

Spring Term Newsletter

After the busyness and excitement of Christmas, there is something lovely about starting afresh in the New Year with few distractions from the children's learning and progress. This term we are looking forward to Bolivia Week in February, an early Easter and an improvement in the weather so we can spend some prolonged periods outside again.

Assessment at Nursery

Assessment is probably not a word that most people associate with very young children, but it forms a whole section of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and is an important part of what early years practitioners do when teaching and caring for very young children.

Assessment in the early years means checking that a child is meeting the developmental milestones that we would expect for their age and stage, across the seven areas of learning as set out in the EYFS. All children develop at different paces, and there is a broad age range within which we would expect milestones to be met.

At Carousel, we use our own framework, which is largely based on the Birth to 5 Matters framework (you can find this online). This framework gives us guidelines to follow when we are observing a child in order to help us assess whether that child's development is where we would expect it to be.

Your child's Key Person carries out weekly observations of your child, when they are being closely watched during a specific activity. These observations form your child's Learning Journey, and they inform your child's Key Person about whether their developmental milestones are being met. Your child is being constantly observed in an informal way by all the practitioners caring for them, but these focused observations that happen each week are what we call formative assessments. They are ongoing and form our view of each individual child's developmental journey.

Your child will have their own framework crib sheet, on which their Key Person will tick off every developmental milestone that she is confident your child is meeting. This then generates quantitative data that we input into a spreadsheet on a termly basis. This spreadsheet is analysed by our manager, Katharine, who is

able to look at each individual child's performance, as well as performance across the whole nursery in rooms and subject groups. We call this summative assessment.

This enables Katharine to identify where any individual child might need some extra support. Following the analysis, a conversation takes place between her and the child's Key Person to establish whether there is concern about this child in that area, or whether this might be down to something else, e.g. a child struggling with communication and language may not have English as a first language or may simply be very shy and not have the confidence to speak much at nursery. We can then ensure that the correct support is put in place for this child, having identified an area of weakness and what the possible cause might be.

Katharine is also able to use this data to identify where practitioners might need support in delivering learning, or if there is a specific area of teaching across the whole nursery that needs improving. This could result in further training being given to staff or additional resources being purchased to support this area of learning.

None of the information or data collected about the children through these two forms of assessment goes beyond the nursery. It is purely used by us to ensure that children are on track with their development, and if they are not then it enables us to put measures in place to support the child/practitioner/nursery.

Our assessment processes also allow us to identify, in rare instances, where we think children might be showing signs of a Special Educational Need or Disability. If this was the case we would discuss this with the parents as soon as possible because early intervention in these cases is in the best interests of the child.

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Nursery news

Staffing: We are pleased to announce two new additions to the Carousel team, although one is not so new! Lillie Lumbard joined in November as an apprentice and she will be starting her Level 3 qualification in the coming months. After spending time working in administration following the birth of her own child, Carly Baquero has rejoined the Carousel team! Carly worked at Carousel for ten years and will bring a wealth of experience to the team.

A second goodbye: We would like to say a big thank you and another sad goodbye to Joana Sa, who came back to work for us from November-February whilst on a break from being a flight attendant. It has been delightful having Joana's capable and bubbly personality back, and we will miss her (again!)

A thank you: Some of you may recall that in a previous newsletter we asked parents to offer up any services/skills they had that might benefit the children or nursery. One of our mums is now giving the upper nursery children fortnightly Spanish lessons, which is fantastic! We are looking forward to a visit from another mum in the summer who works for Hotel Chocolat. She will be teaching the children all about chocolate and how it is made, with hopefully a few tasting opportunities! Please get in touch if you think you've got something to offer the nursery!

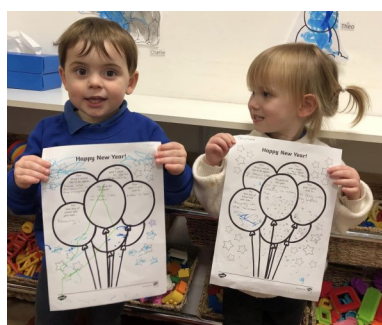
Dates for your Diary:

Bolivia Week—19th-23rd February

World Book Day—2nd March

Easter Weekend—29th March to 1st April

Parent Information Evening—29th February



What a cracking idea!

We are extremely excited to announce that in late April we will be getting a very special delivery of some duckling eggs, that will hatch here at Carousel! The eggs will arrive on 22nd April and the ducklings will leave on 2nd May.

We are using a company called Incredible Eggs, who provide the eggs, incubator and brooder unit, plus support and teaching resources. We will be provided with 7 eggs and hope most or all of them will hatch. The children will have the opportunity to watch the eggs hatch a couple of days after they arrive, and then after the weekend will be able to enjoy watching some very cute little ducklings as they spend time frolicking in their brooder and hopefully in our paddling pool! Incredible Eggs will collect the ducklings after 10 days with us.

This is of course a wonderful and very exciting experience for the children

(and staff). Fluffy ducklings are very cute to look at on the ponds in spring-time, but to have them in our nursery and be able to see them close up will be very special indeed. The children will also be allowed to handle or stroke the ducklings, under adult supervision.

