

Summer Term Newsletter

We love the summer at Carousel. Our planters are starting to bear fruit and veg, we've had the paddling pools out plenty and we've enjoyed some lovely walks in the local area. It's also a busy time with Parents' Evening and the pre-school graduation. We will miss our school leavers, but it's a privilege to send them on to their next chapter.

The importance of play

Ask anybody, and they will probably agree with the statement that children learn through play. But people tend not to have fully grasped just how important play is for children's development. Play is such an accepted part of childhood that it seems it does not get the respect it deserves. Child development is changing, and possibly not in a good way, because opportunities for play are becoming less and less as a result of societal change and the arrival of screens.

Children's brains reach 90% of their full size by the age of five, but they are not mature at this point. Human childhood is so long because it takes a very long time for these brains to be configured. Childhood is in effect a very long apprenticeship for the work of being an adult in our cultures, and the most important part of that apprenticeship is free play with other children.

Often when we conduct visits of the nursery parents are keen to know how many adult-led activities happen during the day. We of course have some of these going on every day, but we often have to defend the importance of free play. The most beneficial way of playing for the development of our brains is free play, and those children who don't get it will in fact be impaired. The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child even states that *"the child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation..."*

Through free play children will get feedback from failures that don't really matter. They will learn the limits of their own abilities, both physical and emotional, and find out what works and what doesn't. Unsupervised, child-led play is also the best way for children to learn to handle their emotions. It does not really help a child to receive instruction or information about how to deal with things like a

bruised arm, a friend being unkind, struggles with sharing or not getting their own way. The best way for them to learn how to handle these difficulties is through experience, which comes through playing with others.

Free play that includes an element of risky play is also extremely important. Having some element of risk in their play enables children to work out how far is too far, again in an environment where the cost is relatively low. For example, wrestling a bit too hard with their sibling or friend will result in tears, and they will gradually learn how to keep this play within the limits of what is acceptable to others.

Play teaches children how to function in a society where acceptable interaction with other people is required. Playing freely with friends allows children to form and invest in relationships with others. Children have a desire to form relationships with their peers, and through play they will learn how to preserve these, sometimes discovering that the loss of such relationships will be costly to them.

It is easy to think that children need to have only adults as role models, usually parents and teachers, but it is also very beneficial for children to have older children as role models. Playing in groups of children of mixed ages will provide others for children to look up to who are closer to them in age.

Modern life is busy, screens are here and people don't send their children out into the street to play anymore. As a result, childhood has changed, and not necessarily for the better. Parents can counter this by granting their children more time to play with friends, which could mean organising a play date instead of an extra-curricular club, and of course limiting screen time so that they have more time to spend in free play, alone or with others.

Issue 17

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Contents

- The importance of play.
- Term highlights
- Funding changes
- Recycling
- Ballet classes
- Library Display



Nursery news

Staffing: We have said goodbye to Lindsey and Ava since our last newsletter went out. We welcome two new apprentices, Demya and Isabelle, who joined us in late June.

Dates for your Diary:

14th-18th July—Brazil Week

9th August—Pre-school Graduation

29th August—Last day that school leavers can attend nursery.

1st September—start of the Autumn term



Term highlights so far

So far this term the children have really enjoyed a couple of special treats at nursery. In April we received the chick eggs that hatched in their incubator after just 1-2 days, and we all absolutely loved the seven fluffy chicks that we got to look after for over a week. All of the children learned lots about lifecycles and chickens, plus they got to handle the chicks and learn about caring for them. Hatching the eggs is such an enjoyable and valuable experience that we plan to make it an annual event—next year we will switch back to the ducklings.

In May the pre-school children enjoyed a trip to Billericay library on the bus, where they enjoyed rhyme time, reading stories and playing on the colourful mat in the children's area. The children were also very excited to see the library display they had helped to make. After we had spent some time in the library we walked to Sun Corner playing fields where the children enjoyed a picnic under the shade of a tree, because thankfully it was a lovely, sunny day for us! After lunch they played in the playground for a little while, before we embarked on the walk

back to nursery. They all did brilliantly on the walk home, despite a couple of grazed knees and getting the walking rope tangled around lampposts a few times! It is no mean feat to walk 15 pre-school aged children from the high street down the hill to nursery, but our staff did a wonderful job of looking after them and remaining patient through the odd hiccup. It is on special trips like these that the kind and caring nature of our team members, plus their years of experience, really shines through. We are so grateful for all of our wonderful staff.

We then took delivery of our caterpillars in early June. It was mesmerizing for the staff and children to watch them go through the transformation process into butterflies, which we then released into the environment. Despite reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* thousands of times between us, watching it happen was still very special and another great learning experience for the children.

