

Report for Stowupland Parish Council Meeting – 21st May 2025

It has been a busy start to 2025 with lots going on at the Pre-School. We started the year with our OFSTED inspection and were very pleased with the outcome. We held a show-round day for the new families starting in September 2025, and everyone commented at how lovely the preschool looks, how it feels safe and secure within the community and about our reputation, of which we are very proud.

We continue to operate at capacity, offering 54 places to children aged between two and four years old over the course of a week. We are still operating a waiting list for the next two years, with contact constantly being made by parents in the local area for placements.

Over the last 12 months, work has continued to improve our setting. Thanks to a successful capital grant from Mid Suffolk District Council, we have been able to purchase new tuff trays, curtains for the back door to keep the heat in during the winter months, a new shed for the children to use, a new shed for the children's large building blocks, and a lunch trolley.

We want to say a big thank you to Stowupland Parish Council for the CIL grant we were awarded last Autumn Term 2024. The grant was used to install and purchase a much-needed new front door.

We are currently fundraising for new iPads. Staff use these to provide daily updates to parents about what the setting has had on offer, and updates on their child's learning journey at the setting. The new technology will also be available for the children to use. They will have limited and supervised time on learning games that can be very useful to a children's development. This helps to support those children who need to be school-ready at the end of the Summer term.

Within the setting itself, we continue to enhance the children's learning and development, especially ready for school at the end of the term. The children are exploring our outdoor area, playing with water, sand and ride on bikes. We have already planted potatoes, carrots, beans and strawberries, as well as re-stocking our herb garden. We are thankful to the Men's shed for building us a new planter after our previous one rotted away.

The Stowupland Bio-Diversity Group have donated beans and marigold seeds for us to send home with the children. These were planted last week ready to go home before May half term.

This term, the children have enjoyed a range of visitors! We have been lucky to have had visits from the local police, an air stewardess, with Emz exotic encounters due this week and a pony visit after half term. We will also be looking at life cycles- watching caterpillars turn into butterflies. These is a hit with the children every year!

We continue to look at new ways to spark imagination in all the children who attend the setting.

As we approach the Summer Term, we are preparing for more outdoor fun and learning opportunities. We will be saying goodbye to 28 children who will be leaving to start their learning journey at school.

It is with regret, we are having to close the Toddler Group, after only opening in January of this year. The up take has been low and with the cost of the Village Hall, snacks and the purchase of new resources, the Pre-School is out of pocket by a few hundred pounds. Taking this into account, and with the warmer weather approaching and Summer always being quieter, we have taken the difficult decision to close it.

The setting is currently trying to manage and plan financially for the next few years ahead. Like everyone, we have seen a cost increase in utilities, food, resources and staff wages. As a small charity, we really do have to look at where every penny is spent and save what we can. We have seen many other settings in the area close because of financial issues. It is unfortunate timing that the Village Hall Committee is asking for staff to pay for a parking permit. Some of our staff have parked there for over 10 years. As a charity we have tried to reach out, but we were unable to get an exception to the rule. With staff wages low, we are concerned our team are unable to park in a safe space, especially with the Village Hall due to close for a refurbishment. We have reached out to the High School to see if they can assist us with some parking spaces. We are concerned this may become an issue in the very near future for our staff.

We'd like to end by saying a big thank you to the local community and our parents for continuing to support us, through donations and fundraising. As a small charity, we really do appreciate every penny to enable us to continue to thrive, particularly when we have seen so many settings in Suffolk having to close.