



ACE Nursery School & ACE Day Nursery



NEWSLETTER



February 2024



We are at the halfway point in the school year already! We've been enjoying trips out of the settings and celebrating Lunar New Year. Staff have been swapping between the two nurseries which really helps to synchronise practice as well as facilitating the transition of Day Nursery children to the Nursery School later in the year. Our annual International Breakfast was very well attended and this year was held on the first day of the new lunar year, heralding the start of the year of the dragon.

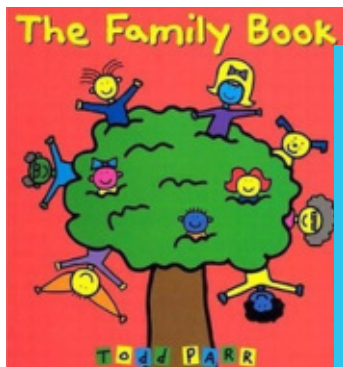
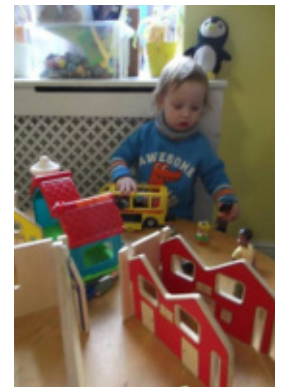


Day Nursery News

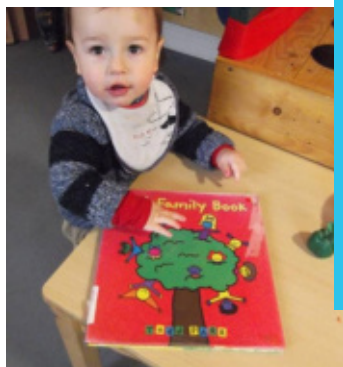
The two main items we'd like to share with you are Families and Chinese/Lunar New Year. We chose the families theme because we've been talking with the children a lot about families and we wanted to follow their interests. We have our "family portraits" available in the playroom (photos of each child's extended family that parents have sent in) and we often look at these with the boys and girls.

Exploring families through imaginative play

Inside the playroom, the girls and boys constructed houses and shops using our happy architect town. Small world people were added and we talked about families, using words like mummy, daddy, grandad, grandma, sister and brother. These conversations quickly linked to the children's own family units and places they visit with their families. The small world people gave the younger children a good opportunity to use their fine motor skills, while the older boys and girls engaged in imaginary play, taking turns and playing with each other.



Dialogic book: *The Family Book* by Todd Parr
This book celebrates the love we feel for our families and all the different varieties they come in. Carmen led engaging activities where children crafted houses with lolly sticks, sparked conversations about home life, and proudly shared about their families and pets. And, because Little ACE is like a second home, the boys and girls even created a special 2D drawing of our nursery, marking their favourite play spots with personal photos.



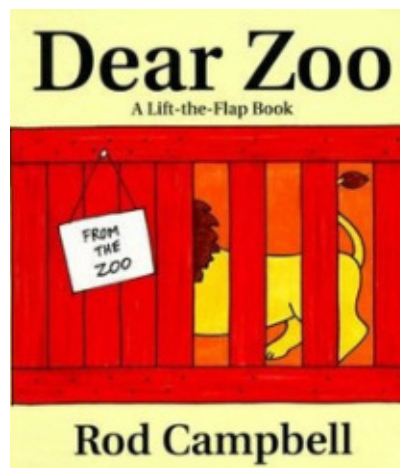
Roaring fun at the animal zoo

The family theme also gives us scope to extend the children's learning by exploring families in a wider context, which is just what Sarah H did when she created an outdoor zoo for the Little ACE children. The activity was based around the book "Dear Zoo" by Rod Campbell with the main focus to talk with the children about animal families. The girls and boys were encouraged to build pens for the animals using wooden blocks. Sarah started conversations with the group about which animals were the same and through these discussions the children were able to put all the elephants together, find the tigers and place those in a fenced pen, and stand the giraffes next to each other because they all have long necks.

