

I have recently taken on the role of Head of Early Years and am thoroughly enjoying meeting the staff and children in all our nurseries. I'm looking forward to working with my growing team of experienced Early Years Managers to support our nursery teams and develop better childcare practices.



As a trained teacher, experienced Nursery Manager and working mother of three children myself, I understand what an important decision it is to choose a nursery that you trust. We ensure that all the decisions we make reflect the fact that we wish to meet the needs of all the children in our care. At kidsunlimited we have 26 years of learning and experience behind us, but make sure we balance that with being reflective about what we do in order to make the right changes where necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the programme developments we have been undertaking to ensure that our curriculum remains stimulating and engaging for your children, watch out for **ku:gardening** and **ku:cookery** in your nursery.

Our partnership with parents is vitally important to me and I'm introducing this quarterly newsletter to further develop the parent / nursery partnership. I hope you enjoy it and I would love to hear any suggestions you have for content of our future ones. Please email your suggestions to: marketing@kidsunlimited.co.uk.

Abi Golland, Head of Early Years



Look out for these new programmes in your nursery...



ku:gardening has been launched in all nurseries. New gardening equipment has been delivered with seeds, soil, planters and pots and has been greeted with huge enthusiasm by children and staff alike.

ku:gardening aims to encourage children's natural interests and curiosity and helps them understand the world around them, building upon the principles of the six areas of learning (see inside).

Our **ku:cookery** programme is designed to help children understand different tastes and textures. The practical understanding of what happens when you bake food and change it from cold to hot or runny to solid helps children explore "what happens if ..." and the basic scientific concepts associated with it. Weighing, measuring and counting all form part of **ku:cookery**. **ku:cookery** also educates children on the benefits of healthy eating and encourages and supports the development of good habits that will accompany them going into school.

Art and craft at home

I'm sure the idea of art and craft at home for the under 5's fills most parents with horror. Thoughts of painty/sticky hands on furniture and walls and endless hours of seeking appropriate resources is not how many of us see the best way to spend our free time with our children.

But art and craft for children isn't just about creating, making a mess or just having fun – there are some important educational benefits too. It develops their co-ordination and concentration skills, as well as helping with maths and developing and exploring their imagination. Even the most simple crafts can help to develop some or all of these skills. A variety of art and crafts is an ideal way for a child to communicate ideas and express feelings.

But why do this at home when your nursery seems to have all the 'bits' and they don't mind the mess? For children to be enabled to do some of the things they do at nursery, at home, helps develop their sense of self-worth, their time at nursery becomes more important because they see it is valued by you. It also enables the child to do things just for themselves and you; at nursery they are sharing resources and adult time.

Art and craft however, does not have to be a nightmare nor does it need many hours of your time. One of the easiest ways to start is to create a box of craft materials that your child can go to freely and later another that is used when accompanied by an adult. Below is a typical list that each may contain:

Freely accessible box....

- Circular pasta - macaroni etc
- String
- Masking tape
- Paper, cardboard etc
- Safety scissors
- Hole punch
- Glue stick
- Small blackboard and chalks with duster
- Any textured or shiny papers such as sweet wrappers, aluminium foil
- Small boxes/ egg cartons
- Note pad and pencils
- Eraser
- Sticky shapes
- Pipe cleaners and straws
- Front of old greetings cards

Adult supervised box...

- Washable felt tips
- Paint in small bottles or blocks
- Variety of brushes – thick, thin
- Playdough with shape cutters and roller
- PVA glue
- Paper for painting/drawing – a roll of lining paper, textured wallpaper is inexpensive.



Playdough recipe

- 1 Cup Flour
- 1/2 Cup Salt
- 1 Cup Water
- 2 Teaspoons Cream of Tartar
- 1 Tablespoon Mazola Oil

Add food colouring 1 drop of what ever colour you would like, or mix the colours. If you wish to perfume the dough add a few drops of any essential oil when the playdough is cooked and cooled, working it through the dough until mixed.

Warm all ingredients in a pot on the stove on low, stir until it gels and then you have your playdough. This can be used for weeks if kept in a sealed storage container.

Your child's nursery will also be happy to offer information and ideas about craft activities that are happening in individual rooms to enable you and your child to develop these at home.

The six areas of learning

The EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) identifies that children's learning and development can be categorised into six areas - these are Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication, Language and Literacy, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Problem solving, Reasoning and Numeracy, Physical Development and Creative Development. We therefore plan our environment and children's play around these six areas. Over the next year, we will explain a little about each area and how you can engage with your child and support their learning.

