



# Potterspurry Pre-School

## 2020 – 2021 annual report for the Potterspurry Annual Parish Assembly

I think we can safely all say that It has been a challenging year for everyone! The global COVID -19 pandemic saw us for the first time in our history close from March 2020 to all children. We kept in touch with families through our online learning journal system to give them ideas for activities to do at home to support their children's learning while we were closed. We were able to reopen in June 2020 to smaller groups of children which enabled us to keep our staff, children and families as safe as possible.

We reopened fully to all children in September 2020. We had a worrying start to the year as we didn't have the number of children we would usually expect at the start of a term. As the Autumn term progressed, we saw more and more enquiries coming through and more bookings which reassured us we would be able to get back to pre-COVID numbers. We are now (almost) fully booked for all morning and afternoon sessions for the rest of the summer term.

We were asked to stay open by the government in January 2021 which we were able to do but on heavily reduced schedule and numbers so that we could manage our staff and their children also being at home. We have tried to carry on as "normal" for the children and we have been making sure we focus on the children's personal, social and emotional development as a priority.

We have been working with the Parish council to help us develop an Outdoor Learning Environment in the local community which we can visit with the children. We have the space marked out we just need to make the site safe by clearing the nettles before we can use it. We hope to use the space this year.

We are continuing the process of transferring to a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The change in our charity status requires that we have a pre-registration visit by Ofsted.

The AGM will be held in the summer term and we are keen for new members to join the committee in the coming months or at the AGM, as we have committee members who have indicated they will be stepping down at the AGM.

As to finances, the pre-school's government funding continued during the first lockdown in 2020. Despite losing the income from fee-paying parents, this government funding allowed us to retain our staff and was positioned as an alternative to accessing the furlough scheme. As the second lockdown commenced it appeared that conditions would become attached to this ongoing funding, such that the preschool needed to remain open to receive it. By the third lockdown in January 2021 it was abundantly clear that if we were to close then funding would stop. As above, despite the clear challenges, we remained open when necessary to preserve the funding. Also, since earlier in 2021, we have been able to access the furlough scheme – for one staff member on a part-furlough basis - given the drop in income from fee-paying parents associated with the reduced schedule. Despite a challenging year, these measures – along with tighter budget control in general – have allowed the pre-school to maintain at close to break-even levels. We have also acted quickly to claim additional funding where we can, for example for special educational needs. All this said, forward challenges do remain including weathering the government cuts for funded places, including cuts to special educational needs additional funding, combined with the increases to the minimum wage each April. The committee have been contingency planning for these changes and will continue to closely monitor the impact of the changes on the financial position of the preschool.

From a staff perspective, we have recently had two members of team join us Jane Bishop and Isabelle Taylor.

Due to the national pandemic we have had to pause all big fundraising events for the year. We were very lucky that Emma James on our committee was able to organise the "Potterspurry Advent Windows" and help us raise £140 for Preschool at Christmas. We loved seeing all the windows around the village.

Highlights throughout the year include the children's amazing Harvest Festival, Christmas performance and the Christmas party. Due to COVID we were unable to have parents attend but we are very egg-cited to be able to welcome the parents back this week for our Easter service at the village church.

The summer term will see us preparing our four year olds for the transition to school in September, and we continue to work closely with John Hellins and the teachers to support the move for those children who have a place there. We will also be holding our annual Sports Day in the summer term.

Kate Morris

Preschool Manager