At the zoo we created an arctic enclosure in the tuff spot, using a blue tarpaulin as the water and a white box as the ice. We talked about why these animals were separate from the elephants, tigers and lions.

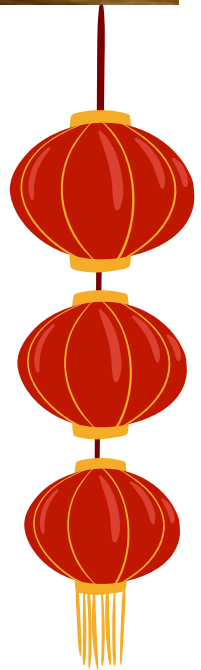


The children took on some imaginary role play with the dressing up clothes and the main attraction was our giant toy tiger. A table was set up with a till and money so the boys and girls could buy a ticket to visit the zoo. You could hear the children talking about mummies and daddies, and the baby animals. Sarah made a zoo sign and some of the children helped by making marks on the paper to decorate it and make it their own. Your daughters and sons spent a lot of time outside when the zoo was set up. It really captured their interest and they focused for long periods of time, sometimes playing side by side and at other times involving their peers.



Happy New Year!

In Mandarin: 新年快乐 xīn nián kuài lè /pronounced sshin-nyen kwhy-ler. This is the year of the Dragon. Laura led our new year celebrations, which developed into a project because we realised how the children's learning could be extended through a variety of new experiences which also took us out into the local community. As our Equalities co-ordinator at Little ACE, Laura is aware of the importance of expanding the children's knowledge and experiences, and the girls and boys had a wonderful time.



In the playroom, the home corner was a hive of activity and full of colour. Gabi set up lots of visual decorations which prompted discussions about why we could see a number of red coloured items. We placed objects in the home corner for the girls and boys to use in their pretend cooking; lots of mixing, emptying and filling went on!



Some of the children practised using chopsticks when exploring red noodles in the tuff spot. This was a lovely group activity involving senses and using our fine motor skills.



A mark making activity saw the boys and girls use black paint to try and copy some Chinese characters. We shared the words hello and goodbye; it was wonderful to see the children really focused and showing a 'can do' attitude.



And of course we needed a dragon! We decided to make one out of cardboard boxes which were then painted and further decorated with yellow, red and orange tissue paper. It was exciting seeing our dragon take shape. Laura showed the children a video of a lion dance and afterwards the group participated in their own movement session, making large movements with their arms and legs and getting quite out of breath!



Further activities in our Lunar New Year project included a trip to the Chinese shop on Burleigh Street, a parent coming in to sing Chinese songs and a delicious lunch made by Sharon our cook.

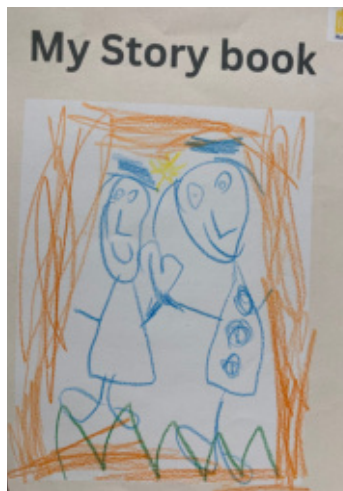


Nursery School News

The two main items we'd like to tell you about in this newsletter are on the themes of storytelling and community.

Storytelling Adventures: From Page to Stage!

We've had a blast diving into storytelling this term. The children are thrilled to write their own tales, collaborate, and act out their stories. Our dialogic book, "*Story Path*" by Kate Baker, with Madalena Matoso's stunning illustrations, sparks imagination as children navigate through various characters, settings, and plots along the path. They craft their narratives, guided by prompts like feelings and senses, enriched by bold colours and clear imagery.