The experience will give the children a great opportunity to learn about lifecycles as they watch the ducklings hatch out of the eggs and spend their first few days of life at nursery. The whole 10 days will be themed around the ducklings, with plenty of songs and games available for the children to enjoy. The older children will be able to learn about how the ducklings form inside the egg, what they need when they first hatch and what happens to ducks as they get bigger. We won't shy away from explaining to the children that some ducks get eaten by humans and others are farmed to give

us eggs. We will also talk to the children about duck habitats and what life for ducks in the wild is like.

The ducklings will probably be placed in the pre-school as this room has the most suitable space for the equipment they require, but all of the children in the nursery will get to spend time enjoying them. Parents are also welcome to come and say hello!

It goes without saying that we are very excited about this, and are confident all the children will absolutely love this experience.



Suncream

At the time of writing it is actually snowing outside, so writing the above headline seems a bit strange. However, by the time we send out the next newsletter we will probably be in need of the stuff!

This year we will no longer ask parents to send their child in with suncream. Instead we will be using a wall-mounted suncream dispenser in the garden, which will save a huge amount of space compared to having 60+ bottles of suncream in the nursery for each individual child.

We will be using Deb SPF 50 suncream, which fits the dispenser. This is suitable for children aged over 6 months and is an **ultra-sensitive** formula, suitable for those with eczema, allergies and sensitive skin. It is perfume-free, water resistant and sweat resistant.

If you are concerned that your child might need to use a different suncream because of their skin, we would ask that you first carefully check the difference between your own and the one we will be using to ensure it is indeed more suitable for sensitive skin, as the one we have chosen is ultra-sensitive.

If you are still confident your child needs something different, then you are of course welcome to provide your own bottle of suncream. We do, however, hope that most children will use ours from the dispenser, as this will be space-saving and much less time consuming for staff.



Your child's nursery bag

We are finding that some children do not have enough spare clothes in their backpacks. Young children are messy little creatures, and at nursery we do lots of fun, messy things! Toilet accidents are also an everyday reality in the early years and children are frequently changed.

We do have some spare clothes that we provide, but these should be for absolute emergencies. We are in fact finding that lots of our spare clothes are not being returned to nursery, which is

frustrating. Could you please ensure any of our spares are washed and put back in your child's bag for us. All of our clothes are labelled with 'Carousel'. Please ensure your child has at least 2 or 3 changes of clothes in their bag every day, including a jumper. If they are toilet training they will need lots of underwear and trousers.

Please also ensure that you are checking your child's bag after each day they are in nursery, particularly if they are in the upper nursery and have a book bag.

This is where important letters or notes will be put, as well as dirty clothes that need to be taken out and any artwork that we are sure your child would like you to look at, even if it does go straight in the recycling!

We know that as parents of young children your lives are very busy, but it is in everyone's interest if parents can keep on top of what goes in and out of their child's nursery bag, and it only takes a few minutes. Thank you.

Sharing messages

We would be grateful if parents could promptly share important messages about their child, circumstances or arrangements with the nursery staff team.

We do expect children to be in nursery on their regular days/times, so if they don't arrive this can be a cause for concern amongst the staff members. Please send us a courtesy message to let us

know if there are any changes to your drop off/pick-up arrangements on a given day. Please also be aware that we won't let your child go home with anybody else without you telling us, so please let us know if anybody other than you will be collecting.

Please also ensure that any information about family circumstances (e.g. moving

house, separation, family illness/bereavement) is shared with us as soon as possible. Young children are hugely affected by these issues and it is really beneficial if we can be talking to your child about them. At the very least it helps if we can be made aware of such issues in case it accounts for some unusual behaviour from that child.



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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 an excellent standard of education and care for children aged 3 months to five years. We are situated in a bungalow specially modified to create a home-from-home feel, 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 (babies), Hedgehogs (toddlers), Rabbits (2-3 year olds) 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.

Parent Information Evening

We are going to hold a parent information evening on **Thursday 29th February**, from **7.30-8.30pm** to discuss the childcare funding reforms that are being introduced from April 2024. There will be a presentation followed by an opportunity for parents to ask questions.

We know that all parents might be interested in the presentation on funding. However, this will be primarily aimed at those parents who will be in receipt of the new funding for 2 year olds from April 2024, and 9 month + babies from September 2024.

There will be no major change to the 3&4 year old funding, so if you are a parent already in receipt of this fund-

ing and have any questions then please email Katharine separately. There are a few parents whose children will begin to receive 3&4 year old funding from April 2024 and you would be welcome to attend if you feel like you need more information about how the funded entitlement works.

Please RSVP to kdilworth@carouselnursery.net or text the nursery phone to let us know if you will be attending, so that we can get an idea of numbers. Thank you.

NOTICE FOR PARENTS: Please do not leave your engine idling whilst you are parked on our driveway, whether you are in the car or not. The fumes pumping out of your car are terrible for the environment, and for the developing lungs of the very young children in our care.

Please turn it off!