

July 2022 – N°11



ACE Nursery School Alumni Newsletter

The latest news from ACE for the past community of parents, staff and children

ACE News

It's the end of the school year and we're delighted to report that the first in person ACE social event for more than two years took place recently...read on for further details of the Teddy Bears' Picnic 2022. It's also a year in which both settings retained their Ofsted ratings, which we are delighted about. See [here](#) for a copy of the Nursery School inspection report from March and a big thank you to the ACE families who wrote letters for the Ofsted inspector reflecting on your children's time at ACE.

The end of term at the Nursery School has been marked by half the staff team catching COVID simultaneously, as well as a number of children; we're grateful to families for their understanding and for reorganising their schedules at short notice to keep children at home. Puffins and Penguins alternated days, with critical workers' children attending all their normal sessions. It hasn't been the ideal end to the academic year but it's a minor miracle we haven't been in this position before during the pandemic. This emergency opening plan was followed immediately by the record-setting heatwave across the region – so it has been a dramatic end to the school year!

In common with other sectors, recruitment is one of the biggest challenges we face at the moment.

At the Nursery School we have been looking for an early years practitioner to start in September, with Virginie off to Canada in August (accompanying her husband on his sabbatical). We wish her well and will miss her creative ideas,



enthusiasm and of course her French language activities! At the Day Nursery we have been looking for a full and a part-time member of staff to replace Paulina (who moved onto another nursery) and Amy (who is on maternity leave) respectively. We seem to be just about there (fingers crossed) but we are always keen to speak to anyone who might be interested in working at ACE, so please put us in touch with anyone you know who may suit a role at ACE: from cleaners to experienced early years' practitioners or students/trainees keen to embark on a child care career. We'd be interested to talk to them about positions at either setting. We'd like to extend our thanks to Lindsey, former Deputy Head of the Nursery School, who has been helping out at both nurseries this year whilst we complete our recruitment.

Lisa is celebrating her 15th year as Headteacher and in this edition we've interviewed her to reflect on this milestone. We're also pleased to include the thoughts of Vicky, a current ACE parent, on what it was like to attend ACE herself in the early 1990s.

ACE has been in the news several times this year: Nursery School children helped to plant new elm trees on Parker's Piece in February; both settings have featured in Jigsaw, the Cambridgeshire County Council early years' magazine, with the Day Nursery recounting their Ofsted inspection day and Diana - from the Nursery School - writing articles about the *Magical properties of the ten frame* as well as *A moving child is a learning child*; and our Jubilee celebrations also featured in Under 5, the magazine of the Early Years Alliance. See the [news page](#) of our website for further information.





At the Nursery School, a recent highlight was our sports day on Parker's Piece. Luckily it was a fine day, but not an extremely hot one, and the emphasis was very much on effort and participation. There was an amazing turnout from the parent body and lots of children came along even if it wasn't a regular ACE day for them. We warmed up with the hula hoop and tambourine game; it's a bit like musical chairs – whenever the tambourine stops you hop into a hoop and gradually the number of hoops is reduced. After that we enjoyed running games involving baskets and collecting pretend food items, followed by egg and spoon activities. The staff had a competitive egg and spoon relay before we sat down for some refreshments. All participants received a medal for taking part. A big thank you to Tom, Tallulah's

daddy, for taking these lovely photos, and to all the parents who came along. It was particularly helpful to have lots of parents assisting us in crossing Parkside (there were so many of us it took four trips for us all to make it onto Parker's Piece).





Gardening has been a particular feature at the Nursery School over this academic year. Our 'bulb in a boot' project was one highlight with children planting bulbs in old welly boots at nursery and then taking them home to look after, with some wonderful results. The allotment is doing well after all the sunshine and

thanks to our keen young waterers. The garden has also inspired still life drawings, including a cutting from the ceanothus.



We've been enjoying the return to normal activities at both settings post pandemic. In particular it has been great to resume outings into the local community. At the Day Nursery, we've taken advantage of the good weather to organise trips to Pets at Home and St Matthew's Piece. On the way there we talked about which animals we might see. As we arrived we noticed a pair of sibling white bunnies – the children talked about how "fluffy" they are and one commented that rabbits "can be quite skittish". We also came across guinea pigs, gerbils and hamsters. We discovered that if you go near the glass and wait quietly, the animals come to see you. The children commented on how small the gerbils' and the

hamsters' noses and feet were. The aquarium was very exciting, sparking some interesting conversations about colours, size, speed and amounts.



