 **February 2021 Newsletter**

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are looking forward to welcoming all of the children back to Flowerbank ECC during the week beginning 22nd February and I wanted to take this opportunity again to thank you all sincerely for all your support and understanding for what has been a very different and challenging start to this year. Thank you for working alongside us last year to support the well-being of all our children, families and staff through all the recent changes due to COVID-19.

I would like to again, assure all our families that we are taking the utmost caution to ensure we are a COVID safe centre and the safety of all our children, staff and families are paramount.

We know that some families might be a bit nervous about coronavirus, so we wanted to share some of the information we have about how ELC settings are low risk environments, and some of the measures we are taking to keep this risk low.

Current evidence continues to show that children are less likely to contract and transmit coronavirus. This includes the new variant of the virus that you might have heard about.

**In Our Setting**

Here are some of the things we have already been doing to reduce the risk of transmission in our setting.

1. Spending lots of time outdoors in the fresh air
2. Keeping the children in small consistent groups
3. Regular hand washing
4. All staff wearing masks in communal areas

In addition, we have access to asymptomatic testing available for all staff.

**Changes for Parents**

We know that ELC settings are low risk environments for children. However, because we know this new variant is more infectious for everyone, it is more important than ever that we all do what we can to keep everyone in our setting as safe as possible. We know that the main risk is from adult to adult transmission, or an increase in community transmission. We’re therefore trying to really reduce any opportunities for adults to come into contact with each other, whether it’s staff:carer or carer:carer.

We are going to introduce a couple of new changes from 22 February. These will be:

1. Asking the children (where possible) to carry their own belongings, so that staff do not have to pass them to you, therefore please ensure only necessary items are in children’s bags to reduce the weight of the bag.
2. Renewing the markings at the gate to make sure parents and carers can stand 2m apart at pick up.
3. Continuing with phased drop off/pick up times to reduce congestion

We have been asked to share important information about some other things that you can do to reduce risk:

1. Keep wearing face coverings at pick up and drop off time.
2. Keep 2m apart from other adults (staff and parents/carers) at pick up and drop off time, and try not to stand in groups.
3. Try to come at your allocated time to reduce busy periods.
4. Think about wearing a mask in any busy areas on the way to drop off.
5. Stick to the guidance outside of Flowerbank ECC – so if you are having play dates, then keep them outdoors for now. For information on how the guidance applies to children and families, look at [www.parentclub.scot](http://www.parentclub.scot).
6. Please use the hand sanitiser that is available at all entrances.

**At Home**

It might seem strange that children can play together at their ELC setting all day, but cannot have indoor play dates at home. However, it is really important to remember that keeping the restrictions at home and across society is what is enabling us to reopen ELC at the moment. In addition, there are many precautions taken at our setting that families cannot always replicate. One of the main precautions is spending time outdoors in the fresh air. So if you want to meet up with another family, then please do so outdoors. It is more important than ever that we keep following the rules at home, as that is the best way to keep our ELC settings open.

**Online Learning Journals**

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all parents/carers for their increased engagement with their child’s learning journals. It has been lovely to see what you have all being doing during this recent lockdown and also thank you to all the staff for the variety of learning that has been posted on the journals to keep us all connected during this challenging time.

**Outdoor Play and Learning**

As we will be accessing outdoors for most of the session can we ask that children are suitably dressed for outdoor play. As we will also have our rooms well ventilated can parents also send their child with suitable indoor clothing.

**Reception Area**

Could all parents using the reception area for dropping off and picking up please pay particular attention to the maximum capacity for that area. The reaction area should **now** only have 2 families (1 adult per family) dropping off/picking up at any one time to allow our staff member to have a safe distance from all adults in this area.

**Online Registration**

The registration process for entitled 3 and 4 year olds is online this year and all parents of returning children are required to apply through this link and choose their preferred booking pattern/sessions:

[**https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/NurserySchoolPlaces/PreSchoolAdmissions/Eligibility/When-and-where-to-apply.aspx**](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/NurserySchoolPlaces/PreSchoolAdmissions/Eligibility/When-and-where-to-apply.aspx)

There is also a booklet that can be downloaded with information of the sessions that each centre is offering and this leaflet sets out the Council’s Policy for the allocation of early learning and childcare places. Can all parents also note a second choice when filling out the form.

**Cohort Groups:**

There have been a few staff changes this term and we have a new staff member who joined our 2-3 playroom. Louise has moved on to another ECC to take up a term time post and we would like to welcome Rachel to the team who took up her post in January. Cherry is changing from a part time post to a full time post with us and Rebecca from Playroom 1 has now finished up for maternity leave and we are looking forward to hearing news of her new arrival very soon.

**0-2 Room (Playroom 2)**

Greg and Morag

**0-3 Room (Playroom 3)**

Elizabeth, Rachel, Margaret, Cherry and Sharon

**Playroom 1 (3 & 4 year olds)**

Playroom 1 has 2 cohort groups this term and we have split the areas into 2 zones, one zone uses the large hall area as a playroom and has access to the main garden, the other zone is based in the main playroom with access to the side garden.

**Staff:**

Lindsay, Stacey, Katie and Natalie are in one zone

Steven, Christine, Andrea, Rebecca C and Stephanie are in the other zone.

If any parents have any queries or concerns please call the centre or if you want to ask your child’s keyworker a question there is also the option of posting a message on your child’s learning journey and the keyworker will respond to this.

*Thank you to all parents and carers for your continued support*

**From Margaret and all the Staff at Flowerbank ECC**