

Portobelo Avonhead Preschool and Nursery Newsletter

February 2017 News from the Nursery ...

Kia Ora and welcome to the New Year! This year in the Portobelo Avonhead Nursery we have rounded off our 'Papatuanuku' focus project and moved into a new project focus called 'Communication', such an important basis for happy and healthy living. Our focus will include both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication as we aim to encourage and develop the children's ability and confidence to express themselves in a variety of ways.



An important part of this project will be expression through the creative arts. Dancing, body language, sign language and artistic creative expression are all different ways of communicating and interpreting the ways in which others communicate and represent their experiences, emotions and feelings. We are planning to use the sensory elements of experiences such as painting to encourage the children's creativity and self-expression as they interact with the paint, first gaining control of the paintbrush, then developing the ability to produce art work that reflects their feelings, moods and emotions.



Group time experiences will focus more on verbal and printed language, as we extend the children's knowledge through experimenting with rhyme, alliteration, stories, and reading books. This exposure helps the children develop positive attitudes to literacy, as they develop an expectation that words, songs and books can delight, comfort and excite us. This attitude is the basis of a life-long love of reading and writing.

Music and songs will also support the tamariki to build relationships with both adults and children around them as they respond positively to others' willingness to participate. These social experiences

support children to initiate, maintain and enjoy relationships with others – all part of our Portobelo philosophy of 'children learning to be friends and make friends' and 'a place for everybody to participate and contribute in their own ways'.



Kind regards, Amber, Nakita, Leigh and Michelle

News from the Preschool ...

Welcome back to Portobelo Preschool for 2017, and we hope you are all enjoying summer. While some of our community took a break over the school holidays, others have been enjoying a relaxed Preschool programme. There have been several trips to the local park, where we have enjoyed practicing our physical skills in the sunny weather. At the park, we can swing, climb, rock, jump, run, skip, hop, and clamber on different types of equipment, which challenges both our bodies physically and our confidence mentally. Children learn to expand their boundaries, try new things, and discover just how much their bodies are capable of, as they gain control and strength. They are also learning new concepts such as how they can fit in spaces, gravity, speed and velocity. The teachers joined in too, testing themselves on their own limits and capabilities, all with a sense of good fun. We like to visit the park regularly, but need extra pairs of eyes and hands to make this possible. If you are available to come with us, please let a teacher know 😊



We are always keen to hear about what our whānau have done over the Christmas and Summertime break. If you have stories or photos to share, please see your child's focus teacher so we can add these to your children's profile books and they can share their adventures with their Portobelo friends.



We have launched our new group time initiative for 2017. Kura Club is the new name for our four-year-old group time programme. Kura (school) Club will focus on extending the interests and thinking of our older children. All kaiako (teachers) will have the opportunity to be responsible for this learning group in turn, and you will see exciting happenings as the children are encouraged to take more responsibility for leading their learning and that of the other Kura Club members. We started Kura Club

by looking at bones, x-rays, and skeletons - a current interest amongst our older boys. Keep an eye on the wall display which will capture this learning journey together.

As with other parts of our programme, Kura Club also provides an opportunity for our parents and whānau to contribute. Can you teach us a new song, maybe in a different language? Would you like to come in and tell us about your interesting job? Do you have a hobby you could teach, or show us about? Could you share your recent holiday experience with us? We are always interested in hearing from our families and incorporating home life with Portobelo. This helps strengthen the ties between preschool and home, and develops the sense of belonging children have from feeling part of a group.



Our project focus starting in February is Whānaungatanga. This loosely translates as 'relationships'. Relationships are important at Portobelo Preschool and we will be looking at ways to strengthen the relationships which children see around them every day. We will be celebrating relationships, and talking about the special people in our children's lives. We will be doing activities which encourage friendships and co-operation, as well as reciprocal learning - tukana teina. The best way to capture this intrinsic value is through photographs, so check out the display board above the mirror which celebrates examples of relationships in everyday life.

Our project focus starting in February is Whānaungatanga. This loosely translates as 'relationships'. Relationships are important at Portobelo Preschool and we will be looking at ways to strengthen the relationships which children see around them every day. We will be celebrating relationships, and talking about the special people in our children's lives. We will be doing activities which encourage friendships and co-operation, as well as reciprocal learning - tukana teina. The best way to capture this intrinsic value is through photographs, so check out the display board above the mirror which celebrates examples of relationships in everyday life.

Welcome & farewell – haere mai, haere rā ...



Welcome to the Nursery: Lachlan, Isla, Alice, Pontiff, Sofia and Orebwa

Welcome to the Preschool: Jade, Maxwell, Elisa, Ellie, Cecelia, Pheonix, Timothy and Linden

Welcome to the preschool from the nursery: Willow and Jhette

Welcome to our new Preschool teacher Rajshree. Rajshree joins us on the 16 February with a wealth of knowledge and experience and is a qualified and registered early childhood teacher. Please help us welcome her in to our Portobelo Avonhead community by introducing yourselves to her 😊

Farewell to our Portobelo preschool graduates who are off to start their new adventures at primary school: Calixte, Nathan, Rihanna-Jade, Riley, Connor, Fernando and Sean. We know you will do well as you continue your learning journey in the school setting.