On the way back to nursery, the children enjoyed a lot of climbing, exploring, imaginative play, balancing and some refreshments at a playground.



We've been using the green space opposite the Day Nursery (adjacent to Barnwell Priory) to great effect. We've held both Mother's and Father's Day events there recently. In addition we've been to Stourbridge Common where we enjoyed, amongst other things, a chain harrow event.



The Nursery School children participated in a research project at the Cambridge Science Centre. We met Dr Squiggles, a musical robot, who is helping researchers look into how young children interact with a musical partner. The Catholic church and central library have also been visited.



It's hard to believe that Little ACE is now 18 years old! Sarah P vaguely remembers some of the names of children who walked or crawled through the door for the first time that day. The staff and children at Little ACE held their annual birthday event to celebrate the 18 years.

Many of you will have had the pleasure of meeting Priory Bear, and over the years he has had a lot of fun joining you on your adventures. Priory Bear has been very lucky as you've taken him on aeroplanes, in cars and on trains to visit the beach, farms, parks and to meet your extended families.

Like everybody, Priory Bear has spent most of the last two years at home, at 6A Priory Road, and his adventures have been rather limited. However, we're pleased to say he is ready to start travelling again so we've been introducing him to the girls and boys. He recently joined in a nursery day, starting with a snack and we've discovered that banana is his favourite fruit.





He spent some time out in the garden and was pleased when the

boys and girls took it in turns to take him on rides on the bike and in the car. After lunch, Priory Bear was very sleepy and enjoyed a two hour nap. In the afternoon Priory Bear took part in a wooden fishing game; he was good at taking turns. His day finished with looking at some books and his particular favourite was Up, Up Up By Susan Reed.



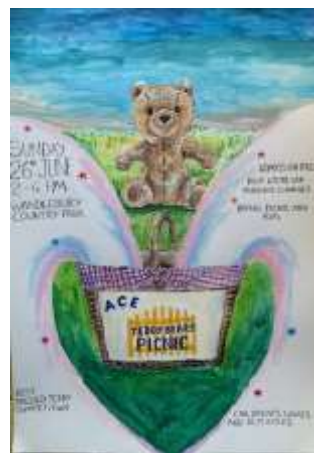
TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC 2022

We were thrilled to hold our first in person social event for almost two and a half years in June on a perfect summer's day at Wandlebury. Huge thanks to Tania (Sophia's mummy) from the ACE Parents' Committee for overseeing the team of parent volunteers and to all of the former staff and alumni who came along with their families. Parents were busy helping out in a wide variety of ways: providing transport, running stalls, buying and preparing strawberries, face-painting, pouring drinks, making giant bubbles for the children to play with, performing live music, preparing craft and other activities and more. Bats and balls were available for children to play with and many just enjoyed the big open space with friends. Staff from both nurseries ran parachute and hoop games and

it was lovely to see former staff and ACE alumni catching up with each other.

The afternoon culminated in the announcement of the winners of the best dressed teddy competition, a group sing along to *Teddy Bears' Picnic* (accompanied by guitarist and vocalist Matthew, Shepard's daddy), Big ACE children performing *I'll fly away* and speeches by Rosie (Cosima's mummy and Chair of the Parents' Committee) as well as Virginia, to mark Lisa's fifteen years at ACE.

Thank you to Michaela, Jules's mummy, for these wonderful photos.











The Teddy Bears' picnic wasn't the only time this term we've seen Paula, the previous Headteacher of ACE. Natalie from Little ACE has been busy helping the Friends of Logan Meadow, the location for our forest school activities. She has been planting trees and supporting fundraising events there. At a recent picnic for the friends, Natalie bumped into Paula...



CO-OP HOURS



We've had some amazing contributions from artistic parents at the Nursery School this year, who have painted wooden discs and pegs for the children to play with. In addition, mud kitchen units have been built, several bigger items have had a lick of paint, and DIY tasks have been tackled.

We're grateful to everyone for their time and expertise; it makes such a difference to the opportunities we are able to offer the children. Musical visitors are always welcome and we were delighted that Georgia, Edith's mummy, was able to visit the Day Nursery with her trombone, whilst Regev, Yotam's daddy, kindly came in on a couple of occasions to play the piano at the Nursery School.