During group time, each child contributed a sentence to our collective story. This evolved into individual story paths, with a proforma sent home: four picture spaces to inspire a story, and a section for parents to transcribe their child's tale verbatim. Many fantastic stories emerged, shared and celebrated at nursery, including a few longer, amusing ones that brought laughter and applause! Diana has also written about Story Path in an [article](#) for a County newsletter.

As a natural progression, we created individual storybooks in-house, now accessible in the puzzle room for children to share their tales. Diana often hears, "Can I tell a story, Diana?" and staff members transcribe these, with children adding their illustrations.

As an extension, we introduced puppets during singing time. Lisa kicked off with "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," encouraging children to act out parts using puppets and props. It's a fun storytelling method that boosts confidence as children perform for their peers.



It's always wonderful to hear how an activity at ACE was extended at home. We were delighted to see that a child decided to make a television at home (out of an old fruit box and with a bit of parental assistance) and then put on her own puppet show for her family. Something that others might like to try at home?



Home puppet show

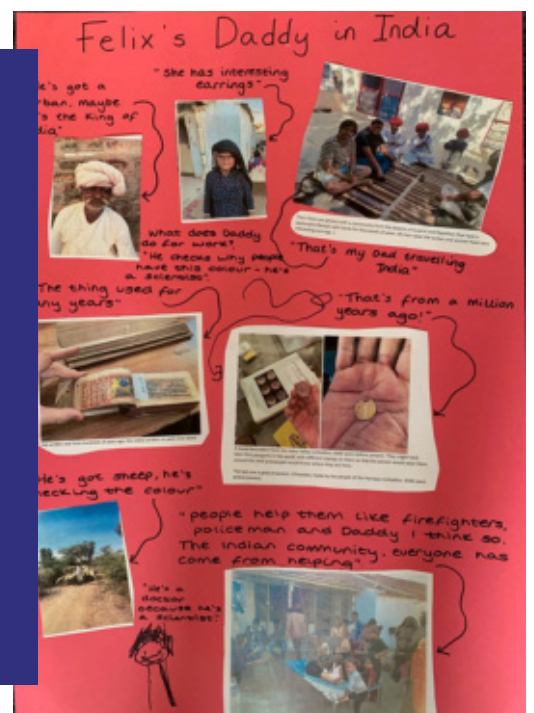


Exploring Our Vibrant Community: From Home to Far Beyond

Bethany's 'Our Community' project has sparked diverse interests among the children, leading to engaging activities inspired by items sent in from home. Children created pictures of their homes, accompanied by photos of their front doors. They learned their house/flat numbers and eagerly explored their friends' doors. The project seamlessly aligned with National Number Day, where children and teachers wore numbers, played number games, and crafted shapes using wooden blocks. For instance, they formed triangles, squares, and rectangles, then searched for these shapes throughout the classroom.



An ACE parent shared captivating photos from India, showcasing the Rajasthani community and their rich cultural heritage. The images featured iconic landmarks like the 1459-built fortress and royal palace in Jodhpur, along with glimpses of the pastoral lifestyle in Gujarat's deserts. We explored traditional attire, turbans, and jewellery unique to these communities, and marvelled at ancient artifacts such as a palm tree wood script, possibly the world's oldest, and a bead from the Indus Valley civilisation, considered the earliest form of a passport. This experience beautifully complemented our community project.



Out and about in Cambridge

We delved into our local community, discussing the roles of police officers and firefighters, given the proximity of Cambridge's stations to ACE. This sparked exploration of fingerprints and hands-on activities like crafting police cars and fire engines from recycled materials. We also explored construction work, enjoying tactile experiences with sand shaving foam to simulate bricklaying.



We also organised a number of outings into our local community; we are aiming to take each child on a trip and once everyone has been, we will start over again. We visited the Fitzwilliam museum – children and teachers took an exciting taxi ride to the museum (as it was rather cold at the time and it meant we could be back in time for lunch!). Everyone was buzzing afterwards, eager to share about the paintings they saw.



