



Registered Charity Number 1155711
01372 721 111

December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have had a very busy half term, and we do hope that you have been keeping up with our children's activities through the memos that are added to Tapestry weekly.



We have been busy with different celebrations. For Diwali, the children joined in with the story of how villages lit the path so Rama and Sita could find their way home after defeating King Ravana. The children made salt dough and then used it to make and decorated their own Diva lights holder.

Our children enjoyed the story of Guy Fawkes for Bonfire night, and all the children observed our rocket experiment in the garden. The children predicted what might happen and joined in with a countdown as they watched the ingredients react to make the rocket blast off. We took this opportunity to talk about firework safety.



For Remembrance Day, the children made their own representations of poppies by printing with their hands and painting with a brush. We watched a short CBeebies clip called poppies and talked this through with the children.



With the Christmas nativity performance in mind, we started with preparations early by introducing the story of birth of baby Jesus to our morning children. This has continued in several forms, including our magnet story and small world nativity scene. Our morning children have been very busy practising all the songs and choosing which parts they would like to be.

We have been out with the morning children doing post box walks to deliver letters they have written to Father Christmas. During our walks, we listened out for sounds we could hear, looked out for, and commented on wildlife, as well as looking for meaningful numbers and letters in the environment.

Some of the other activities we enjoyed this half term include dressing up for Children in Need and enjoying a fun session including Pudsey mask making and learning about the need to help others.

Our morning children had a visit from Zoolab, and we learnt all about the corn snake, white tree frog, baby rats, scorpion, giant millipede, and tarantula. The children enjoyed this experience and some of them touched some of the animals.

The children have been developing their hand muscles through finger gym activities and sensory play. This is a pre-writing exercise as without the development of our hand muscles children are unable to hold a pencil in an effective grip to mark make and then go on to writing their own names.

Christmas Parties

Afternoon Children – 1pm – 3pm on Thursday 11th December

All afternoon children are invited, even if Thursday is not their normal day. Children will need a snack for the party in a named container. There will be party games and an opportunity to meet Father Christmas. Please arrive around 2.45pm at the garden gate, so that you can accompany your child to meet Father Christmas!

Morning / Long-Day Children 10.30am – 1.30pm Friday 12th December

All morning children are invited, even if Friday is not their normal day. Children will need a packed lunch for the party in a named container. There will be a children's entertainer, party games and an opportunity to meet Father Christmas! Please arrive around 1.15pm at the garden gate, so that you can accompany your child to meet Father Christmas!

Dual languages

If you would be interested in reading a story in your home language to the children, please do let us know.

Staffing

We have a few staff changes this half term. Hayleigh has started her maternity leave with her little one due in January.

We have two new bank staff, Ellie who is a qualified teacher and Sophie who has a Level 2 qualification in Early Years. These team members provide extra support in our sessions together with support for our children who have an additional need, and cover for staff who are absent from session on training, or sickness.

School Places for September

We hope that all parents of children going on to school have now made their preferences for a school place known and we would remind those that have not yet done so that your preferences need to be completed and submitted by 15th January 2024.

Early Years Funding Expansion

The new funding entitlements will be introduced in phases:

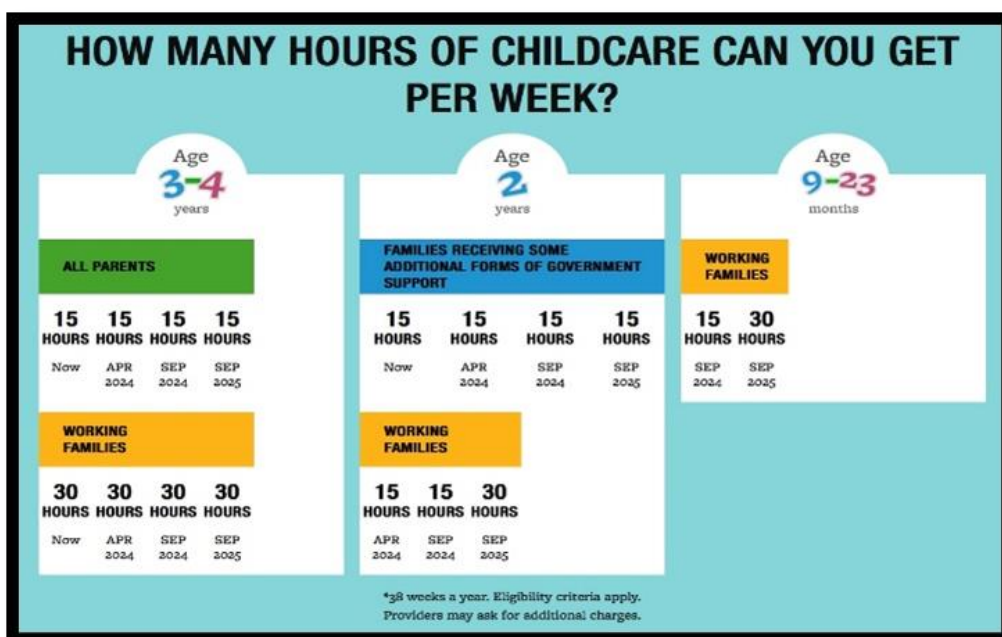
From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access their 15 hours childcare (over 38 weeks a year) **from the term after** their child's 2nd birthday.