PARENTS' COMMITTEE

Thank you to the following committee members who have served this year. It's been difficult trying to resume normal business after the pandemic and we realised that many had never been to an ACE social event before, which doesn't make it easy to organise one! It's been great to have two ACE alumni on the committee again this year – thank you Liam and Angharad.

ACE Committee 2021/22

Chair & business team	Rosie Humphrey
Treasurer & business team	Liam (William) Kelly
Secretary	Mareike Gentsch
HR/staff liaison officer & education team	Caspar Rebling
Child protection/Safeguarding lead	Hannah Greene
Alumni newsletter	Tania Saigol Roth
Social events	Angharad Walter
Social events	Bego Carod
Social events	Anna Masefield
Social events & policy review	Jenny Ridge
Newsletter	Holly Beckett
Policy review	Mircea Iliescu
Policy review & social events	Elizabeth Kirk
Headteacher	Lisa Tuohy
Day Nursery Manager	Sarah Piotrowski

We would also like to thank Rob Boland, Jamie's daddy, who updates the website on an almost daily basis in a non-committee role. In addition we're grateful to Jerry, an ex-ACE parent, who continues to advise ACE on its investment strategy, alongside Liam as Treasurer.

The committee can be contacted at ace.parents.committee@gmail.com

Quite a few of these committee members will be retiring at the AGM in November as their children are moving onto school. If you know anyone who

might be interested in finding out more and potentially joining the committee, please ask them to get in touch with the committee via the email address opposite and/or contact Lisa at the Nursery School or Sarah P at the Day Nursery. In particular we are looking for people to: organise social events, write newsletters, review policies, be a point of contact for HR matters or take up the safeguarding role. We usually meet once each half term on a Monday – Thursday evening (mostly virtually with the odd in person meeting).



LEAVERS' FUND

We're extremely grateful to families of children who left ACE last summer and contributed to the 2021 Leavers' Funds at both nurseries (raising an amazing £1,255 at the Nursery School and £476 at the Day Nursery). At the Nursery School we've used the funds to buy a wide range of resources, including a variety of books (replacing worn out favourites like *The tiger who came to tea*, and making new purchases like books on feelings and emotions including *I talk like a river* and *The Colour Monster*, as well as *The Christmas Pine*, *The pirates next door*, and *Let's get gardening for children* by the RHS). We've extended our mud kitchen, bought a sand tray and cover and were excited to host the Living Eggs Project again this spring. Ten embryo eggs arrived one Monday morning and we enjoyed watching all ten chicks hatch out before looking after them for a fortnight. Four of the chicks have been rehomed by an ACE alumni family. In addition we've purchased binoculars and sand timers, CDs and a new CD player, a voice recorder, Lego and card games.

At the Day Nursery our main purchases have been a new storage unit for our books, a toddler bench

and two chairs. In addition we bought a large mat, books and soft building blocks.



Thank you for making all these things possible. We've just launched our Leavers' Funds for 2022 and will update you in the next edition.

The Leavers' Fund was the brainchild of Natasha, an ex-ACE committee member, when her daughter left the Nursery School in July 2015. To date £5,647 has been raised for resources at both nurseries. Thank you!

INTERVIEW WITH LISA – 15 years as Headteacher

Lisa Tuohy, Headteacher, is celebrating fifteen years at ACE. We interviewed her about achieving this milestone.

What are the stand out moments for you from the last 15 years at ACE? Any particularly fond memories (or nightmares)?

The most recent stand out moment was maintaining our outstanding rating from Ofsted. I have achieved outstanding at my previous three nurseries but this is the first time I have stayed

long enough to achieve it on two consecutive inspections at the same setting. I'm very proud of the team that I manage who always go above and beyond to give the children in their care the best possible experience.

There have been one or two nightmares too! I remember the drains being blocked, with water overflowing in the basement. The hallway ceiling collapsed during a summer closure period, just before the beginning of the new academic year.



Then there was the pandemic of course, but that was everyone's nightmare.

What have you most enjoyed about working at ACE?

