



It's the end of an action-packed year and we're delighted to be sharing ACE's news with you from the last twelve months, as well as interviews with ACE alumni. We can report that the ACE co-operative is thriving with parents coming in to share their talents and interests with us throughout the year, in addition to well attended social events. It was lovely to see ACE alumni at our Wandlebury event in the summer; please save the date for next year's Teddy Bear's Picnic on Saturday 22nd June, 2024. All ACE alumni and their families are very welcome.

Our News

Social events



All the ACE social events are back up and running post COVID. We've also added playground gatherings to the calendar as a way of families getting to know each other via an informal weekend play. Please find below a few photos from our 2023 Teddy Bears' Picnic, Pumpkin Party and Winter Fayre. They have all been huge team efforts, with around 40 parents coming together to make each party run smoothly. Please save the date for the next alumni gathering: **Saturday 22nd June 2024, 2-4pm** at Wandlebury. It would be lovely to see you there.





Winter Fayre



The rain stopped in the morning and we were able to enjoy all our outdoor activities as planned, culminating in carol singing in the garden. Thanks to all the parents who made this event happen, together with a number of staff members. The lead organiser was Mircea (Felix's daddy) and the clean up operation was run by Julia (Rebecca's mummy). In true ACE style, a parent volunteered their work colleague to be Santa when a last minute SOS call went out for a second Father Christmas!







New committee

We elected a new ACE parents' committee at our AGM in November. About half of the committee members are new to ACE and the rest have returned for a second or third year.



Caspar Rebling Chair
Salman Mohammad Treasurer
Rene Oosthuysen Secretary
Ariana Rees-Roberts Social events
Bego Carod Alonso (Day Nursery parent) Social events
Charlotte Eccles HR, staff liaison and newsletter
Jennifer Payne Safeguarding and child protection
Julia Forman Community liaison and policy review
Lauren Roberts (Day Nursery parent) Social events
Lisa Tuohy Headteacher
Lucy Richens Newsletter, social events and policy review
Mircea Iliescu Social events
Orla Lynskey Social events
Sarah Piotrowski/Hanna Ochalik-Baca ACE Day Nursery Manager
Will Newhouse Social events

The committee can be contacted independently of either nursery via the following email address:
ace.parents.committee@gmail.com

Local community

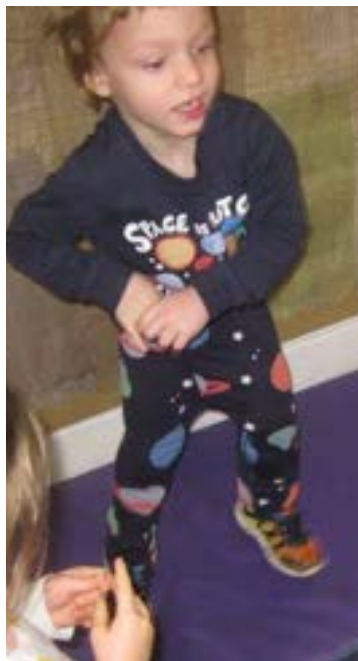
We've recently participated in the Priory Road Living Advent Calendar and made a tree out of recycled materials for the Mill Road Winter Fayre forest exhibition at the Zion Baptist Church - making connections in the communities near to both settings.



Children in Need Fundraiser



At the Day Nursery, the children made cakes (banana bread and shortbread) which we sold at pick up time. At the Nursery School, we held a pyjama jump-a-thon to raise funds for Children in Need. The girls and boys were invited to come to ACE all week dressed in their PJ's, with parents commenting how excited their children were to be able to wear their pyjamas all day! Every child was invited to take part in the challenge to see how many jumps they could complete in 30 seconds. The parents generously sponsored their children and ACE collectively raised an amazing £468. The staff joined in the fun and wore their pyjamas on the last day of the challenge, and how comfortable and warm they were! Sleep time went very smoothly all week as the children were already in their night clothes!



Leavers' fund



Thank you to all the families who left us in the summer of 2023 and generously donated to our leavers' fund, raising £1,030 in total. At the Day Nursery we have spent some of the funds on educational wooden toys for sorting and stacking as well as a wooden farm set. At the Nursery School we are planning to replace the playhouse in the back corner of the garden once the weather improves in the spring. A parent has recently made a temporary repair to its base, but after around 20 years of constant use, the house now needs replacing.

The leavers' funds were the brainchild of an ACE Parents' Committee member in July 2015 and since then have raised over £7,500 for the nurseries. Thank you to everyone who has contributed over the years.



We've had a huge amount of use out of the library at the Nursery School, which is located in what used to be the parents' room. This was funded entirely out of the proceeds of the July 2022 leavers' fund. It's a great place for small group work, talking to visitors, for staff to do online training, as well as the perfect place to read books of course! Maria - one of our staff members - has recently catalogued all the ACE books so we can find them easily.



Staff news

Many of you will know **Sarah P**, who has worked at ACE Day Nursery since it was set up in 2004 and where she has been Manager for many years. We're delighted to report that Sarah had a baby in February (a son called Orson) and so she has been on maternity leave for most of 2023. You can see Orson and Sarah pictured below soon after he was born, and as a bouncy 9 month old, as well as with Dad (Ian).

Hanna took over as full-time acting Manager and Laura stepped up to be full-time acting Deputy. Lisa (Headteacher) and Sarah R (office manager) have been spending time at ACE Day Nursery each week and it has really brought the two settings closer together. Diana attends Little ACE staff meetings too, and more staff swaps are taking place between the two nurseries which helps with transitions when the children move up to the Nursery School.



