



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 | |



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.

It has been such a strange year and we have had some staff changes in amongst it all.

The children have coped so well with the changes and the new routines.

We said goodbye to Charlotte, Declan and Sara who have moved on to pastures new and this week, Shahanara who has just gone on maternity leave. She will be followed at the end of June by Rosie who is also going on maternity leave—we must stop employing people who love children!

Since the last newsletter we have been joined by Rosie, Abi, Charlotte, Summer and Emily into our little family at Orchard Lane.

We look forward to welcoming you back inside the building when we are told we are able to—hopefully not too far into the future. There are several changes we have made recently which you will not have had the chance to see including the garden and new lighting.

New lighting has been installed throughout the building. Not only does it brighten everything up but it is also far more energy efficient.

The garden is still in the process of being re-arranged. The children have been planting seeds which are starting to grow much to their excitement. They bounce into my office each day to give me a progress report. It is very exciting to anticipate what will grow and what they will produce.

We have welcomed lots of new children to the Orchard Lane all of whom are settling in really well especially since we have been unable to do our usual settling in visits.

We are going to start taking the children back out in small groups into the local community for walks and to practice our Highway Code. You may well see us out and about with our high visibility waistcoats which the children love to wear.

It is a relief for the builders opposite to have finally gone—not that they were any bother, in fact the children were fascinated by the various lorries, trucks and machines but it is nice to have a little less noise and activity—for now! We know that there are plans for more redevelopment in the area.