

Harpenden Children's Centre Newsletter



A Sure Start Children's Centre

SPRING 2010

www.hertschildrenscentres.org.uk/harpenden

Hello again!

Well it certainly has been an eventful few months. Whilst the snow was incredibly disruptive it was wonderful to see the children having such a great time experiencing the wonders of this great winter phenomenon. It's far more fun to play with the real stuff, than to pretend by gluing cotton wool onto paper snowmen. I was at a conference a few weeks ago and a wise, passionate and experienced speaker summed it all up in a simple sentence *'during our lifetimes we can have more than one go at most things- career, marriage, where we live, but we only get one go at childhood'* Childhood doesn't last long, it is a precious thing and we need to help children enjoy every minute of it. Snow, sunshine and rain, the awe and wonder of the world, music, laughter, mischief and love. Take time to help your children experience and enjoy all of it. Make the best of the moment.

Life at the Children's Centre has been incredibly busy with an ever increasing number of families accessing our services. We have been rewarded for our endeavours by receiving a good inspection result from a Herts County Council Inspection and awarded the status of being a fully operational centre at Batford and designation as a centre in Southdown, despite not yet having a building. Good news at Southdown; we now have planning permission and work will start on the development at Easter. By September, we will have a new information point and a small venue for appointments and some small group activities.

Many of you have been enquiring about the Easter Stay and Play - sadly, as we no longer have access to the internal part of the school, we are unable to run the sessions at Easter because the weather is too unreliable. Good news is that due to their overwhelming popularity, we are hoping to increase the number of stay and play sessions during the summer holidays.



Calculation of Benefits

Parents can now get an estimate of the amount of benefit they may be entitled to by using the 'Benefit Adviser' on Direct Gov. This is a calculator that can be used by inputting their own personal details to see their entitlement to benefit or to input new information and circumstances if increased hours or a new job is offered once they are in receipt of benefits. Go to www.direct.gov.uk and put 'Benefit Adviser' in the search box. Parents can also use Direct Gov to submit an application for Jobseekers Allowance - once it is processed they will be called back to arrange their initial interview.



SureStart

Sure Start is the Government programme to deliver the best start in life for every child. Harpenden Children's centre is a Surestart centre bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support.

Back to Basics Play

Children are children for such a short time... it is their biological need to enjoy life and have adventures. As parents & carers, we must encourage curiosity and play.

Children need to be touched by grass, sunshine, fresh air, and birdsong. They need puddles to jump in and trees to climb. They need dirt for mud pies, creepy crawlies, and rocks to skip. They need sticks and bare feet, stories, songs, paints, costumes....

Why not try an Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt? Water Balloons are great fun on a hot Summer's Day. Or try make a 'fort' using a large box from your local appliance centre - and don't forget the "keep out" sign! Aluminium Foil is a great resource for model making for all ages, and even scrunched up white paper is enough for an indoor snowball fight!

If you're stuck for ideas and need a fresh look at child's play, why not visit our Toy Library [every Wednesday @9.30am] or speak to a member of staff - we're here to help!

Steps to Choosing a Good Nanny

More and more, research tells us that our children's healthy development depends on safe and positive experiences during the first few years of life. If you are a parent who works during these early years, choosing good child care is one of the most important decisions you will ever make for your child.

To help you make the right choice for your child, we have listed some guidelines to think about when making your choice of nanny. However, if you need further advice on this matter and don't know where to start, please call and speak to one of our Parent Support Workers who are always to hand at the Centre with a wealth of information all types of Early Years Care, including Childminders, Nurseries etc..

Define your needs

Do you want a live-in or daily nanny? Will your nanny have sole charge or are you or your partner likely to be [working] at home too?

What are her qualifications?

Nursery nurses are qualified; nannies in some cases, are not. You want someone competent, trained and/or experienced. Always ask to see original copies of qualifications, not copies.

Check references

Speak to previous employers - don't rely on written testimonials handed to you at the interview. It's also a good idea to do a police check (even if you go through a nanny agency).

Let your children have a say

Let them meet her to see if they like her. Children usually know who they like and dislike - and their instincts are invariably right.

And once you've found her how do you keep her?

The answer is simple; Make sure that your job is more attractive than any other she might be offered. Be a good employer: respect her privacy, and her working hours; don't encroach on her free time; make sure you pay her for any overtime; and review her salary on a regular basis. And if you can give her other perks, such as a car and an interesting lifestyle, all the better.