The children have enjoyed a 'space' theme over the last few weeks, and will now be enjoying some tennis fun as Wimbledon starts!



Funding changes from September 2025

The final stage of the Government's childcare funding reforms will come into play in September 2025. This will mean that from September 2025 all eligible children aged 9months and older will be able to access 30 hours of funded childcare per week.

If your child is moving on to the 30 hours funding model from the 15 hours model currently in place, **you don't need to do anything**. The entitlement code that you have provided us with will automatically allow us to claim 30 hours for them instead of 15 from September. Please remember that we stretch the funding offer at Carousel, so you access fewer than 30hrs per week, over more weeks of

the year.

If you have a young child who will be eligible for the 9month+ funding (FEEE1W) from September you are now able to apply for your working parents entitlement code through the Government childcare service website. We have sent out forms to complete that we need you to return so that we can make a claim.

A quick note for parents of 3&4 year olds who are only eligible for the universal entitlement (15 hours) - your entitlement will not increase to 30 hours from September, but will remain at 15.

The same rule remains in place that a

child becomes eligible for the funding (or moves into a new funding rate age band) the term after they turn the relevant age. For example, if your child's birthday is on the 2nd September (the day after the term starts) they won't become eligible for the funding (or the new rate) until the start of the Spring term in January.

Our fee structure shows what your fees will be according to the funding we can claim for your child. Your fees will only change if your child will be accessing funding for the first time or if they are moving onto a new funding rate. Please refer to the document sent out in April to find out what your fees will be from September.

Recycling

You may have noticed the numerous and colourful bins we now have on the driveway. Following changes to Government legislation, we are now recycling at Carousel. We are all pleased to be doing this for environmental reasons and having the separate bins in nursery helps us teach the children about recycling. Most of us are used to doing it at home so it feels very natural. We haven't recycled up until now because it does

increase the cost of our waste disposal, and on top of all the other cost rises in recent years it is something we had held back on.

We are particularly pleased to be recycling our food waste, as we produce at least 10-15L per day. Nurseries and schools also produce a lot of paper and cardboard waste, so it is nice to know that this isn't going to landfill anymore.

We do try to re-use at Carousel too, so various packaging materials are often repurposed for some kind of creative craft. We also welcome offers of toys and resources from parents, so do think of us if you're having a clear out. Things don't last long in a nursery and it's good to avoid buying new all the time if possible. We like to give good quality items a second life, even if it turns out to be a short one!

Ballet from September

The ballet classes we have hosted at nursery, delivered by Christina Marks School of Performing Arts, have been really popular and the children love them. The teacher, Maddy, is very friendly and engaging and the children really enjoy their class with her.

Having offered the class on a Tuesday for two terms, we will now be swapping the ballet class to a Monday in order to ensure that some other children get a chance to experience it.

The classes are paid for by parents directly to the dance school—the nursery does not get any of the funds, we simply host the class. Before the start of the new term a letter will be sent to all Rabbit and Pre-school parents, which will include instructions on how to sign your child up.

Any children not participating will spend the 30mins of the class in the Rabbit room.



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Early Learning for a Brighter Future



Carousel Day Nursery & Pre-school is a family run business, established in 1992. We are a small nursery that provides an excellent standard of education and care for children aged 3 months to five years. We are situated in a bungalow specially modified to create a home-from-home feel, in a quiet residential area of Billericay and can accommodate 31 children each day. Our nursery is separated into a Lower and Upper nursery and consists of four rooms—one for each age group: Ducklings (babies), Hedgehogs (toddlers), Rabbits (2-3 year olds) and pre-school Squirrels (3-5yrs). We also have a lovely outside area with a range of suitable equipment for the children to explore and develop their motor skills. At Carousel we are constantly striving to provide an excellent quality of education because we believe in the importance of early learning for a brighter future.

Library Display

Some of you may have seen the Carousel display in Billericay Library this spring. Emma, our Outdoor Learning Co-Ordinator, helped the different rooms put together some lovely artwork to showcase the season of Spring. Jen (our resident artist!) did some fantastic drawings that the children enjoyed colouring in. It was a great team effort that resulted in something all the children could be proud of.

We know some of the children have enjoyed seeing the display in the library already, and we would encourage you to pop down there to have a look if you

haven't already done so. The library really is a great place to visit with your young child, where you can carve out time and space to read with them and share a love of books. Billericay library also holds a children's activity every weekday except Tuesday, and there is usually more happening in the school holidays too.

We now have a new display up in the library, which celebrates everything the children have been learning about 'Space' over the last few weeks. Please do go and have a look.

NOTICE FOR PARENTS: Please ensure your child has plenty of spare clothes in their backpack—this is the season for water play and they need them! Please also ensure they have swimming things in their bag during spells of warm weather. Thank you.

