

## **Managers Report January 2011**

As with the Christmas newsletter, which at the time of starting my report I have just compiled, it is again the time of year to reflect on what we have achieved during the last twelve months, and look forward to the future in 2011.

### **Numbers of children attending clubs.**

Following the format of previous reports I am led to the numbers of children attending clubs. We have entered a difficult time for all monetarily during the past twelve months, and the current economic trends unfortunately have been reflected in the number of children attending club since September 2009. However I will not dwell on this negative phase, but regard it as a challenge; to move forward and ensure that we attract the maximum number of children possible into the settings by diversification (which is touched upon later in my report), and continuing to uphold the outstanding achievements and levels of service of the past four years.

### **Staffing**

This year I am pleased to tell that our staff turnover has been low, but we sadly had to say goodbye to Katey Moxley at the end of July as she moved onto pastures new.

Touching on my previous comment when reporting on the number of children and the effect of the economic climate, the decision was taken not to employ a new Deputy Manager, but to restructure the duties of our existing workforce, that is, to temporarily appoint Janette Hull as Team Leader at Streetsbrook, and to increase both Janette's and Charlotte Burke's hours a little to allow them to perform some of the duties previously carried out by the Deputy Manager, the main focus being the organisation and implementation of the activities in clubs.

It is important in these times to have a flexible approach to the staffing structure and for this reason these changes have been implemented on a short term basis until April 2011 which allows Swallows Childcare the opportunity to review the numbers of children, financial position and the staffing structure again. In the meantime well done to both members of staff in their new positions and responsibilities, and I would like to convey that these new arrangements have got off to a good start.

### **Administration and new facilities at Streetsbrook**

The administration centre of Swallows is now very settled in its new home at Sharmans Cross, and with building work very nearly completed at Streetsbrook, we look forward to having a 'satellite' office within the nursery building, allowing us to have an office and contact point at both sites. In September 2010 we were fortunate to be able to move our session's permanently into the nursery space at Streetsbrook affording us more storage for our equipment and a wealth of space, for which we have many plans to expand activities and services; the first of which being able to offer a breakfast service to parents. I look forward to reporting on this and much more in January 2012!

### **Staff training.**

Charlotte Burke has now completed her level 3 in Child Care Learning and Development; well deserved congratulations Charlotte. All staff have undertaken the new level 1 Safeguarding course as required by the Local Safeguarding Board in Solihull. Due to the overwhelming demand on places I await a place on level two training, but have completed a further safeguarding course with regard to managing allegations. Also several members of staff have since my last report renewed their paediatric first aid, and food handling training. Unfortunately central funding for the Playwork Transition course was not available to us and therefore we were unable to proceed with these plans. I continue to monitor relevant training available to us, and we remain committed to our involvement in further training opportunities.

### **Club activities before and after school**

Our range of exciting themes and activities and the opportunities these provide continue to grow and have this year ranged from pirates to disco and flower power! We have introduced new role plays from a hairdressing salon, to a driving test centre and embraced our weather with the unexpected opportunity to play in the snow in February, but had to camp indoors due to our unpredictable weather later in the year.

Our healthy eating menus are now well established with the cafeteria style access to snacks which encourages the children to make personal healthy eating choices and promotes independence. We have introduced the children to foods they may not have yet sampled with different foods related to the theme of the week, and these opportunities will be extended further by relating future weekly menus to particular countries and styles. It was evident how much the children enjoyed these 'tasting sessions' when included in my next account; the introduction of weekly 'Wednesday workshops' open to all children at Streetsbrook.

The lower numbers of children attending the evening session here on a Wednesday afternoon has afforded us the opportunity to promote the good work we do, and incorporate a wider clientele into our sessions by inviting parents of any child attending Streetsbrook School, regardless for the need of formal childcare arrangements, by way of activity workshops.

The first block of workshops consisted of 5 sessions in the lead up to Christmas and were very successful with positive feedback from both new children and 'regulars' and succeeded in introducing new parents and children to our club.

As has become a feature of our year we will again be holding a charity fundraising week. The charity this year will be the National Association for the Guide Dogs for the Blind and will be launched in February 2011.

### **Holiday Clubs**

The range of activities offered increased this year with our trips off site; firstly the opportunity to join in the Interclub sports day held at Monkspath Primary School and I am proud to report that Swallows came fourth out of nine clubs from across the borough. Having never taken part before, and with the event on the second day of our summer holiday scheme and therefore very little time to practice, children attending were very keen to 'have a go'. All of our participants were volunteers on the day and represented the club superbly as did all of the children with their (very vocal!) support and good behaviour. Now all we need is to purchase a trophy cabinet for future cups!

Our second venture off site was to Conkers Activity Village near Leicester which gave the children the opportunity to explore outdoors, ride on a small gauge railway, take part in a teddy bear hunt and practice their den making skills in the woods. We were very lucky with the weather as it stayed dry if a little overcast, however reports from home said there had been heavy rainfall!

During this year we have also had holiday clubs which have featured visiting providers, a science professor, who taught us how to make sweets, and slimy goo, rock band musicians with 'hands on' tuition on electric guitars or drums and singing lessons using a P.A system. The fair came to us by way of fairground attractions, and the farm came to visit bringing a Shetland pony, goats, guinea pigs and rabbits. We have explored dance and movement, held talent contests, visited the piazza in Italy and the diner in America

I finish this report now in 2011, having looked back at another successful year and forward to yet another, with all the challenges we will undoubtedly face but with enthusiasm and a sense of anticipation.

Lyn Hoban - Manager