The ethos was what first attracted me; it is how I try to live my life. The teamwork of the staff, who support each other hugely, and the close ties with the parents make ACE feel like a true community. I also like how every day is different (e.g. today included taking an injured pigeon – which couldn't fly - from the ACE front garden to the Clarendon Street vets round the corner).

What have been the most challenging moments?

I mentioned the pandemic earlier; that was the most challenging time. I had to try to make the right decisions for the nursery alongside my family's needs.

What are the main changes you've seen at ACE over the years?

From the outside looking in, I think that lots of things have stayed the same but behind the scenes there have been fundamental changes in streamlining paperwork and introducing more formal procedures and policies. The whole staff team has a voice and the opportunity to advance their careers by taking on roles which would have been purely for management in the past.

Are you one of the longest serving Headteachers at ACE?

I believe I am second only to Paula, my immediate predecessor, who was Head for 27 years. Although I am a long way off that fabulous achievement, I am extremely proud of the role that I have.

What did you do before ACE?

When I left school at eighteen, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do; my parents were keen on me working in a bank. I did this for two weeks and was so bored I joined a small independent estate agency. Within two years I was managing it and stayed there for six years. I believe this experience taught me a great deal about communication with a wider variety of people, running a business and leading a team.

Which is your favourite ACE social event?

Very tricky question! If I have to choose, it would be the Pumpkin Party: children dressing up, the array of beautifully carved pumpkins and the fact it is held at ACE – such a lot of fun!

Which activities do you most like doing with the children?

Being a very keen gardener myself, I would say this is one of my favourite activities to share with the children. They are so interested, keen to learn and help, and the ACE garden thrives with their care. I would also have to add music and singing time. Some children start the year shy and not keen to join in but before long they are dancing, singing

and playing musical instruments with such joy; it is truly heartwarming.

What are your top tips for looking after young children?

Children thrive on routine, knowing boundaries and having quality one-to-one time with adults who care for them. They enjoy and respond to being given responsibility and being praised for completing tasks. At ACE we have high expectations of the children and they always reach, if not exceed, them.

What's your favourite thing about your job?

Knowing that every day will be different and that after fifteen years in the position, I am professionally challenged and continue to learn and develop as a practitioner.

How has lockdown/the pandemic been for you?

Lockdown was the most difficult time of my career; when it was first announced I wanted to crawl under my duvet and pretend it wasn't happening. However, after the initial shock I thought about the importance ACE has in the community and how we

could 'do our bit' to support the families, many of whom are critical workers. Having the backing of the whole staff team, and of course the Parents' Committee, made it possible to keep going. We took one week at a time and gradually made our way through the pandemic.

Are you still in touch with ex-ACE staff?

Lindsey, my Deputy until last summer when she retired, is a good friend of mine and we meet up from time-to-time. I also love to see Paula (my predecessor as Head) and Sally (my first Deputy) at ACE social events. The four of us are planning to see each other for dinner over the summer. There will be lots to talk about; between the four of us we have worked at ACE for 96 YEARS !!!

What is your vision for ACE going forward?

To continue to strive to be as good as we can every single day, be true to our ethos and always put the children at the heart of what we do.

Viva ACE!

ALUMNI INTERVIEW

In this edition, we are delighted to share with you an interview with Vicky about her connection with ACE.

Vicky attended ACE Nursery School in the early 1990s and her daughter is now here

When did you attend ACE?

We still have this ACE mug at my parents' house! I was born in 1988 so I would have been at ACE from 1991 to 1993 (my older brother Oliver also attended ACE and would have been there to obtain this long lasting mug).





I would have been known as Victoria; here is a photo of me at ACE:



July

Tell us about Scrumpy

Scrumpy is our pet tortoise. We have had him in our family for about 40 years; my parents brought Scrumpy in to ACE to show the children when I



attended. It was super fun for Iris and I to be able



to bring Scrumpy back to ACE in 2022 so the current children could meet him and learn about tortoises. I was asked some great questions including, "Does Scrumpy like football?"

What particular memories do you/does your child have of ACE?

When I was at ACE I loved being in the art room. I remember painting butterflies by splodging colours on one side of the paper, folding the paper in half, squidding it, then opening it up to find a butterfly! So fun - I still do this with Iris. My memories are

hazy but I also remember fire practice - it was super exciting to come down the spiral staircase - and there used to be pet rabbits in the garden.

