

St. Mary's Pre-School, February 2020

Our Forest School provision continues to grow. We are doing an extra morning for those children who want to do it twice a week, enabling us to offer more spaces in the main pre-school. We also offered a Forest Fun Holiday club in the summer holiday for school aged children at the Scout site in Colgate. This could not officially be called 'forest school' as it was not an ongoing provision but it enabled some children to extend experiences and skills from previous forest school sessions and other children to have an introduction to what we do. We hope to offer this again in the Easter and Summer holidays this year.

We have also continued our link with the Age Concern Centre at Lavinia House. The Wednesday afternoon children visited every three weeks last year and building up relationships with the older people over that time so that they would ask about them by name if someone was missing. This year, with a new group of children, it has been lovely to see the children arrive and head straight for a particular lady they know will read a story to them or a gentleman who loves to play 'Mr Potato Head' with them. Parents have commented that the attitude of their children to older people has become more caring as a result. Over February & March we had display in the library showing some of the things we do together along with our dinosaur and volcano activities.

We have a strong team of 12 staff members plus a growing band of faithful volunteers from the church who come to play with the children, wash up, help at forest school sessions or weave ivy bunting for our forest school site. The staff do their best to support not just the children but their families as well, directing them to other support services, offering parenting courses, helping them to make connections with other families and of course, the church. Parents have said how much they value the continuation of provision provided by St. Mary's for their families, with Baptism, Little Footprints, Kairos, the Pre-School, Who Let the Dad's Out & other events, Lighthouse and beyond.

Difficulties the pre-school has experienced this year include disappointment over the lack of progress with the Barn project, which was to enable us to have a 'purpose built' venue while also bringing in revenue for the parish. We have also experienced extra challenges with the Guide Hall premises during January and February after the garden wall collapsed, making the garden inaccessible. With kindness from the school, Lisa's family and volunteers, however, we have managed to take the children out each day as we are required to do, and we are now able to play in a small area of the Guide Hall garden again.

We are looking forward to some fundraising events again which will involve the whole church family. The '5K and fun day' in May will include a 10K as well this year and we are hoping to set up an escape room at the end of the summer which will involve the school as well.

Please 'like' us on [Facebook.com/stmarysnurseryhorsham](https://www.facebook.com/stmarysnurseryhorsham) if you want to see more of what we do.

Karen Inglis Taylor