



Out of the Pot!



Summer 2021



Mud carnival in an Early Years setting in Fiji.
What's your reaction - awesome or horrified?!

What have we learned from the pandemic, so far?

It's been a while since our last newsletter. Like everyone else, we have been somewhat preoccupied with global events over the last 12 months. We have referred to our experience as riding the coronacoaster—waiting for the next unexpected big dip. We reflect that it is this constant state of uncertainty, the insecurity of those things that we maybe formerly took for granted, that has resulted in our communal sense of anxiety. I heard of an incident at a play area recently where a 4 year old suddenly aware of another child's presence, turned and ran back to his carer shouting, "I'm not allowed to go near other people." I find this heartbreaking. Fortunately, across Paint Pots, the consistent positive we have witnessed is children's resilience. It is a precious part of their lives that they inhabit a small world of play free from the worries of pandemics, politics and pollution. For us adults, to be invited to engage with children's imaginations, creativity and sense of fun is a wonderful privilege. It reminds us that connection is at the core of our humanity—none of us thrives with social distancing. Perhaps our children are teaching us what really matters?

Early Years Foundation Stage Changes

We live in a world filled with acronyms—3,4, sometimes 5 letter codes that stand for something! I remember many years ago working for a large company that had so many that they published an internal dictionary of theirs. Some of them had more than one meaning! Well, Early Years is no exception and our key acronym is EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage). This is the document that describes both the care and the educational framework that all Early Years providers must adhere to. It lays out what we must do by law as well as the 7 areas of development that we must ensure all children progress in whilst with us and on, up to the end of their first year in school. These are the headings under which we share our observations of your children with you on Tapestry. From September, we will be using a revised EYFS. Part of the reason for this new version is to ensure teachers spend less time recording what children do and more time being with and supporting them. Rather than ticking off a list of what children can do, we want our teams to use their knowledge of your child to help them progress. We will of course continue to work in partnership with you and value your input. We will celebrate your child's achievements and capture examples of learning but it may be that there will be less Tapestry posts than previously.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to stay calm and to return to a calm state when stressed (feeling anxious, angry, or withdrawn). In order to achieve self-regulation—to be able to calm ourselves, we need to be able to recognise our emotions—what do happy and sad feel like? We also need to learn how to manage these emotions. The immature brain relies on its instinctive parts to react to stresses—perhaps lashing out or crying uncontrollably. Sometimes this can result in a tantrum. This is not bad behaviour. It is evidence of a brain that is not capable of controlling itself yet. Our children need us to co-regulate their emotions. They learn how to control themselves by the way we support them. If we can be their calm, we are helping bring them into a state of calmness and teaching them how to do this for themselves. What does this look like? For some children it is loving touch, cuddles and soothing. Others respond to a soft, soothing tone of voice. As parents, we know our children best and what unconditional love is for them. Research shows that more than anything we can do for our children, helping them to self-regulate underpins the achievement of positive goals in life such as maintaining good relationships, learning and maintaining wellbeing.

CHECKLIST OF OUTDOOR CHALLENGES

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| 1 Climb a tree | 20 Make a mud slide | 37 Check out the crazy creatures in a rock pool |
| 2 Roll down a really big hill | 21 Eat blackberries growing in the wild | 38 Bring up a butterfly |
| 3 Camp out in the wild | 22 Take a look inside a tree | 39 Catch a crab |
| 4 Build a den | 23 Visit an island | 40 Go on a nature walk at night |
| 5 Skim a stone | 24 Feel like you're flying in the wind | 41 Plant it, grow it, eat it |
| 6 Run around in the rain | 25 Make a grass trumpet | 42 Go wild swimming |
| 7 Fly a kite | 26 Hunt for fossils and bones | 43 Go rafting |
| 8 Catch a fish with a net | 27 Watch the sun wake up | 44 Light a fire without matches |
| 9 Eat an apple straight from a tree | 28 Climb a huge hill | 45 Find your way with a map and compass |
| 10 Play conkers | 29 Get behind a waterfall | 46 Try bouldering (a form of rock climbing) |
| 11 Throw some snow | 30 Feed a bird from your hand | 47 Cook on a campfire |
| 12 Hunt for treasure on the beach | 31 Hunt for bugs | 48 Try abseiling |
| 13 Make a mud pie | 32 Find some frogspawn | 49 Play geocache (A hi-tech form of hide and seek using a GPS receiver to locate hidden treasure) |
| 14 Dam a stream | 33 Catch a butterfly in a net | 50 Canoe down a river |
| 15 Go sledging | 34 Track wild animals | |
| 16 Bury someone in the sand | 35 Discover what's in a pond | |
| 17 Set up a snail race | 36 Call an owl | |
| 18 Balance on a fallen tree | | |
| 19 Swing on a rope swing | | |



Let's Get Outside!