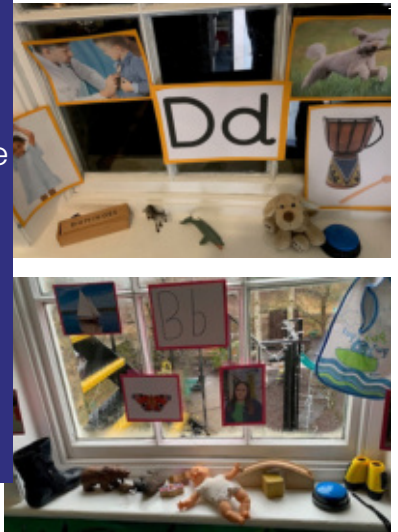
Molly and Bethany led a small group to the Central Library, where they met up with another group from ACE Day Nursery. We received a wonderful email from a member of the public who praised the children's excellent behaviour. The children chose a Portuguese book from the library, and Andreia, Maria's mummy, kindly read it in her native language. She then translated it into English for us. Thank you, Andreia!



Maria led her first outing when she and Molly took a group of children to buy fruit and vegetables from a local market stall. There is so much learning which can take place on such a simple trip; talking about the plants and flowers growing in our neighbours' gardens, the colours and numbers of front doors, street signs and how to keep safe with cyclists, dustbins and lamp posts all potential hazards!

Letter of the week

We've been exploring consonants like P, D, B, and T. Bethany sets up a display with objects related to each sound on the half landing up to the puzzle and art rooms. During "B" week, bells were added to the display and rung by children as they passed by. We introduce the objects at group time before placing them on the windowsill. For instance, Lisa revealed objects like a ball, bear, bike, and bell on a tray covered with a towel, asking if anyone knew what they had in common. A child correctly observed that they all started with the 'b' sound.



Mindful Moments

Diana incorporates Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), mindfulness, meditation, stretching, relaxation and yoga into sessions with the children. EFT involves tapping acupuncture points while affirming positive statements like "I am strong" and "I am brave." Afterwards, the children comment they feel relaxed and calm. Diana often follows with a meditation and gentle stretches. A tap-and-talk EFT session is available on our [Easy and Fun Home Learning Ideas](#) page, along with several yoga sequences.



Springtime excitement blooms

With spring approaching, we've restarted the Bulb in the Boot project. Children repurpose old wellington boots as plant pots, filling them with compost and adding daffodil bulbs. Each child will take one home to care for. Please share photos as the bulbs grow; we also welcome donations of unwanted boots!

Herbs from our advent seed calendar have been planted and are starting to sprout on the windowsill in the Little Room; these will be used in the mud kitchen planter later in the year; the children will be able to enhance their culinary creations with some fragrant leaves. A child took home some pumpkin seeds she had planted at ACE and she was excited to get in touch to let us know they've already germinated! Although the weather isn't always fine, we try to get out into the garden and have some fun.



Dragon Delights: Celebrating Lunar New Year at Big ACE

We were delighted that Tim (Tin Lam's daddy) came in to talk to us about Lunar New Year and read us a retelling of a traditional Chinese story called *The Dragon Painter* by Lesley Sims. The best painter in China is summoned to paint dragons on the Emperor's temple, but paints them without eyes. Is that because if you add eyes, painted dragons come to life...? We also did some paper folding with Tim to make fish and lanterns. Tin Lam shared a video of her eating noodles very proficiently at home using chopsticks. She was laughing as she sucked up the noodles and the children were very impressed.



This inspired a visit to one of the shops on Mill Road to buy noodles; traditionally noodles being long represents long life. Virginie and Lily took a small group of children to select two different types of noodles to bring back to ACE for the children to enjoy. You can see in the photos how the children got fully involved with purchasing the items, using money they had requested earlier from Viki in the office. Viki reminded them to get a receipt which they brought up to her upon their return. The children then helped prepare the noodles and everyone was offered the chance to try them at snack time.

