

Smarties Preschool and Out of Hours Club AGM 2018

Chairs Report

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for showing an interest in Smarties and taking the time to attend the AGM this evening.

Once again, we have experienced an extremely eventful 12 months with changes to personnel, our staffing structure, more Ofsted Inspections, and continuing Local Authority support.

Staffing

After our Ofsted inspection in September 2017, and with Katy our manager at the time deciding to step down, we looked to employ a Childcare Operations Manager. We interviewed shortly after the last AGM and there was a very energetic candidate that we were naturally drawn to. So in November 2017 Michelle commenced working at Smarties. Michelle took the time before Christmas to assess the situation and get to know staff, but in January she rallied the team to make some dramatic changes in the appearance of the internal environment. Instantly, there was less clutter and a more open feeling to the space, something noted by all who came through the door. A new work space was created to enable staff to keep on top of paper their work and filing, as well as the back room being turned into an area where children could undertake activities quietly either one-to-one with a keyperson or in small groups.

Michelle also tweaked the structure of the staff, making Rachel the Pre School deputy and Georgina the Out of School deputy. Over this period the team grew in confidence and their practitioner skills rose.

Michele has continued to worked tirelessly as the administration manager; bringing the policies of the setting up to date, and there are many, as well as maintaining and developing the communications between the setting and parents.

The Setting

In the October half term, we had the outside space transformed. Taking the old shrubs out from along the side and installing astro turf and a mud kitchen. This has enabled the area to be used more regularly and kept it cleaner and tidier. In the hot weather this summer we also had two gazebos donated enabling us to ensure that children could be outside, and these have extended the amount of time the children have been able to be out this Autumn.

We have been providing forest school, and have been enabling all children attending during the course of a week to participate in sessions. We are very proud to be able to offer this and that we have staff trained in running the sessions.

OFSTED

At this time last year, we had just had our second visit of 2017 from Ofsted were awaiting the report and inspector's judgement. At that time, we received an improved judgement of Requiring Improvement. Though this showed progress from May the staff and committee wanted to make progress quickly to become 'Good'.

Michelle quickly won the team over and an air of collegiate productivity emanated from the setting. In meetings it was noticeable that the staff were hungry to keep raising standards and 3 months in to 2018 they were chomping at the bit to have the inspectors come back and reevaluate the setting.

However, they did not return until September. The team demonstrated their abilities and met with the inspector. When I arrived to talk to the inspector she only had a couple of questions and the interview was over in minutes. I took this as a good sign that Michelle and the staff had managed to provide the inspector with all the information she required and that she had been impressed.

It turns out that I was correct the staff earned the 'Good' judgement that all of their efforts deserved.

I don't want to read the whole report, though I would happily, but it is worth noting a few of the highlights:

- **Staff know the children well and plan interesting learning experiences.**
- **Staff successfully promote children's language and literacy skills.**
- **Children are treated with respect and benefit from the staff's gentle and caring approach towards them.**
- **Staff are good role models for children. They provide a calm and consistent approach when managing children's behaviour.**
- **Children make good progress from their individual starting points and capabilities.**
- **A welcoming and friendly atmosphere greets all children and their families.**

Finances

I am going to leave the information about the finances to our Treasurer. Though it is important to note that the delay in having the Ofsted inspectors come back, and having the previous judgements hanging over us, has meant that we have not been able to advertise as we would like. These factors have an impact on our numbers this year, something we aim to change by publicising our new Good status. That reduction in numbers has then had an impact on Smarties income and our Treasurer will explain this further and the steps that are being taken to resolve our current situation.

Closing

I would like to close by thanking the staff for working so hard to implement the changes across the course of this year. Their efforts and team work in all aspects of Smarties has been what has got the setting back to 'Good'. I know from my own children's experiences that they enjoy attending Smarties, both the preschool and out of hours club, and have been always happy. I would also like to thank the members of the committee for all their efforts throughout the year.

It is rare for a village such as Steeple Morden to have a setting such as Smarties, which provides a full-time preschool, wrap around care for all ages and a holiday club. It is a key part of this and the wider community, so my last words are to ask you all to champion us to your friends, families, in your workplaces, even in the pub. Spread the word of the committed staff and happy children and the Good Ofsted judgement.