Special events . . .

On the 28th of January some of our families began the celebrations for Chinese New Year. 2017 is The Year of the Rooster and this takes over from the Year of the Monkey.



According to traditional beliefs, babies who will be born in the new year, as well as those born in 1957, are fire roosters – said to be trustworthy and responsible with a good sense of timekeeping.

The Chinese festival marks the beginning of the New Year, which starts on the second new moon after the winter solstice and ends on the full moon fifteen days later. Families celebrate by gift giving, spending time with family and friends and eating special meals.



Children's Day is coming up on the 5th March 2017. There are many events planned around Christchurch to celebrate this day, which is all about treasuring our tamariki, making time for them, praising and encouraging, listening and talking, sharing love and affection and exploring new experiences. These values relate to what the children at Portobelo Avonhead Preschool and Nursery have recently been learning about – manākitanga. Manākitanga is about caring for others and this traditional Māori value is reflected in our centre teaching and learning philosophies. These can be found on the Portobelo website <http://www.bestpreschools.co.nz/pgs/avonhead.php>

On another note . . .

We like to make communicating with you as easy as possible. Both the Nursey and Preschool have cell phone numbers that you can text messages to – for example if your child is going to be absent for the day, if you want to check on how your child's day is going or any other non-urgent messages you may wish to pass onto the teams. Our Nursery number is **0273618181** and the Preschool Number is **0274556990**.



Don't forget to follow our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PortobeloPreschools/> for updates on children's learning. This is also where we post up-to-the-minute information about the centre in the event of an emergency, so it's a good idea to 'like' and follow our page now.



A note from Dr Sandy, Portobelo's Professional Leader...

Welcome to February! Summer has finally arrived, just when those of us lucky enough to have had a break have gone back to work and older children are back at school... Starting school has been in the news lately, with the Education Amendment Act a step closer to becoming law. Among other things, this Act means schools can choose to start children in groups at the start of each term, rather than when they turn 5.

I was recently approached by *The Press* for comment on this issue, and I was glad to provide my thoughts. This is because most of the conversation I hear about this issue centres on how much more convenient this will be for schools from an administrative point of view. I have to ask – what about the children? Looking internationally, New Zealand already has one of the youngest starting ages for formal education in the world. Yet research shows us that at the age of 11, there is no difference in reading achievement between children who started formal instruction at 5 and those who were 7, so there is simply no long-term advantage to an earlier start to a child's formal academic learning. Rather, as Fiona Miller (Occupational Therapist) reminded us at our Professional Learning evening, young children need to develop the strong bodies and minds that set them up for formal learning, and this requires a multitude of whole-body sensory experiences every day. How can we provide this? Through rich play experiences that are meaningful to the child in that moment. When children are given time, space and engaging environments to play in with their peers, they naturally learn and grow the skills that will see them succeed in their later academic learning. Without enough of these experiences, children may become the ones in the primary classroom who get frustrated and cry more easily (as they haven't learned to manage their emotions), who have difficulty paying attention and concentrating, who don't know what to do when they have a problem (because an adult has managed their problems for them in the past), who are clumsy and have trouble holding their writing tools, who are too scared to try in case they don't succeed (because they haven't experienced risk-taking and facing the world again after failure) and who haven't been able to work out the give-and-take of building and rebuilding relationships with others. These are skills that develop naturally in a play-based curriculum, and are the reason the Portobelo teaching and learning statement prioritises 'discovery learning based on fun, playful, creative and challenging experiences allowing risk-taking and provoking a sense of wonder and awe'.



We also know the importance of a smooth transition for the child between their early childhood setting and school. To help bridge the gap, our older Preschool children have special times where the programme is devoted to activities designed to help support their move to formal education. If your child is approaching school age, and you are interested in knowing more about their programme in our Preschools, or what you can do to help them make a successful move to school, please talk to your Centre or Team Leader.

Teachers' professional learning . . .

The start of the year means the start of our series of workshops for teachers' ongoing professional learning. We will be starting with a revisit of Occupational Therapist Fiona Miller's workshop about children's sensory processing and how this impacts on their learning. Other topics on the Portobelo 'Professional Learning' agenda for 2017 include an 'inspiration' session to support our continued commitment to teaching and learning about kaitiakitanga and sustainability; working on presenting our centre environments so that they reflect a home away from home in Aotearoa New Zealand, and working on building relationships with our community outside centre walls. This is all just another way we ensure we keep teaching and learning fresh, up-to-date, and effective for our children and families.