The dragon we made at Big ACE came to life in the garden, being danced around the circular path by both the Penguin and Puffin groups respectively (in between rain showers!)



Molly, one of the Nursery School team, did Mandarin GCSE in the not too distant past, so she has been teaching the children a little of the language. She showed us her school vocab book and how she had practised writing the characters out neatly in a book full of square boxes intended for this purpose. We also learnt a few things about China, including the Great Wall of China. Some of the children were inspired to build their own wall in the ACE garden.



Parent visits

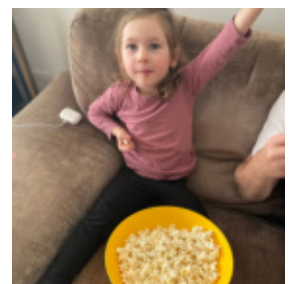
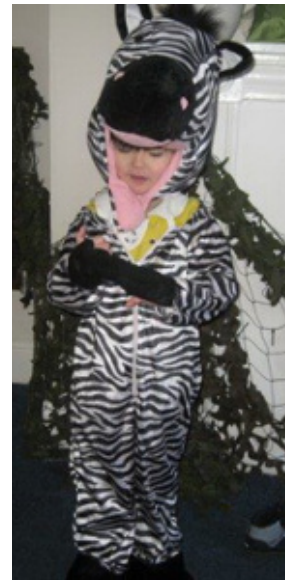
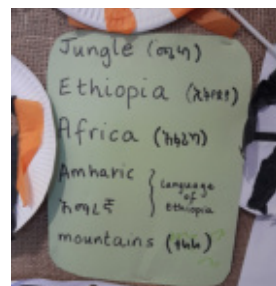
We welcomed two families to celebrate Setsubun ("seasonal division") in early February. Mamoru, Miyuki (Makoto) and Mayu (Sara) shared about this festival, held the day before spring in the old Japanese lunar calendar. Setsubun rituals include bean throwing to drive away evil spirits and welcome good fortune.



Henrik (Rebecca) visited us on Australia Day in late January. He brought in soft toy animals from Australia and shared fun facts about them through a song and a book. It was an Aussie twist on "If you're happy and you know it" with actions like climbing trees for possums and digging holes for wombats. Henrik also brought a cork hat and showed how to flick away flies, which the children found amusing. We wrapped up the day with Anzac biscuits, enjoyed by all.



Staff member Judy, originally from Ethiopia, set up The Little Room to introduce Ethiopian animals. She shared photos of animals she's seen in the wild and demonstrated a coffee ceremony, explaining its significance. Wearing a traditional garment made by her grandmother, Judy explained that the coffee grounds are brewed three times and that a small snack of popcorn usually accompanies the coffee. Judy made popcorn with the children and taught them some words in Amharic (which has an alphabet containing some 280 letters!). One child was inspired by the popcorn making and asked if she could do the same at home...



International Breakfast

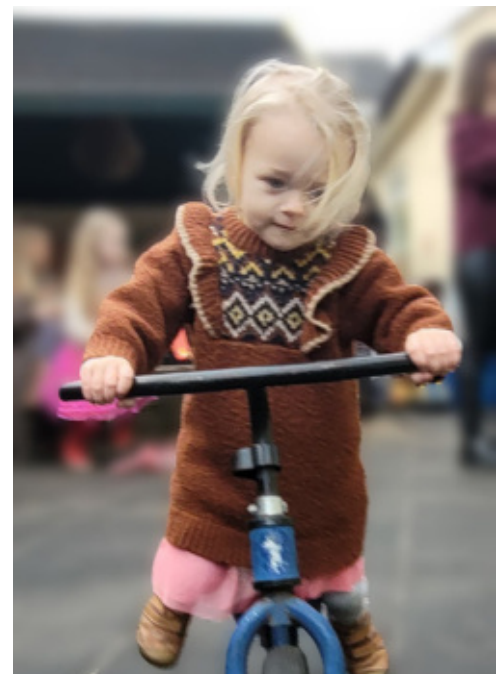
Thanks to everyone who supported our recent International Breakfast at the Day Nursery. There was a fantastic turnout of families from both nurseries and a splendid array of food, including samosas, sushi rolls, banana cake, ciambellone, quiche, churros, spinach parcels and more. It was lovely to combine the celebrations with Chinese New Year / the new lunar year which fell on the same day. Children made lanterns, played in the home corner, threaded cereal hoops onto elastic to make edible jewellery, coloured in flags, had their faces painted and enjoyed the playdough table. A couple of parents asked about the playdough recipe we use and you can find this on our website – it's the last recipe in the [ACE Recipe Book](#). You can also find different [playdough and paint recipes](#) shared by Virginie.















