



The Ark Pre-School Manager's Report 2020/21

Once again, another year has flown past. We have been privileged to nurture such a lovely group of children and will greatly miss those leaving for school and to other settings. This academic year has certainly had its challenges but we are pleased that we were able to continue to open our provision and try to keep our routine as “normal” as possible. We are so thankful to Wellington College for allowing us to extend our stay until the end of the summer term. We have so appreciated all the benefits that this site has to offer and have made the most of the facilities.

The autumn term was different to usual. Although we held our own Harvest celebrations in the outside area, we missed having the parents join us and a talk from a member of Crowthorne Baptist church. This was also our first year since the history of The Ark that we were not able to carry out a traditional Nativity Play. I know the staff were quite relieved to have a break from all the organisation involved and the continual rehearsals! We did celebrate Christmas however, by reading various versions of The Christmas story and completing Christmas crafts. We even had a decorated tree! The highlight of the autumn term was our Christmas party for the children on the last day of term. Father Christmas made an excellent impression on the children (and staff!) and will be invited back again!

In the spring term we were sad to miss our annual trip out, which would have been to the Fire Station (linked to our topic of People Who Help Us). We did however celebrate World Book Day and we were pleased to see so many children dress up as a book character and bring in their favourite book to share.

The summer term felt more like winter to start with, but we were thankful to return to the sunshine and warmer weather after the half term break. With Covid restrictions relaxing we were pleased to be able to hold our summer trip at South Hill Park and our sports day at Wellington. We were delighted that parents could join us at South Hill Park and it was just so lovely to do something “normal” again. Just the Leavers assembly to go now!

The routine we follow has remained pretty much the same throughout our time at Wellington, although we have adapted it depending on the weather

and any visitors we have had. The children have been extremely adaptable to any changes and they have coped really well to the implications that Covid has had on our setting. The children have all enjoyed our daily walk and we have made full use of the college grounds. Once our numbers were such that we could have 4 members of staff a day, we decided to split the children into 2 walking groups so that the older/more able walkers could explore further and practise physical skills at their level. We could also bring in letters and sounds and rhyming words on our walks, as well as numbers and shapes. The younger children have enjoyed shorter walks with a different focus each day. This smaller group have benefitted from a higher teacher/child ratio, enabling them to gain confidence with communication and language as well as physical skills.

The only part of the timetable that has been omitted this academic year has been Show and Tell time in key Worker groups, due to the children being unable to bring things in from home. We have ensured that the Key Workers get to know their children really well and spend time with them individually.

Our caterpillars were a big hit again this year. The children enjoyed watching them grow and change into butterflies. We read various stories about caterpillars and butterflies and sang related songs. We were able to talk about various life cycles. The butterflies had the perfect environment to be freed into as we let them go in the wild flower area next to the theatre.

We have really missed our visits to St. Brendans this year, knowing that the children were such a blessing to the older people there. We hope to return in the autumn when we will sing songs and share stories and crafts with the residents.

Misty the cat has had a very long time in hibernation! Sadly, we have been unable to send home a fluffy toy to each of the children's homes during Covid but we hope to resume this special treat in September.

Although Covid has lots of negative impacts, we were particularly delighted to welcome Kevin and Wendy to The Ark. (minister of Crowthorne Baptist church and his wife). As soon as they were allowed on site, they introduced themselves to us and joined us for our daily walk. Their enthusiasm and passion for The Ark has been a real joy to us all. Kevin and Wendy continue to make regular visits to The Ark, joining in with the children's play and helping them to follow the routine. They have a great sense of humour and have bonded so well with the children. We look forward to seeing much more of them when we return to the church.

Desperate to be able to send all the leavers off with a homemade pencil case (an ongoing tradition at The Ark), Avril and Sally (members of the church) very kindly volunteered to come in on Tuesday mornings to sew with the children. We are very thankful for their time and the great way in which they interact with the children.

We would personally like to thank all the parents for their involvement and continued support. I would particularly like to thank those that have helped us with our move back to the church by taking rubbish to the tip and unwanted items to the charity shops. We continue to receive so much positive feedback for which we are very grateful. Word of mouth has always been our top selling point! We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with parents and carers and to involve them as much as possible in their child's learning and development.

Heather Sinclair
Manager
16 July 2021