Well, we have actually experienced a few warmer days recently (not that weather is a barrier to getting outside in our opinion). Coupled with the new freedoms we have to explore our area, here are some suggestions of (free) outdoor activities over the coming months. Why not share your adventures with us on Tapestry? We love a photo or a video—they are a great way for us to start conversations with your children about what they have been doing at home. Often these casual chats spark interests in the group and provide learning about all sorts of things—the natural world, science, history, climate change, ecology, independence building, risk taking and keeping ourselves safe, our families and our culture. We have loved exploring the green areas in our city over lockdown. Why not let us know where your favourite local walks / play areas are?

Thank You

Whether you have recently joined the Paint Pots family or you have been with us for many years, we really appreciate your support, patience and understanding as we continue to navigate the changes that Covid has brought. I suppose one of the key differences is not admitting adults into the building, with your children being received / passed to you, at the door. There are several aspects to this—

Queuing—at peak times, it can take a while to receive and settle each child, particularly if he or she is anxious about separation. We want to make sure that we get this important transition right and that our focus is on you and your child, rather than rushing through the process to get everyone in as quickly as possible. Thank you for being patient and understanding when this means you are sometimes delayed waiting for your turn. It can sometimes mean there is a pressure on our very limited drop-off spaces for vehicles. If you are driving, the nearer to your child's session start time you are able to arrive, the more availability of parking spaces we will be able to maintain.

Communication—messages at start and end of day are now delivered from behind masks, at the door. We recognise the limitations of this. You are always welcome to phone, email, ask for feedback. We will arrange for your child's key person to discuss anything about your child's care and development with you. And of course, Tapestry is a great means of passing information between Paint Pots and home.

Suncream We continue to follow public health Covid guidance regarding the application of suncream, ensuring we are not sharing bottles between children from different families. On sunny days, we need to ensure your child is protected from the sun. Please provide him/her with a hat and suncream for us to apply. For their own safety, we are unable to allow children to go outside without protection. Thank you for your support in this.

We are delighted to let you know of the safe arrival of Maxine and her partner Steve's baby, Jack. Jack arrived on 30th March, weighing 7lb 5 oz. He is a much longed for baby brother to Rhiley and Harrison and we are pleased to let you know that both Max and Jack are doing very well.



We would also like to introduce you to our newest member of staff Andrea, Andrea has a marvellous 18 years of experience in early years and is passionate when it comes to ensuring that every child has the ability to thrive in the early years. Andrea has an NVQ level 3 in childcare and is our settings SENco (special educational needs co-ordinator). I'm sure you will join us in welcoming Andrea to our Paint Pots family.

We have got off to a wonderful start of the summer term, we are really enjoying having such a large garden and the children have been doing a great job of welcoming local wildlife by making bird feeders and a bug hotel. Karen has kindly brought in some tomato and strawberry plants that the children have enjoyed nurturing from seed, we have watched in fascination as they have sprouted in our greenhouse and are almost now hardy enough to transport into the vegetable patch that we have been working on.

We have also been pleased to see that the seeds many children planted and took home to care for as part of their Easter break home learning challenge have grown, Riley's runner bean has now been moved to her family's allotment, Lottie's bean grew some chocolate eggs much to her delight! And here's Bella showing us her fantastic beanstalk.

If you are able to support in our vegetable patch in any way we would be extremely grateful.



We are really pleased to share that one of our families has won a Blue Star Community Hero award! Freddie's Mum, Gemma was nominated by members of her community for collecting food and toiletries and making them into care packages and distributing them to families across Thornhill and Harefield. She also hand delivered fish and chips to some elderly neighbours that were isolating. Gemma said she was overwhelmed at the generosity of others and had food piled up in her house to deliver to families, this is no mean feat to a busy Mum of 4 boys! Gemma's prize was to have her photograph blown up on the back on Thornhill's Blue Star buses - Gemma reports that she is still not sure of how much she appreciates this this sentiment!

Congratulations Gemma, you are a ray of sunshine. We completely agree with a member of your community that reported that you bring the rainbow after the storm.

Here's Freddie and Gemma out supporting their community.