During this edition, we have focussed on Knowledge and Understanding of the World and Creative Development.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World: Children have an understanding about the world in which they live. As adults we can find out about their interest and understanding of their local environment and community, and extend these experiences to help them to engage with the world around them, and give them an interest in learning more about it.

To support this area of learning you could:

- Go on 'collecting' walks: You could collect everything from natural objects to things you can hear or smell! If you go for a 'listening walk' or a 'smelly walk' - talk about all the things you can hear or smell, can you see them too? You could take pictures of the things you hear rather than physically collecting them, and make a scrap book when you get home.
- Children learn best through experiences and play: Allow them to be hands on, for babies this will be their hands and putting things in their mouth; older ones want to get in and on or simply do it themselves!
- Encourage their inquisitiveness: Help them by identifying and explaining what things are and how they work, if you don't know try to find out together.
- Conduct your own science experiments: Cooking and gardening are very exciting when exploring what might happen next. Remember cooking could be making a potion and gardening could be raking leaves or making a mud pie in the garden!
- Go bug collecting: All you need is an old plastic tub, and a magnifying glass if you've got one. Once you've collected your bug, you could find out more about it on the internet or at the local library.
- Make a family tree: You could draw a picture or collect photographs of people who are important to your child, this may extend to outside your family – your neighbour, your cat, the postman or the lady in the sweet shop!!
- Become an engineer: Building towers and then smashing them down may seem destructive, but is an important part of learning about how things work and how they fit together. Roll cars down ramps, under bridges and through tunnels, build houses of lego.



Creative Development: Children are creative from birth, by listening to children and watching their play we can develop and support their imaginative and creative play. This develops their confidence when responding to experiences and expressing and communicating their ideas.

- Music is always a favourite and a great way for children to express themselves: have a variety from traditional children's music to jazz, classical, soul, etc.
- Make your own music: kitchens pans and wooden spoons always go down well!
- Make a dressing up box: with hats, bags, costume jewellery shoes and clothes.
- Make an art box: exploring and expression through paint, crayons, pencils, play dough, stamps, etc. Allow them to get messy! See our Art and Craft at home section.

Parent tips

Within each issue we will be sharing our experts hints and tips with you about some of these crucial topics. This issue ...**potty training**.

As experienced professionals we support and advise families when we feel a child is ready to start potty training. We discuss with the family the way in which we are all going to approach the transition to support the child, ensuring it is a positive and consistent experience.

Is your child ready?

- Do they recognise when they need to go, or can they tell you?
- Do they hold on for short periods to be able to wait to get to the bathroom?
- Do they independently undress and redress when they have used the bathroom?



What you could be doing:

- Praise your child when they make achievements, never punish for accidents or show your disappointment, it's all part of the learning process.
- As parents be patient, it's hard but important.
- Do not rush them, if it becomes a pressurised and / or negative experience it will be far more difficult for them to become independent. The consequence of this may be that they regress or rebel.
- Ask your child if they need to use the bathroom, often being engrossed in play can lead to forgetting.

Engage your child in the preparation:

- Buy the potty and pants together, and maybe a potty for their teddy or doll.
- Have the potty out for a while prior to actually starting training.
- Get your child used to sitting on it after you have changed them, before they go to bed or when they get out of the bath, etc.

Make this the routine you will follow when you actually start training, this will build on their confidence and eagerness to participate, teddy will enjoy it too!

Parent Know How



In line with our commitment to working in partnership, **kidsunlimited** will be supporting the September launch of the Parent Know How programme from the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Parent Know How brings together a range of free services developed to provide support and advice to everyone in a parenting role – mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with parental responsibility – by ensuring access to expert advice through existing telephone helplines or a new generation of services, delivered online and to mobile phones.

Look out for a wealth of parenting information on display in your child's nursery over the coming months on:

- Childhood nutrition – Breast-feeding, bottle-feeding, weaning your baby
- Childhood health and wellbeing
- Child safety e.g. at home, in the car
- Parents as partners in EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)
- Positive parenting

Don't miss out - get it by email

In the future we'd like to send out electronic versions of our newsletter to ensure you always receive your copy. Please email your address to us at marketing@kidsunlimited.co.uk, telling us your child's name and nursery or fill in the form at the bottom of the newsletter and return to your nursery.

Name:

Nursery:

Childs name:

Email address: