



St Catherine's
Independent Nursery

Newsletter – January 2026

Nursery Trustees – Lisa Maddock (nominated person), Tracy Austin, Joanne Ikin, Helen Brockliss and Mary Marriott

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Dear parents and carers,

We would like to take this opportunity to “WELCOME” all the new children and their parents into the nursery, and we hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and all the best for 2026.

Under the “Early Years Foundation Stage” framework it is an “OFSTED” welfare requirement that the nursery holds private and confidential information on all the children entering nursery. For existing families at the nursery please ensure that the information that we store is still applicable.

Term Dates and Easter Closure

February half term – Monday 16th February to Friday 20th February

Last day of Spring Term Thursday 2nd April

Nursery closed from Friday 3rd April and re-opens for children who attend all year round on Monday 13th April. Term-time only children return after the Easter holidays w/c 20th April.

All of our term dates / closures are available to view on our Parent app – Please Click Content and then Events and you can add them all to your mobile phone calendar.

Miss Rowlands – Maternity Leave

Miss Rowlands starts her maternity leave at the end of the month, her last day is Friday 30th January. I am sure you will all join us in wishing Beth a happy and healthy maternity leave, and congratulate her on her growing family!

Sound of the Week

To all our new parents ~ Letters and Sounds is a six-phase programme designed to help teach children to read and spell with phonics. At Nursery we will be concentrating on Phase One. The aim of this phase is to foster children's speaking and listening skills as preparation for learning to read with phonics. Parents can play a vital role in helping their children develop these skills, by encouraging their children to listen carefully and talk extensively about what they hear, see and do.

Please have a look on our parent app for more information on Letters and Sounds – under 'Useful Links' – 'Literacy' – 'What is Phonics'.

Each week we have a 'Sound of the Week', for instance the sound of the week for the week commencing 5th January is 'L', we ask parents to help their child to bring in something from home beginning with the letter 'L' for our sound box. Please see below for subsequent weeks thereafter. (Please don't bring anything of value as items could go missing).

W/c 5th January – 'L'

w/c 12th January – 'F'

w/c 19th January – 'B'

w/c 26th January – 'S'

w/c 2nd February – 'A'

Nursery Rhyme of the week

Reading, reciting and singing nursery rhymes are an excellent way to help children get ready to read. When a child chants a rhyme repeatedly, they develop key pre-reading skills such as the ability to hear the distinct sounds that make up words, discern sound and word patterns and broaden their vocabulary. Studies have shown that the more nursery rhymes a child knows, the easier it will be for children to learn to read. The nursery rhyme of the week will be sung at singing time, and we encourage parents to sing the nursery rhyme at home with their child.

Below is a list of the next few Nursery Rhymes of the Week;

This week the nursery rhyme will be 'Five little snowmen'.

w/c 12th January it will be 'Five little monkeys'.

W/c 19th January – 'The Grand ole Duke of York'

w/c 26th January - 'One, two buckle my shoe'.

w/c 2nd February – 'Incy Wincy Spider'

Take a look at our Parent app under 'Useful Links' – 'Communication and Language' – 'Nursery Rhymes'.

Word of the Week

The staff incorporate the 'Word of the week' into normal routines and activities throughout the day, and we ask parents to join in at home to develop their child's vocabulary. We have been very impressed with the children using the 'Word of the Week' in the correct context whilst playing with their friends. Please let a member of staff know if your child has been using any of the words of the week at home.

w/c 5th January – Thrilled

w/c 12th January - estimate

w/c 19th January – independent

w/c 26th January – courageous

w/c 2nd February – attention

Teaching children new words is so important, please take a look on our Parent app under 'Useful Documents' – 'Communication and Language' – 'Teaching Children New Words'.

Handwriting Development in Early Years

Ever wonder why your child has a hard time holding a pencil, writing, or drawing? The photo on the right is a pre-schooler's hand, the one on the left is a 7-year-olds.

Notice the bone development difference.