From Sept 2024, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-year-olds can access 15 hours childcare (over 38 weeks a year) **from the term following** their child turning 9 months.

From Sept 2025, the offer will be rolled out in full, with eligible working parents of children aged 9 months and above able to access 30 hours (over 38 weeks a year) **from the term following** their child turning 9 months.

Upcoming changes to childcare support

The explainer below summarises how entitlements are changing between now and September 2025. More detail is available here. [Upcoming changes to childcare support | Childcare choices.](#)



From 2 January 2024, eligible working parents will be able to apply for their 15 hours childcare for their two-year-old. Parents have until 31 March to apply for a code, with the best time in mid-January to the end of February, in case they need to provide further information to support their application.

An online childcare support checker is available to help parents find the right childcare offer for them and learn how much money they can save. [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#)

More information on wider financial support is available on the Help for Households toolkit and leaflet. [Campaign toolkit - Help for Households](#)

Childcare support expansion offer: Am I eligible?

From April 2024 15 hours childcare from the term after their child's 2nd birthday.	From September 2024 15 hours childcare – from the term after the child turns 9 months	From September 2025: 30 hours childcare – Aged from the term after the child turns 9 - months
<p>For eligible working families in England</p> <p>Each parent earning under £100k per year and at least £167 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage)</p> <p>With a 2-year-old child</p> <p>15 hours of childcare or early education for 38 weeks (the term after they turn 2) A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare providers.</p>	<p>For eligible working families in England</p> <p>Earning under £100k and at least £167 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage)</p> <p>With a child aged 9 months old</p> <p>15 hours of childcare or early education for 38 weeks (the term after they turn 9 months) A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare providers</p>	<p>For eligible working families in England</p> <p>Earning under £100k and at least £167 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage)</p> <p>With a child between 9 and 23 months old</p> <p>30 hours of childcare or early education for 38 weeks (the term after they turn 9 months) A total of 1,140 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare providers</p>

Tax – Free Childcare	Universal Credit Childcare
<p>For working families, including the self-employed, in the UK</p> <p>Earning under £100k and at least £167 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage) each</p> <p>Who aren't receiving Tax Credits, Universal <u>Credit</u> or childcare vouchers.</p> <p>With children aged 0-11 (or 0-16 if disabled)</p> <p>For every £8 they pay into an online account, the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year (or up to £4,000 per child if disabled)</p> <p>Can be accessed through your registered providers and childminders who have activated their Tax-Free Childcare accounts.</p>	<p>For working families claiming Universal Credit, in England, Eligibility criteria apply</p> <p>Both parents working – unless one of the allowable exceptions is met.</p> <p>With children usually under 17 (including disabled)</p> <p>Up to 85% of eligible childcare costs can be reclaimed.</p> <p>Upfront support is available to fund your first month's payment. Ask your Work Coach for more information.</p> <p>Tax-Free Childcare is not available if also claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Universal <u>Credit</u> or childcare vouchers.</p> <p>Can be accessed through registered providers or childminders.</p>

Next term

Boogie Beats Sessions (Monday mornings)

We are delighted to have booked Boogie Beats dance, music, and movement sessions to take place each Monday morning for the rest of the school year. The children had a taster session in November, and they thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



Parent meetings

All our parents should have had the opportunity to speak to their child's key person this half term. Next half term we will contact our parents to give another opportunity to talk through next steps for your child's development. Please keep an eye out for the sign up sheet.

Next half term we are looking forward to lots of celebrations.

25th January – Burns Night

10th February – Chinese New Year

13th February – Shrove Tuesday

14th February – St Valentines

Please let us know if there are any celebrations or events that you would like us to celebrate or introduce the children to.

Have a lovely Christmas everyone! We return to Pre-School on Thursday 4th January 2024.

Best wishes

St Martin's Pre-School Team

Useful links

Epsom Foodbank – essential emergency service for people unable to afford food.

[Epsom and Ewell Foodbank | Helping Local People in Crisis](#)

Home-Start – a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through their challenging times.

[Home-Start UK](#)

Family Information Service – useful local information relating to services for children and families living in Surrey

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families>

The Samaritans – support with 'whatever you are going through':

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Crisis – for those faced with homelessness:

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice – for information and advice for all. Currently updated with latest Coronavirus information.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Eric - for help with potty training

<https://www.eric.org.uk/>

SEND Local Offer – Online hub for 0-25 year olds with Special Educational Needs or a Disability

<https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/home.page>

NSPCC – Safeguarding and child protection. Find information here regarding COVID-19 and returning to school.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

I Can – communication charity.

[I CAN, the children's communication charity](#)