



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.

We have had lots of exciting changes happening at our setting, including some environment updates to the rooms and also welcoming some new staff to our setting. We have welcomed Jess as our new Toddler Room leader whilst our lovely Megan is on maternity leave and Emily and Sophie make up the toddler room team.

We will be welcoming Sophie back to toddlers from her maternity leave in the middle of May too.

Baby Room news

The children have enjoyed lots of exciting activities over the past few months as you have seen on Tapestry. They have had Irish dancing, at the zoo activities and lots and lots of messy play!

We are very excited about our outside babies play area updates which the team are currently working on (in their own time), including the addition of a mark marking area, a planting area, a small world play area as well as a new sandpit. We can't wait for the children to experience these new facilities!



Toddler Room news



The children have adapted amazingly to the changes of staff in this room and there are many interesting activities going on in here. They have been learning about vegetables and being healthy through a story called Oliver's vegetables. From this, the children have discovered some different vegetables to taste as well as being offered the opportunity to print using vegetables. The children even grew cress. They are now listening to the Supertato story and playing with frozen peas, capes and potatoes! Lots of learning—the names of different vegetables, likes and dislikes, tastes, creativity, textures, healthy eating, where food comes from, superheroes.....



Preschool Room News

Catherine and the team have been making some changes to the environment in the preschool room, we have added lots of loose parts* play and this has really sparked the children's imaginations. Lots of super role playing and making creations happen here.

* Loose parts play is about having a variety of 'loose parts' i.e. materials which can be used to construct their own ideas and to decide how they interpret the materials they are given to play with to enhance creativity when playing. This enables children to use their imagination and natural or other generic resources to represent items e.g. a fir cone becomes a cake.



Recently we have made a construction area in the preschool garden for the children, complete with real signs. This has proven very popular.



All the children have been coming in and telling us that they have been to the zoo, the farm and met up in the park with friends, so lovely to hear the excitement in their voices as they re-tell their stories. Lovely to be getting back to normal slowly but safely!