The best way to help your child is to strengthen their hands and fingers. Play with playdoh, paint, play in the sand, bath time pouring and scooping water

and lots and lots of large movements catching balls, swirling ribbons and joining in with action rhymes

Main Focus for Learning and Development - PSED and Mathematics

This half term we will be focusing on Personal, Social and Emotional area of Learning and Development (PSED), which will involve settling new children into nursery, developing strong child/key person relationships, learning routines and boundaries, and encouraging friendships.

Children's PSED is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm, and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate, and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

We have lots of ideas for supporting children's PSED at home on our Parent Connect app, just click 'Content' on the home page then 'Home Learning' and then scroll down to PSED.

This half term we will also be focusing on Mathematics. Please find some learning activities at the end of this newsletter and take a look on our Parent app, under 'Useful Links' and 'Useful Documents' – 'Mathematics' which has an abundance of simple math's activities for you to do with your child at home, to help them develop their math's skills.

Staff Roles

For your information, please take note of the following staff roles below:

Helen Brockliss – Nursery Manager: Designated Safeguarding Officer, Health and Safety Officer

Jane Handyside – Deputy Manager: Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer, Equalities Named Coordinator (ENCO),

Emma Rawlinson - Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer

Louise Leonard: Parental Involvement Coordinator (PICO)

Nursery Policies and Procedures

Please make yourself familiar with our policies and procedures which you can view from our website and through our Parent app. In particular, our safeguarding, late collection and non-collection of a child, lost child policies and procedures, and Complaints and Compliments.

If you do not have access to the internet, please request to view these policies at nursery or ask to be provided with copies.

If you have any queries or would like to contribute your ideas regarding our policies and procedures, please feel free to speak to a member of staff.

The policy of the month is 'Nutrition and Mealtimes', please view the policy through our parent app or on our website.

New Years Resolutions

- **Better Health Campaign**

The new year is a good time for making resolutions, not just for yourself, but for your family. Finding ways to improve their health is one of the best resolutions you could make.

The government's Better Health campaign helps families to eat better and move more. It includes a 'scan, swipe and swap' feature for the NHS Food Scanner App, which provides a simple solution to help families maintain a healthier diet. Families can scan products from their shop, and the app will suggest healthier alternatives to help make an easy swap next time you shop. The app uses a 'Good Choice' badge to help signpost people to healthier food and drinks in line with the government's dietary recommendations for added sugar, saturated fat and salt.

It is so important that children reduce the amount of sugary, fatty and salty foods they eat to help them stay healthy and reduce the risk of health problems such as diabetes and tooth decay.

For more information on the campaign and/or to download the free NHS Food Scanner App go to our Parent app - Click Content then Useful Links and search for Healthy Eating

- **3 simple New Year's resolutions that could save a child's life**

New Year's resolutions can be a bit too ambitious, especially when you're a busy parent. But these super-simple New Year's resolutions are easy to adopt and could save a child's life.

1. Fit blind cord safety devices

In just 15 seconds a young child can lose consciousness if they get tangled in a blind cord. They can stop breathing in 2-3 minutes. Yet something as simple as a £1 cleat hook and some strong adhesive can help to stop that happening.

Please take a moment to check that any blind cords in your home have suitable safety devices. These include cleat hooks, tidies or tensioners.

If there isn't one fitted, fit one yourself or you could ask a friend or relative to help. (Guide available on our Parent app [Click - Content – Useful Links – Accident Prevention](#))

If drilling into the wall is a problem you can use a strong adhesive, just make sure you're satisfied that it's securely attached.

And, remember that small children love to climb and can often get higher than you think. So, where possible, move furniture away from cords and chains.

Learn more about blind cord safety on our parent app. ([Click - Content – Useful Links – Accident Prevention](#))

2. Do a button battery hunt

If your child swallows a button battery, the damage can be life-altering or even fatal. So, it's important you know where they are in your home. And, now is the perfect time for a quick search.

Since Christmas you've likely had lots of new products and toys come into the house which button batteries may power. Perhaps some presents even came with spare batteries that are now loose and need a safe home?