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Five Fun Games with Vegetables

A Great Way of Introducing Vegetables to Children who are reluctant to eat them!

Carrots

How many different ways can you carry a carrot? Hold it under your arm. Balance it on your shoulder. Tuck it under your chin. Carry it between your knees. Pretend to be a horse or donkey and carry it in your mouth.

Tomatoes

Cut open a tomato and scoop out the seeds and juice into a bowl. Paint your lips with the juice. Demonstrate how shiny and beautiful your lips look with tomato juice on them.

Brussel Sprouts

Sit down with your child and show them how you can peel off the outer layers of leaves. See how far they can peel them and count how many you pull off. Make it a fun activity by seeing if a piece will stick to their nose, cheek or chin.

Kiwi Fruit

Make it fun to eat. Put it in an egg cup and slice the top off to eat it like a boiled egg.


Bananas

Hide some bananas around the room and go hunting for them. Perhaps pretend to be hungry monkeys looking for food or elephants with long trunks searching out a tasty treat.

A Child's Positive Body Image

In today's ever pressurised society, help your children love the healthy shape they're in.

- Be a good role model. Think about how you refer to your own body and comments that you make about size and weight. Try to avoid making any negative comments about other people's weight and appearance, too.
- Encourage a healthy attitude towards all foods. Make sure there are plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in your child's diet, but don't be afraid to offer the occasional slice of cake and biscuit. It's important your child understands that it's not bad to eat these once in a while.
- Focus on the physical functions of the body rather than how it looks. Praise your child for dancing, swimming, and doing cartwheels.
- Never force food upon your child. Children naturally regulate their own eating, so don't let it become a battleground.
- Encourage media awareness by talking about the images you see in magazines and on TV, and thinking about what each one is trying to promote and how they are achieving that.



Helping Families to
Be Healthy, Stay Safe,
Enjoy & Achieve, Make
a Contribution, &
Achieve Economic
Well-being

Regular events taking place at Harpenden Children's Centre

Day	Session	Venue	Cost	Time
Monday	Childminders Group	Magpie Room	Free	10am – 11am
	Opportunity Class	Magpie Room	Supporting young children with significant delay or learning difficulties Referrals only / Free	1pm – 3pm
Tuesday	Monkey Club	Magpie Room	Supported Mother & Toddler Group By Application Only / Free	9.30am – 11.30am
	Post-natal classes	Chaffinch	Free informal themed sessions, call for programme	
Wednesday	Toy Library	Magpie Room	Registration Fee & Hire Cost Applies	9.30am – 11am
	Baby Massage	Chaffinch Room	£5 for 5 sessions	10.30am – 11.30am
	Baby Clinic	Chaffinch Room	Free	1pm – 3pm
	Opportunity Class	Magpie Room	Referrals only / Free	1pm – 3pm
Thursday	Monkey Club	Magpie Room	Referrals only / Free	9.30am – 11.30am
	Opportunity Class	Magpie Room	Referrals only / Free	Every 2 weeks 1pm – 3pm Starting from 14 th Jan
Friday	Post-natal drop-in Older babies drop-in	Chaffinch Room Magpie	Free	10am – 12pm

Other Upcoming Events

First Aid; Due to popular demand, we are going to run another Saturday **First Aid** session. To be held on Saturday 26th June from 10am – 12pm, this is a basic 2 hour session in the morning which may be followed up by a resuscitation course if attendees are interested. Phone for details.

Tiny Tots Taster Session 29th March 2010 Enjoy a free taster for a new local weekly drop-in music group, for newborns to crawlers, that brings songs old and new to life with a variety of multi-sensory resources. If you would like to be registered for a place, please contact Jackie or Rachel on 01582 714210.

Our course of **Postnatal Sessions** starts again on April 20th for 8 consecutive Tuesdays* [*Resuscitation will take place on a Monday, 24th May and will be a bookable session]. These are open to all parents of new babies in the area; parents are welcome to attend, even if they have come to a previous 2009 session. No pre-booking is required.

New Library Session; Our Parent Support Workers will attend Harpenden Library every Tuesday from 9.45am – 11.45am. Feel free to pop along to discuss issues like your child's well-being and playing & reading with your child.