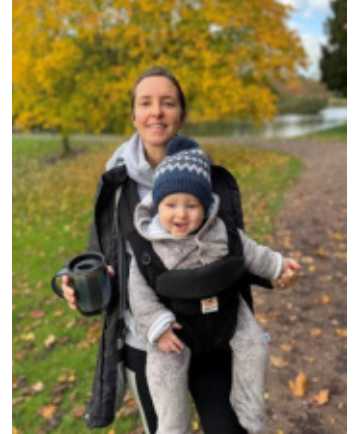


Staff News



Farewell and thank you to Sarah

Sarah P - at the Day Nursery - returned from maternity leave in December, but a change in her family circumstances means she will be leaving us on 8th March to look after her young son full-time. We'd like to thank Sarah for an incredible 19+ years of service at the Day Nursery - she has been with us since the Little ACE door opened for the first time in 2004! Please keep in touch and come back to see us whenever you can. Hanna will continue as full-time Day Nursery Manager.



Welcome to the world Mateo

Congratulations to Maria at Big ACE! We were delighted to hear that Mateo arrived safely at the end of January. Here he is enjoying a sleep. We're hoping Maria comes to visit us soon so we can all have a cuddle!

All the best to Gemma

Gemma has decided not to return to ACE after her maternity leave, opting for a part-time role closer to home to spend more time with her daughter. Gemma hopes to join us at some of our social events to keep in touch. Thanks to Gemma for her long service at ACE Nursery School and we wish you all the best for the future. Diana will continue as Deputy Headteacher.



THANK
you

Goodbye and best wishes to Rubina

Rubina joined us in November but will not continue after half-term due to health reasons. Thanks for your contributions, Rubina. We'll be recruiting her replacement and will keep you updated. .

Get to know the team: Viki, ACE Day Nursery

Hello, my name is Viki. I am from Hungary. I started to work at ACE Nursery School in 2009 and have just celebrated 15 years of being an ACE employee! Initially I worked in the office with Sarah R and Lisa, and I also do the finances for 'Little ACE'. A couple of years ago I began to help out with the children as well, and now spend Wednesday mornings and Thursday afterschool club with them which I really enjoy. It's lovely to get to know the girls and boys. Through the office side of my role, I've probably spoken to many of you on the phone and exchanged emails with you, even if we haven't met in person.

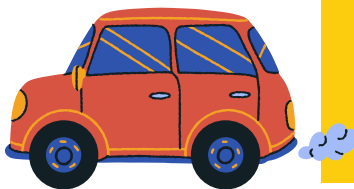
I came to England in 2003 and worked for a family as an au pair for 5 years while I was learning English. Before coming to England I worked for an agricultural company for 9 years as a secretary and an accounts assistant.

I live in Cambourne with my partner and two sons. We have a caravan in Cromer so we spend most of our free time there, exploring the wonderful Norfolk coast.



Staff swaps

Members of the teams at both settings have been swapping places for a morning over the past few weeks. This gives us all a chance to work with other ACE colleagues, share activity ideas and for the Day Nursery staff to see the children who moved up from Little ACE last year. It also helps to start the transition process for children currently at the Day Nursery who will be moving to the Nursery School later this year; they become more familiar with the Big ACE staff and vice versa.