The other event I have vague memories of was trying to beat the Guinness World Record for the longest paper chain ever made. I recall attempting this on Parker's Piece with the whole nursery and all the families. I am not sure if anyone else remembers this or if my memory has warped over time.

Do you remember any staff members in particular?

Sally and Paula were the two staff members I remember; we had pet goldfish named after them at the time.

How were your parents involved in the ACE co-operative?

My mum was on the ACE committee; she was a seamstress by profession so used to do lots of sewing jobs and fancy dress making for the nursery.

How do you see ACE now, returning as a parent?

My little girl, Iris, is now three years old and is in the Puffin group. She is fabulous and has an amazing imagination. I see ACE in a completely different light now Iris is there. All the staff are beyond brilliant and so supportive to both Iris and I. (I have no idea how to raise a child so often ask questions and the staff are so helpful). ACE still has that lovely small and friendly community vibe that was there 30 years ago.

How has lockdown/the pandemic been for you and your family?

The pandemic has of course changed our experience of being parents. Looking back it was exhausting in the early days juggling work and childcare simultaneously but thankfully for Iris, as soon as she started at Little ACE she was able to have an almost normal early childhood with both ACE nurseries remaining open for her to enjoy. It was such a relief knowing she was out playing with little ones her age and enjoying all the activities, even if we couldn't go inside the building and see them for ourselves.

ACTIVITIES

Book bench trail

Following on from the success of the Cows about Cambridge art trail last summer, we were pleased to discover exhibits from The Cambridge Book Bench Trail installed near the Nursery School last week. There are twelve to see in total around the City. See [here](#) for further information. Our nearest benches are inspired by L S Lowry, the Salford based artist famous for painting scenes of life in the industrial districts of NW England in the mid-20th century (located by Parkside pools) and an Outer Space design created by Czech-born airbrush



artist Adam Pekar (in position near the cricket pavilion on Parker's Piece). 'A seat for friends' can be found near St John's College and 'Peaceful escape' close to Drummer Street bus station.



C.A.V.E.

We've enjoyed a number of outings into the local community this year. One of the most colourful was when we took a small group to the sensory CAVE on the second floor of the Grand Arcade. This is a **C**ontrolled **A**udio **V**isual **E**nvironment complete with sensory equipment to encourage different kinds of user interaction. It's free to book and each slot is for your use only. It's open from 9.00am – 6.00pm most days and 11.00am – 5.00pm on Sundays, and is in situ until 31 August. See [here](#) for further information.



Make up a rhyme or story

Maybe you could make up a rhyme or story inspired by something you see in Cambridge... the van in the Cam? The big skies over the big wheel on Parker's Piece? We'd love to hear them and share them with the children if you do.



Date truffles

Thanks to Yael (Yotam's mummy) for sharing this recipe with us. We've made them at nursery and several families have also done so at home. Highly recommended!

Ingredients:

15-20 Medjool dates
 4 tablespoons tahini (sesame paste)
 4 tablespoons coconut oil
 0.5 cup desiccated coconut
 4 tablespoons cocoa powder
 0.5 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 3/4 cup ground almonds (if allergic to nuts, can be replaced with crushed biscuits)

Method:

Take out the seeds/stones from the dates and soak them in boiling water for 5 minutes. After soaking,

the skin can be peeled off easily, and the dates become soft; use a blender (or the end of a rolling pin) to mash into a paste. Blend the dates with the tahini and coconut oil. Add the rest of the ingredients and blend/mix together. With moist hands roll the mixture into balls. Optional: add a fun coating. Cool them before eating and store them in the fridge (or they can be frozen).



DO GET IN TOUCH

Please feel free to contact us

Please get in touch if you would like to share some news or be interviewed for the newsletter; we're always pleased to hear from ACE alumni and their families and to feature another ACE face in the newsletter!

We finish with this lovely photo of an ACE child who is leaving us this week to fly away to big school, beside the "big yellow friendly door."



Happy Holidays to you all!

Editor: Tania Saigol Roth

Many thanks to

Lisa Tuohy, Sarah Piotrowski and Sarah Ransome for their input; alumni for sharing their fond memories with us; former and current ACE staff for helping to foster the ACE community to be what it is today; and the current ACE families for their tremendous support this year. As a former Chair of the ACE Parents' Committee says, 'Onwards and Upwards!'