

A letter from Travis' mum (Steph Cracknell)...

Ever wondered why it's the 'NEW' Montessori pre-school?

A bit of history you may be interested in...

The Montessori Pre-school was founded in 1997. Back then it was more like a traditional pre-school - it was owned by someone and could make a profit from the fees paid by parents. Roughly 36 families attended the pre-school and benefitted from the Montessori Method of teaching. Very suddenly at the end of 1998, due to personal circumstances, the owner closed the pre-school and set up again in Lancing. Parents were told if they wanted their children to stay in Montessori education, then they must bring their children to Lancing. There was no other Montessori in Worthing at the time and so on Christmas Eve, parents at the pre-school held a crisis meeting. How could they open the school again? They valued the Montessori Method of teaching and their children were settled and had made lots of friends there. Most parents couldn't travel all the way to Lancing. So, after long discussions, a group of about 30 families decided to open the pre-school as a charity, allowing them all be involved in running the pre-school. The Management Committee was born!

A few weeks later on January 4th 1999, doors opened and all children turned up to re-register. The Management Committee had prepared a list of resources that the pre-school needed and each family brought one thing from the list with them on that first day. Through a huge community effort The NEW Montessori Pre-school (TNMP) was up and running!

Beki Shanahan, (now our Principal), was one of those parents. She had begun volunteering at the pre-school in 1997, and was so inspired by the Montessori Method that she went on to do her Montessori Diploma and became a classroom assistant. As the pre-school reopened, one of the mums called June Knight took on the role of Principal and Beki took the role of School Manager. Two years later June left and Beki became Principal. Claire Morgan was also a parent at this time and had been volunteering. She went on to do her Montessori training and is now our School Manager.

That year, the team of parents fundraised madly to re-equip the nursery with all the beautiful Montessori equipment, some of which you still see today. A fund-raising team evolved and each year they organised fun events to raise the extra funds needed to continue to provide children with high quality teaching resources.

A huge community effort by parents who really valued the experience that their children were having, turned this new pre-school into a thriving school that now cares for, educates and prepares children for school and life. Over 70 families now attend the pre-school.

And now, did you know?

The New Montessori Pre-school is the only Montessori accredited pre-school in Worthing and it is accredited as 'Outstanding'.

It is the only Montessori pre-school in the country that is a registered charity.

No one owns TNMP and no one is making any money from it (other than staff salaries).

In most areas of the country, Montessori trained staff earn more than the average pre-school practitioner. That is not the case at TNMP, staff salaries match any other standard pre-school in the area.

The average hourly fee for a Montessori Pre-school in this country is higher than we pay. For example, the nearby established and accredited Anne Frank Montessori in Horsham and Southwater charge £7 per hour. TNMP charges £5.50.

The Pre-school's aim is to provide Montessori education to all children at an affordable cost. This year Beki urged our treasurer not to raise fees to ensure the pre-school stays accessible to as many of the local community as possible.

For no extra salary, the pre-school provides Parent Courses and Heuristic Play Classes. This is all completely free for all parents and staff receive no extra pay.

The opening hours, lunch club, afternoon hours have all come about from parents' wants and needs and have been organised through the Management Committee.

Until 2012 there was an active fundraising team of parents who ensured extra money was raised through fun events bringing the pre-school community together. This allowed the pre-school to buy more high quality Montessori equipment and resources for our children while keeping fees low.

Currently there is NO fund raising committee. Despite requests from the pre-school in newsletters and posters, no parents are currently prepared to give their time and effort to this committee. Beki, Claire and staff now give up their own time and work time to organise the events that used to be organised by parents.

Currently there are 3 mums (out of 70 families) on the management committee who feed into the development of the pre-school.

The reason for writing this letter...

I didn't know very much of this information until I joined the management committee. Now I do, I feel it is a shame that the parent/carer participation in helping to run the pre-school has all but disappeared. Perhaps knowing this history may make more parents and carers may feel like they would like to give their time to keep the community spirit of our special pre-school going!

I know only too well how busy family and work life is these days. I also know that money is very tight for lots of us and sometimes it's easy to think "but we are already paying for our children to be at pre-school". But I still think our children's formative years and education is worth investing a bit of extra time in, and I can see that a pre-school like ours does need to raise extra funds through fund raising to keep its provision high quality and prices low. Do you agree?

If you do, please return the form below to pre-school. At our Christmas AGM we will welcome new members, so now's a good time to get involved!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Best Wishes, Steph.

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I am interested in being part of:

The Management Committee

The Fundraising Committee

My Name _____

Child's Name _____