Zooming to success

Congratulations to Bethany and Molly – Nursery School staff members - who both passed their driving tests (first time!) recently.

Co-Op Hours

Thank you to all the parents who have been helping us out with their co-op hours. If you are not on track to complete them by the end of term, please get in touch. There's always something to help with!

International Breakfast

Thank you to the team of volunteers who came together to make this event happen: Bego (Kaila), Tabitha (Otis), Lauren (Caius), Ariana (Luca), Frank (Daphna), Oliver (Max de G), Tomas and Veronika (Bela), Rachael (Iris), Rohanne (Clemmie), Thomas (Helen), Ying (Galen), Sophie (Esme), Lucy (James), Sasha (Max R-A), Abigail (Maya), Hannah (Myles), Olga (Lea) and Yashi (Arna).



Big ACE Hours

Laundry: Thanks to Jocasta (Rio), Jon & Hanna (Clara), Rohanne (Clemmie), Daniela (Arthur). **Shopping:** Thank you Sophie (Marina), Andreia (Maria), Zeynep and Mehmet (Naz), Charlotte and Graham (Thomas). **Compost purchases:** Ben and Atira (Shaya), Ed and Tabitha (Otis). **Chair painting:** Thanks to Samin (Yunus) for the beautiful pair of chairs pictured below and to Rebecca (Hazel) for the bright and cheerful flowery chair. **Parent visits:** Andreia (Maria), Mayu (Sara), Mamoru and Miyuki (Makoto), Tim (Tin Lam), Henrik (Rebecca). **Sewing:** Rohanne (Clemmie). **Gardening:** Hero (Tilda). **Welly boots preparation:** Ailsa and Chris (Rein). **Bulb research:** Sophie (Esme).



Little ACE Hours

Painting: Thank you to Frank (Daphna) for painting us a meadow scene in the playroom at the Day Nursery. **Laundry:** Elaine (Sophie), Sarah-Jane (Oscar), Daniela (Leo).

Maintenance tasks: Joao (Maria), Etai (Maya), Andi (Leopold). **Gardening:** Rebecca (Esther) and Eleni (Dani). **Taking an old toy to the charity shop:** Atira (Noa). **Taking the old staffroom sofa away and buying bags of soil:** Bob (Lila)

Useful Information

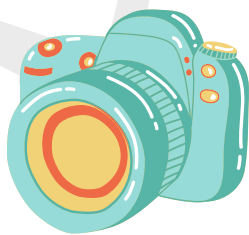


Early Years Funding

We hope to be able to offer the early years funding available to the working parents of two year olds from April 2024. Parents who may be eligible are required to obtain a code from HMRC as soon as possible and forward that onto us. See the [Childcare Choices](#) website for further information on how to apply.

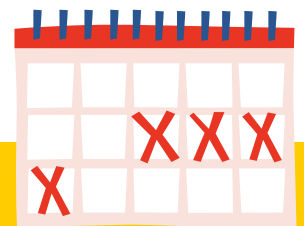
Photos

A photo of the 2024 class of ACE children and staff will take place on Thursday 13th June. The Nursery School photo will be taken at 10.00am and the Day Nursery one at 11.15am. If your child doesn't attend ACE on a Thursday, please try and bring your son/daughter in if at all possible as it would be wonderful to have everyone in the picture (arriving by 9.45am for the Big ACE photo and by 11.00am for the Little ACE one). Hard copies will be available to buy afterwards.



Living Eggs Project

This will run for two weeks from Monday 11th – Friday 22nd March. We will take delivery of ten embryo eggs, hopefully watch them hatch and then look after the chicks for the rest of the fortnight. The chicks will be based at the Nursery School but Day Nursery staff and children will visit them. Everyone who attends the spring fayre on Saturday 16th March will be able to see the chicks then as well.



Upcoming Social Events

ACE Nursery School open morning: Saturday 2nd March, 10am – 12 noon for parents of children interested in starting at the Nursery School in September 2024.