Staff news

There's also baby news to report at the Nursery School where **Gemma** (Deputy Head, who has been at ACE for 20 years) had baby Clemmie in April. You can see her pictured below at birth, 3 months, and 7 months. Gemma caught up with us at our staff night out recently - see the next page for further details - and has popped into the Nursery School on a couple of occasions with Clemmie. In Gemma's absence, Diana is acting Deputy at the Nursery School.

Maria at the Nursery School is just about to go on maternity leave as her baby is due in January. We wish her all the best for the birth and hope all the ACE staff babies can play together before too long!



Staff news



Staff night out

A lovely celebration meal took place at Little Petra to mark 50 years of ACE service (Gemma: 20 years, Sarah R: 15 years, Diana: 10 years and Bethany: 5 years). Thank you to a group of parents who kindly contributed towards the cost of the night out. A wonderful time was had by all.



Return of familiar staff

Many of you will know Virginie, who returned to ACE in September after a year in Montreal where she was accompanying her husband on his sabbatical year. We enjoyed keeping in touch with her via Zoom and learning about the very cold winters, frozen lakes and more.

Although Lindsey retired as Deputy Headteacher a couple of summers ago, she comes back to help on a regular basis (three days per week at the moment). Lindsey is pictured on the left with Gemma's daughter, Clemmie.



Natalie has also recently returned to ACE. She is resuming her role as Forest School Manager at the Day Nursery after a year of working in adult mental health services.

Alumni interviews



We've interviewed three alumni and/or their family members for this edition...

1. Fritha Wolsak

Our son Sami attended ACE Nursery just over a dozen years ago – he's now a strapping 15 year-old getting ready to take his GCSEs at The Perse! We arrived in Cambridge after an epic journey from Vancouver which we made without taking a plane – just trains, buses and boats – and quickly felt at home in the city. Although smaller, its vibrant diversity and abundance of green spaces made it seem the perfect place to raise young children.

ACE was a welcome first educational experience for Sami. We were struck by the warmth of the staff, the international makeup of the parent body and the happy, curious atmosphere enjoyed by the children. Virginie and Sarah became favourite teachers for Sami, though all of the staff members were equally dedicated and engaging. To this day, we remember the yellow door, and think of it as a gateway to friendship and learning. Oh, and while Sami completed primary school, Mike became a medical doctor! So Cambridge has been a wonderful place for the whole family to explore new possibilities. Thank you to all at ACE for opening the door to us.



2. Ted Flanagan

When did you attend ACE?

In the early 1980s.

What are you doing now?

I am a captain on a sailing boat and organise sailing holidays in Italy and Greece. I must admit this is sent to you in a bit of a rush whilst at anchor in Sardinia!

What particular memories do you have of ACE?

My memories are vague but I remember painting, the garden and eating my packed lunch with my good friend Rosie.

Which staff members do you remember?

Lovely Paula.

What were the best things about ACE?

The yellow door and the staff.

What were your favourite activities?

Painting, drawing and playing in the garden.

Was/were your parent/s involved with co-op tasks at ACE?

I am sure my Mum was involved at some level!



How was lockdown/the pandemic/homeschooling for you/your family?

Lucky to be in the countryside with my Dad. No children to homeschool but saw it was tough for my sisters and their families.

Are you still in touch with ex-ACE friends?

Yes lifelong friends with Rosie Millet who was born next door the day after me.

With thanks to Becca (Gilbert's mummy) for putting us in touch with Ted, who is pictured here with his wife Vanessa.

3. Katie Earnshaw

When did your child attend ACE?

Théo went to the Nursery from 2019 to 2021. He loved it from day one and we as a family got so much out of being part of the ACE community. I was so nervous about his first day at nursery, but I needn't have worried – as soon as he had been welcomed by Maria and saw all the toys he told me that I could go home!

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

The ACE garden made a lasting impression on Théo and he has lots of memories of playing with his friend Amalia in the houses and the mud kitchen. He also remembers singing lots of songs. We as a family are still fond of some of the books that we discovered through Théo's time at ACE, in particular Mr. Gumpy's Outing and Handa's Surprise. Théo often talks about Maria, who was his keyworker, in particular if he hears someone speaking Spanish! I am so appreciative of how rich his time at ACE was and how many opportunities he had for creative play – I loved reading the ACE update each week and finding out what new activities had been set up in each of the rooms!

Where is your child now? Where are you working now? What are you doing now?

At the end of Théo's second year at ACE, we moved to Fontainebleau, just outside Paris, for a five-year secondment. I was so sad that his younger brother Lucas missed out on the chance to be part of ACE too! School starts earlier in France and Théo joined in the last year of infant school, which was a big change for him. Fortunately, his school had some similarities to ACE – it also has a parent-run model and a child-led approach, which helped a lot with the transition. He has just finished his first year at primary school and says that it is quite different to ACE as there are not so many toys and the classes have the names of countries instead of birds. When we visit Cambridge, Théo is always keen to walk past ACE and he was so happy to have the chance to see Maria again earlier this year. He is also always excited to see Amalia, who was his great friend at ACE, and who he loves to keep in touch with through text messages and cards.



Happy holidays



We wish you all a good rest over the holiday period, a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Seasons' Greetings, Winter Solstice etc...

We would love to hear what our ACE graduates and their families are doing so please drop us an email if you have time. We'll sign off with a recent view from the Office window at Big ACE and a reminder of the snow we had this time last year!

With very best wishes from everyone at ACE

