

Hartest Preschool Parish Council Report April 2017

Looking back over the past year Hartest Preschool has seen many changes these include a new parents committee, huge improvements with links to the Primary School, a large increase in occupancy and lastly a complete restructure of staffing.

At the end of the academic year in 2016 this saw Yvonne Hamilton resign as the Preschool Manager after 9 years of hard work, dedication and commitment to the Preschool. Yvonne was offered an opportunity to further her career in Early Years and is now the County Manager for Norfolk Preschool Learning Alliance. Yvonne is very much missed at Preschool but we wish her every success for her future. We also said a sad goodbye to one of our wonderful volunteers, Julie Moore who had been volunteering at the Preschool 2 mornings a week for 5 years. Julie and her husband Bob have now moved to Bishops Stortford to be nearer their gorgeous grand-daughter.

Since September 2016 Megan Driver who was Deputy Manager to Yvonne for 3 years has now stepped up to Manager and is settling in well to the role. Vicki Harries stepped up to become joint Deputy Manager along with a new member of staff employed from September 2016, Yasmin Mechan.

As the year has gone along Preschool has seen its numbers surge seeing the occupancy increase from 35% (Sep 2016) to 62 % (April 2017) this meaning more new staff members were needed. Holly Shutlar was employed full time and Fallon Stone was employed as a trainee in February 2017. Hartest Preschool now has a strong staff team of 6 paid employees. We also have a wonderful volunteer 2 afternoons a week, Janet Garwood and we were fortunate enough to celebrate her 80th Birthday with her in January.

The Beginning of the academic year also saw many committee members needing to step down as their children moved up to 'big school' and no longer attended Preschool or members had various other work commitments. At our Preschool AGM we were lucky enough to recruit 3 new committee members. The Parents committee now consists of Katherine Lee as Chairperson, Emily Gellard as Vice Chairperson and Safeguarding Officer, Natalie Hughes as a non-executive. Hayley Kyle remained on the committee as the Treasurer and Zoe De'ath remained on as a non-executive. However this does mean the committee is now running on the absolute minimum number of members needed as instructed by the constitution so we will be looking desperately to recruit more members ASAP.

The Preschool committee work very hard by volunteering at the Preschool and organising fundraising events to raise much needed money for Preschool resources etc. The start of the School year saw the Hartest Village fete which was extremely successful (although the sunshine may have helped) and Hartest Preschool raised an enormous £620.83. Later on in the year we held our yearly Bonfire and Fireworks display which again was a huge success and raised an enormous £2,409.69.

The end of the year saw the Preschool committee team up with the 'Friends of Hartest Primary school' and put on a wonderful Christmas Fayre here in the Institute which raised just over £1000 and was split evenly between the School and the Preschool.

The latest Fundraising event was our Easter egg hunt and fundraiser which saw over 60 children from the Preschool, Primary School and the Village enjoy an afternoon of fun!

Not only did the committee team up with the 'Friends of Hartest' for the Christmas Fundraiser but the Preschool are over the moon to now be involved with the Primary School in many different ways. This includes hot dinners being made available to all Preschool children for a small charge on a daily basis which are prepared freshly on the School site and are collected each day by a Preschool staff member. This has deemed very popular with both the staff and children (especially fish and chip Friday!). In addition to this the Preschool now attends events such as celebration assembly, open the book story time and are always invited to share and join in special experiences at the Primary school which has been wonderful for all involved.

Looking ahead there will be more changes to the way preschool operates as there has been a significant cut in Funding for all Preschools and sees the hourly rate paid by the Local Authority dropping from £4.21 to £3.87 per hour per child with immediate effect to all preschools across Suffolk. As a result of this Hartest Preschool has already calculated a loss of £1,600 just for the Summer Term.

In addition the government has decided to increase funded hours for children from 15 hours to 30 hours from September. So as a Preschool we will need to look at the best way to supply this and ensure high quality care and service is still delivered.

Looking forward to the following year we hope to continue to provide a wonderful, caring nurturing Preschool to offer many, many children the best start in life and a secure foundation for their school years ahead.

Hartest Preschool Committee.