Playground meet up: Sunday 3rd March, 2 – 4pm hosted by Julia (Rebecca) and Ariana (Luca). Location tbc.

Spring Fayre: Saturday 16th March, 2 – 4 pm at ACE Nursery School

Playground meet up: Sunday 21st April, 2 – 4pm hosted by Julia (Rebecca) and Mircea (Felix). Location tbc.

Parents' social evening (pub location tbc): Wednesday 15th May from 7.30pm

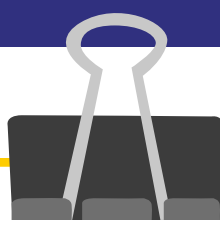
Playground meeting up: Sunday 19th May, 2 – 4pm hosted by Julia (Rebecca) and Orla (Conor). Location tbc.

Teddy Bears' Picnic: Saturday 22nd June, 2 – 4pm at Wandlebury

Parents' social evening (pub location tbc.): Wednesday 2nd October from 7.30pm

Pumpkin party: Sunday 20th October, 2 – 4pm at ACE Nursery School

AGM: Monday 11th November, 7.30 for 8.00pm at ACE Day Nursery



Term Dates



Day Nursery

Spring Term 2024

Thursday 28th March: last day of term

Friday 29th March – Friday 5th April inclusive: closed

Summer Term 2024

Monday 8th April: First day of term

Monday 6th May: Early May day bank holiday

Monday 27th May: Spring bank holiday

Friday 16th August: last day of term

Monday 19th – Friday 30th August inclusive: closed

Autumn Term 2024

Monday 2nd September 2024: first day of term

Nursery School

Spring Term 2024

Monday 19th – Friday 23rd February: half-term holiday (holiday playscheme running – **one space still left on Tuesday**). The office isn't staffed every day during holiday periods so please call the landline for a more immediate response/urgent messages.

Wednesday 27th March: Last day of term

Monday 8th – Friday 12th April: holiday playscheme available

Summer Term 2024

Tuesday 16th April: first day of term

Monday 6th May: Early May day bank holiday

Monday 27th – Friday 31st May: half-term holiday. (Playscheme available from Tuesday 28th May – Friday 31st May inclusive)

Thursday 18th July: Last day of term

Friday 19th July: Closed

Monday 22nd July – Friday 16th August inclusive: holiday playscheme available

Monday 19th August – Tuesday 3rd September inclusive: summer closure period

The Committee



The ACE parents' committee met on 24th January. The main focus was on reviewing the finances for the autumn term 2023, summarising the investment sub-committee meeting in early January, and discussing the government's expansion of early years funding this year. Also on the agenda was planning for the ACE social events in 2024 and a review of safeguarding policies and procedures.

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 Robarts (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 Managers

Will Newhouse: Social events

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

There's also a separate email address for any safeguarding queries: acesafeguarding@gmail.com.

These email addresses divert to two different committee members and operate independently of the ACE staff teams.

Love is in the air...

As we head into half-term, since it's Valentine's Day this week, we wanted to spread the love and wish those of you who are away for half-term a wonderful holiday. We look forward to seeing Day Nursery children as usual during the half-term week as well as Nursery School children attending the playscheme.

Your thoughtful Valentine's messages brought immense joy to the children at the Nursery School - they absolutely loved them! It was beautiful to watch their reactions as they hugged staff and each other. As one child said after all the messages that day had been completed, "I bet you are bursting with love now". Thank you for making their day extra special. At the Day Nursery we made heart biscuits and cards to take home.



"We wanted to share with both ACE nurseries what a happy and proud little man our son has turned into...he is known for being very kind and a model for those around him. As parents the proudest thing for us is that he is very sweet and caring to his brother.

you have all been fantastic mentors and your guidance and mentorship shine through. We thank you very much and we wish you many years of success in inspiring and guiding other little people."

And as we're exchanging messages of love and affection, it seemed appropriate to share this message too, that we recently received from the family of an ACE graduate, who started at primary school in September 2023.

