft voice to speak to them about why they are upset is better than shouting or walking away. Helping a child to understand why they are upset (if they are old enough) is a good way to tackle a behavioural issue at its root.

We will no longer be using time outs or token charts as a way of managing behaviour at Carousel. We have found time outs to be ineffective, and when used in a group scenario they can be humiliating and frustrating for the child concerned. Token charts encourage children to do good things like sharing or tidying up so that they get a token, but instead we want to encourage them to do these things for their own sake.

Our top three tips for managing challenging behaviour when it does occur are: acknowledge your child's feelings, be consistent with rules, most important of all, stay calm.

Carousel Day Nursery & Pre-school

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Nursery news

- Staffing – Britney Purkiss and Megan McQuaide left our employment in November. In December we took on Joana Sa and Lauren Carnaby-Parry as floating staff members. Both will soon start their Early Years Practitioner Level 2 courses.
- We took part in Children in Need Week in November and were so pleased to raise over £1000 for this excellent charity. Thank you all for your generosity.
- We are regulated by Ofsted and had our last inspection in October 2017. We were therefore due an inspection between autumn 2020 and autumn 2021. However, Ofsted have announced that any nurseries rated Good or Outstanding at their last inspection are now likely to wait up to six years for an inspection. Carousel is in its 29th year, and we have consistently received a Good rating from Ofsted. We also receive ongoing support from Ofsted as our regulator.
- **Dates for your Diary:**
Kazakhstan Week (postponed from January) - 22nd to 26th February
Valentines Day—14th February
Pancake Day—25th February
Mothers' Day—14th March
Ireland Week—15th—19th March (St Patrick's Day is on 17th March).



Something new—Parent Questionnaire Feedback

Thank you to all those parents who returned the Parent Questionnaires that we sent out with the nursery reports in November. We received 42 responses, out of 59 that were sent out. We have read through each response and will be implementing some changes as a result of your feedback. We want to take the opportunity now to respond to a few points that were raised.

All parents seem to like the new nursery reports, but all were equally very keen to attend a Parents' Evening. Our plan going forward will be to hold a Parents' Evening in July, with reports issued in January/February. We hope to be able to hold a Parents' Evening this summer, but will keep you updated.

A common theme in the feedback was that parents would like more information about what their child has eaten during the day. We moved away from all food being written on the daily diary sheets because this was very time consuming for staff, who had to write them out for each child. We do not want to return to this because paperwork takes staff away from the children and it is not an efficient way of working. However, we understand that parents want to know what and how much their child has eaten. We have therefore changed the daily diary sheets so that they now tell parents which menu we are using that

week, and whether their child has eaten 'some', 'most' or 'all' of their lunch and tea. Our menu is always up in the foyer, and all of the five menus are available on our website, so it is easy for parents to find out what their child will be eating that day/week.

Most parents expressed an interest in attending an extra-curricular event, such as a Stay to Play session or a Sports Day. We will look to organise our first family event as soon as the removal of restrictions allows, and look forward to seeing parents in a fun and relaxed environment.

Many of you gave us some helpful suggestions about how we could use our social media pages better. Thank you for these, they have been useful and we will be implementing some of them.

Some parents expressed a wish to speak with their child's key person more regularly and to have a more in depth conversation about their child's progress. We would like to stress to all parents that you can request a phone conversation with your child's key person whenever you want—please arrange this at drop off/pick up or via text or a phone call. Our staff will always be happy and willing to speak to you, but it is for you to let them know if you would like a chat.

"...parents would like more information about what their child has eaten..."

The Importance of Reading

We're sure that all of our parents know how important it is to read with their child(ren). However, we have recently learned a bit more about just why reading is so important and wanted to share this with you.

Early communication and language, early reading and early literacy at home are three crucial factors in ensuring that a child develops the reading and communication skills they need to do well at school. For parents, this means that from the moment their child is born, they should regularly speak to them and read to them. These positive interactions lay the foundations for a child's reading and communication ability in later life. Without early communication and reading, children can really fall behind at school, and this can have serious implications for their future.

It is also very important to encourage in your child a love of reading for pleasure. Whilst reading is a fundamental life skill needed for education and beyond, it is also something that many of us simply enjoy for its own sake. Reading with your child consistently and frequently will help them to develop a love of reading for enjoyment.

If your child is reluctant to read at home, you could create a reading corner somewhere in your house. We recently received some advice about improving our book corners and these photos show you what we have done in our Rabbit and Pre-school rooms. The benches and shelves were made by a local carpenter, and the fantastic mural was painted by a local artist. The children love these new areas dedicated to books and stories, and we hope it will encourage their love of reading.



Role play resources

We want to encourage our children to take part in more imaginative, make-believe play at nursery. All young children can engage in pretend play, even babies, because children imitate what they see in the environment around them, and love playing grown ups! We have a home corner in each of our rooms, with a pretend kitchen and objects from the home, but we would like to provide resources for different role play scenarios, such as being at an

office, the shops, hairdressers, post office, dentists or vets (to name just a few). Children love this kind of imaginary play and it is an excellent way of improving their communication and vocabulary, as well as their critical thinking skills. We are aware that at the moment children's experiences outside of home and nursery are limited, so we want to create opportunities for them to imagine they are in different places or scenarios.

Bearing in mind that lots of parents are working from home at the moment, and that the charity shops are shut, we thought we would ask parents to donate anything they may have lying around at home that could be used in this kind of pretend play, including dressing up/old clothes. We will leave it to your imagination to think about what could be useful, and will be grateful for all donations! Thank you.

Practical clothing at nursery

We would like to take this opportunity to remind parents about the importance of dressing your child in practical clothes for nursery. There are a few reasons for this:

- The children play outside in our garden in almost all weathers and we do lots of messy activities indoors. Whilst the nursery nurses do their best to keep the children clean and tidy, it is inevitable that their clothes will get dirty, so please don't send them into nursery in their nicest clothes!
- When children are toilet training, and even once they are toilet trained, it is very important that the clothes they are wearing are easy to take off/put on. This prevents accidents from occurring when the children cannot get undressed in time. Clothes also need to be easy for children to hold out of the way whilst they are on the toilet.
- It is a good idea to dress children in clothes that encourage their independence, so clothes without tricky fastenings such as zips and buttons are useful. Please also avoid shoes with laces as young children cannot do them up, and fare much better with Velcro. Please also ensure babies bring sturdy shoes to nursery to wear in the garden, particularly in this wet weather.





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Early Learning for a Brighter Future

Carousel Day Nursery & Pre-school is a family run business, established in 1992. We are a small nursery that provides a welcoming environment and an excellent standard of care for children aged 3 months to five years. We are situated in a specially modified bungalow in a quiet residential area of Billericay, and can accommodate 31 children each day. Our nursery is separated into a Lower and Upper nursery and consists of four rooms—one for each age group: Ducklings (3-18mths), Hedgehogs (18-28mths), Rabbits (28-36mths) and pre-school Squirrels (3-5yrs). We also have a lovely outside area with a range of suitable equipment for the children to explore and develop their motor skills. At Carousel we are constantly striving to provide an excellent quality of education because we believe in the importance of early learning for a brighter future.

Tax-free childcare payments

Some parents have recently had difficulties when paying their fees via the Government's tax free childcare scheme (Childcare Choices). Problems have occurred because there are now two accounts linked to Carousel Day Nursery, but one of these is redundant. We had to re-register with Ofsted in the summer, and when we did we

were given a new registration number. This meant that our old account with Childcare Choices, using the old registration number, became inactive in May 2020.

When making payments via this portal, please ensure that you are searching for our active account using our new Ofsted registration number: **2592744**.

