



## February / March 2023 Newsletter

**THIS NEWSLETTER CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DECISIONS  
RISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETING – PLEASE READ!!!**

### Opening Hours

- **Holidays**

Over this financial year we have run a trial to be open all year round – during school holidays – instead of being termtime only, as a way of trying to see if we could improve our child numbers and financial situation. We ran sessions over the summer holiday and were fully open during the October and February half terms. Unfortunately, this has made a considerable loss on each occasion.

At the committee meeting the decision was made to revert to termtime opening only. This will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, so we will not be open during the school Easter Holidays (3<sup>rd</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> April).

Whilst the majority of our families have not used our holiday opening, we know that this will pose a problem for some families. We apologise if this is the case for you – we have tried really hard to promote our new opening hours, but our financial situation is very tight and we cannot afford to risk continuing to making a loss in future school holidays. Please talk to us if this is going to be difficult for you.

One thing we talked about during the committee meeting was the possibility of running a Summer Club for two weeks of the long summer holiday, which is the most difficult one for working families to cover. We will look into this in the summer term and will run it if enough people book in.

- **Wednesdays**

Our term-time numbers are excellent and we are almost full for some sessions, which is fantastic. This means that we are looking to open on Wednesdays after the Easter Holidays. We will talk to each of you individually over the next few weeks, so have a think in advance about the days you would like your child/ren to come from April. As soon as we are sure it will be financially viable we will confirm this change.

## Fees

We look at our fees for each financial year. Last year a decision was made to freeze our fees, so they have not gone up for two years – indeed for families committed to the year-round trial fees actually went down. We discussed fees at length because we are very aware that finances are difficult for many of us at the moment and we do not want to increase the strain on our families. However, government funding for 3 & 4 year olds has barely increased this year, whilst the minimum wage is increasing dramatically; as are our bills for electricity, insurance, ground rent etc.. In order to remain a viable business we are therefore going to have to increase our fees from 1<sup>st</sup> April:

Hourly rate for all unfunded children / hours in excess of funded entitlement – £6.00

Contribution towards consumables for funded children (money we receive from government funding must be spent on education) – 50p per half-day session

Please speak to us confidentially if these increases will be difficult for you.

-----

## Our Learning

The next few weeks bring lots of opportunities for children to learn about their world, with Pancake Day, Mothers Day, and Easter as specific events, and with all the wonderful signs around us that spring is beginning to arrive.

There are also two events happening that we will mark in Esklets:

- **World Book Day, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March**

We love stories! We intend to celebrate World Book Day by snuggling up with our favourite books. We would love children to bring a favourite story from home to share with us. If children would like to dress up as a character from a story they are very welcome to, but do not feel under pressure to do this if they don't want to. If your child doesn't attend on Thursdays they are welcome to bring a book / dress up on Friday instead!

- **Comic Relief, Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March**

The Early Years Comic Relief theme this year is Bluey (the TV show). Dress up as Bluey, wear something red, or wear something that makes you feel happy. We will take part in the Bluey Keepy-uppy challenge and have some themed activities, including baking. This year Comic Relief are asking for donations via Just Giving and have created a page for us

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rednoseday23-esklets-playgroup> I'll share this on facebook too nearer the time.

## Preschool Assistant Post

We have extended the deadline for applications until 28<sup>th</sup> February. Please tell anyone you think might like to work in our lovely setting!

## Early Years Funding

If your child turns 3 between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March, you will be entitled to at least 15 hours of funded childcare per week, starting from April. You may be eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare. To check what you are entitled for, you need to visit this website

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk). All 30-hour codes must be applied for before 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Please make sure you let us know if you can access the 30 hour funding as you need to fill out a funding form. The code needs to be validated by Esklets so we can access the funding for the summer term.

Anyone already claiming the 30 hours funding, please look out for your renewal emails. Any code that is not re-validated cannot be used and you will have to pay for your child's hours.

## Tax-Free Childcare

Do you know about the Government's Tax-Free Childcare Scheme? It is a scheme to help families with childcare costs. If you go onto the childcare choices website, you can find out if you are eligible. A lot of families don't realise they are eligible – for every £8 you pay towards your childcare costs, the government will top it up to £10. You can claim this from when your child is born up to when they are 11.

## DIARY DATES:

Danby Fire Station visit. We are waiting for confirmation from the fire station, but this is probably going to be a Tuesday morning in the second half of March. All children will be welcome to join us – if it isn't their usual day an adult MUST accompany them. In order to be able to do this we will be asking for volunteers to help us walk there safely. Further information to follow.

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

World Book Day.

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March

Comic Relief

End of term

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March

Start of Summer term

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April

Sorry for a long and information-filled newsletter! Congratulations on getting to the end!!  
Thank you for your continued support.