Remember:

- Check that battery compartments in toys are secure
- Keep household products with easy to access batteries out of reach of children
- Watch out for loose spare batteries in open packets or sent with new products

- Keep flat batteries out of reach and recycle them as soon as you can. Then, make a commitment to continue to #BeBatteryAware by always storing them safely and checking any new products that come into your home.

Learn more about button batteries on our parent app. (Click - Content – Useful Links – First Aid & Accident Prevention)

3. Set a recurring reminder to test your smoke alarms

With busy family life, it can be hard to get into the habit of testing your smoke alarms (monthly is best) but it only takes seconds to do, and it could just save you and your loved ones' lives.

You are 8 times more likely to die from a fire if you don't have a working smoke alarm in your house.

Smoke alarms are especially important if a fire starts at night. You may think you'll smell the smoke and wake up. But in fact, breathing in the thick, black smoke from a fire can kill people so quickly that they never wake up. Smoke alarms give you the vital minutes you need to get out before your home is filled with smoke.

That's why you should set a recurring reminder to test your smoke alarm. And, whilst you're at it, don't forget to test your carbon monoxide detectors too.

Kind regards

Helen Brockliss

Nursery Manager

Helping your child learn at home in

MATHS

In the street



- Recognising bus numbers
- Number plate hunt. Who can find a 7? Add the numbers up.
- Comparing door numbers
- Counting – how many lampposts on the way to school?

Doing the washing

- Counting in 2s – matching shoes
- Sorting by colour and size.
- Matching/pairing up socks.
- Find four shoes that are different sizes. Can you put them in order.





Time

- What day is it yesterday, today, tomorrow?
- Use timers, phones and clocks to measure short periods of time.
- Count down 10/ 20 seconds to get to the table/ into bed etc.
- Recognising numbers on the clock. If you cover a number, what number was missing?



Food!

- Can you cut your toast into 4 pieces? Can you cut it into triangles?
- Setting the table. Counting the right number of plates etc. How many more do we need?
- Can you make shapes/ patterns out of the knives and forks. Can you put them in the right place in the drawers?
- Helping with the cooking by measuring and counting ingredients.
- Setting the timer.
- Positional language at dinner time: what is on the rice, where are the carrots etc?

Going shopping

- Reading price tags
- Counting items into the basket
- Finding and counting coins
- Comparing weights – which is heavier



Measuring

- Are you taller than a ...?
 - Marking height on the wall.
 - Cut hand shapes out of paper.
- How many hands long is the couch?
How long is the table? Which is longer?
- Who has the biggest hands in our family?
 - How many steps from the gate to

the front door?

Shapes

- Cut a potato into shapes (circles, triangle etc). Use with paint to make pictures and patterns.
- Cut out shapes from coloured paper/newspaper and arrange into pictures.
- Shape hunt: Can you find a square in your house (windows etc), a circle ...



Playdough

Here's a simple recipe:

1 cup of plain flour

1 cup of water

1 tablespoon cooking oil

2 teaspoons cream of tartar

Half a cup of salt

***food colouring and essences
(optional)***

Put all ingredients in a large saucepan, and heat slowly, stirring all the time until it forms a ball. Keep it wrapped in clingfilm or in a covered tub to stop it drying out.

Then

- Make numerals and shapes
- Sort shapes into groups, or order by size
- Make long and short wiggly snakes.



Games

- Putting cards into piles
- Jigsaws (you can make your own by cutting up a magazine picture)
- Snap (matching pairs) or Happy Families (collect 4 of a kind)



- Snakes and ladders or other simple dice games.
- Adding numbers on two dice.
- Bingo, with numbers or shapes
- Hopscotch

Number rhymes and songs

*Eg: 5 little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
Mummy called the doctor and the doctor
said
"No more monkeys jumping on the bed!"
4 little monkeys jumping on the bed ...*



Your child can teach you lots more or try this website which has the words and sings it for you:
http://www.nurseryrhymes4u.com/NURSERY_RHYMES/COUNTING.html

Internet maths games:

www.mathszone.co.uk

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/maths/>

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/online_math_games.html

www.sesamestreet.org

