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# The Ellingham

"The finest care, the greatest fun,  
the most encouragement".

## Entertainer

### Ellingham House

#### Day Nursery

(since 1995)

www.ellinghamhouse.co.uk

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Newsletter No. 54

Summer 2020

### Welcome to our newsletter.

And it was decreed by the highest in the land, Boris was his name, that all should remain where they were, henceforth and for always, until the dark cloud of Covid-19 had passed.

Monday March 23<sup>rd</sup> – our world changed.



Or, did it?

Our world, that microscopic world of Ellingham and it's staff and children, this idyllic and delightful bubble of constancy, our venerable long standing home, its grounds and paddock pets, the routines, and laughter and lunchtimes, the love and cuddles and giggles and carefree play, the sunshine, happiness, growth, exploration and development has remained.

Yes true, for springtime, we were much reduced in number, an ongoing essence of our family being played out by our 'core covid team' and the 12 to 25 daily children of our 'Key Worker' parents.

Indeed the months of April and May were like a time machine, travelling me back a quarter century to the very first Ellingham summer. The summer of '96, a summer of anticipation and aspiration, surrounded by a handful of 'pink ladies' and a sprinkling of new children. It was a wonderful time, a simpler time, no emails or iphones, no digital marketing or websites, just an ad in The Echo and off we went!

However dark, oppressive and frightening the covid clouds of spring – here at Ellingham it was indeed idyllic. We were in our own 'bubble' where little was changed and Ellingham time stood still, as the sunshine of those days helped ease our fears.

On Thursday evenings we clapped. We clapped for all those who were 'doing their bit' for the benefit of all. Yes I clapped for our NHS heroes who were genuinely and actually 'taking one for the team' – thank goodness for their pluck in the early weeks when treatments, practice and knowledge was at such an early stage. To walk forwards into unknown danger is the very truest of bravery. And to then do it daily and with family responsibilities, it was indeed a great duty discharged.

I also clapped, for those in the background, the support teams for those on the front line, without which, the battle would have not been possible to effect. Amongst this group, with a touch of bias of course, I clapped for our 'Ellingham Pink Ladies' who stood tall when asked to do their bit. – Well done chaps – I simply could not be prouder of you and the spirit of Ellingham House. On the stairwell of the main house stairs to the Baby-Unit is a tribute to the 'Covid crew', it will always remain there.

We are now starting to take the first steps into the 'living with Covid-19' future. Treatments and knowledge have improved and grown. Experience dictates, both here and abroad, that children are the most resilient population group to the effects of the virus.

Life is evolving and human behaviour is in large accepting the new constraints. We will continue to take heed of official advices, guidance, requirements and safe guarding protocols. We will endeavour to use best practice and common sense to reflect and be flexible to the needs of the day and look to our parents to assist us by using their good common sense in these times and continue to act in a way which best protects us all. Whilst an effective vaccine would be game changing, until such time, we will have to live and work alongside covid.

As I write, the wearing of face masks are becoming mandatory in a number of enclosed public spaces. Early Years settings are not required to encourage face coverings and indeed it would be most off-putting for staff to do so.

However, if we saw a significant surge of new Covid cases in our region we may request that parents wear a face covering whilst in the nursery. Hopefully this will not be necessary. The colder months will bring additional compromises and challenges and we must master these as we journey ahead.

And we will.

### **Breaking News!!!**

Well, it was back on March 6<sup>th</sup> – **Helen Spiller** was announced as our new Nursery Manager! Helen follows Sarah Parry-Norton (2016 -2020) and Lin Bridge (1995 – 2016) as our Head of Nursery and she certainly deserves the position. Helen is in her 24<sup>th</sup> Ellingham year and during her time has led both Baby-Unit (10 yrs) and Pre-School and has been Deputy Manager since 2004. You have to serve your time here at E.H.!!!

She is also the first Ellingham Nursery Manager to have to manage a plague!

**Amy Thorne** – Head of Pre-School and a qualified primary teacher is Helen's deputy with Ofsted curriculum responsibilities.

### **Current Nursery Status:**

Since 1<sup>st</sup> of June we have been welcoming the whole 'Ellingham family' back and now are at about 75% of normal attendance. Numbers will grow slightly through August with the last of our returning children rejoining, before dropping back again as we wave a fond and final cheerio to our departing Pre-Schoolers (45) as they head off to their respective 'big' schools in September.

The Baby-Unit suffered the greatest drop in attendance, however, it is now enjoying the company of six or more children each day and should be close to normality by the New Year.

I am also delighted to have been able to welcome back a significant proportion of our staff with a July full-time team of 17 'pink ladies' and 6 ancillary crew.

Baby-Unit – Hannah, Keely, Maddie

Younger Toddlers – Emma, Olivia, Beth

Older Toddlers – Lauren, Lizzie, Megan, Martha

Conservatory – Zoe, Maggie, Abby

Pre-School – Amy, Jessica, Carlie, Gemma

Chef – Kevin

Diane, Doreen

Office – Hugh, Helen, Jan

### **New Initiatives:**

**Instagram page** – to enable parents to get a full picture of the whole nursery, what the various groups get up to and how they spend their days we have been trialling a protected, private instagram page displaying photographs of nursery activities and happenings. Tapestry conveys what your individual child is up to – Instagram expresses the life and times of the whole nursery. Baby-Unit parents are able to gain an idea about what their child will be doing in the months and years ahead. Please share with us your feedback and thoughts. Parents who do not wish to have their child included are easily able to opt out.

**‘Down on the farm’** – Our paddock pets are enjoying a good summer. A few weeks ago, Poppy, Pepper, Ping & Pong our Suffolk sheep put up a solid resistance to being caught prior to shearing. Pepper especially (the largest sheep our shearer has ever seen!!!) who managed to clear the fence like Red Rum in the 1974 Grand National! A return visit was required and Pepper was finally outwitted and outmanouvered by a combination of great human dexterity and determination and a Principal wishing to put his life on the line for the cause, by launching himself onto the aforesaid ram whilst he had his head down in the feed trough (sheep not man) and then hanging onto the sheep’s back rodeo style until both crumpled to the ground! (breathe dear reader, breathe - that was one long sentence!) We are now trying to interest Sky T.V. for the transmission rights next year! Monet our miniature Shetland is in fine fettle and Daisy the Dwarf Dexter cow as is her way, stentoriously bellows to remind me it’s lunch time feed time for all! Our chicken flock is down to one and she has outlived her cohort by a couple of years or more. Frankly, it may be worth exploring her genetic makeup! Once she has departed to her perch in the chicken house in the sky, we will replenish the flock and fresh, free range eggs will be back once again on the take-home menu for the Pre-School children.

The vegetable patch is truly having a wonderful year – free from the usual ravages of rabbits and deer we are getting a most splendid crop of a broad variety of vegetables. Children have assisted in the planting and watering (as has Helen the gardener!) and much produce is going into our kitchen and going home with the Pre-Schoolers. It is also a delight to have fresh sweet peas at the breakfast tables.

### **Ellingham Is A ‘Nut Free’ Environment:**

.....(But you gotta be crazy to work here, boom, boom!) – Seriously though, we have to be very, very, very careful with all and any foodstuffs within the nursery.

Please do not bring any foodstuffs into the nursery without first enquiring of room staff regarding suitability and the possible allergy issues of our children.

**Sickness Absence:** We try to help parents who are forced to take time off work when caring for poorly children by allowing illness swop sessions (when availability allows) within a week or so of illness at no extra charge. With Covid zero tolerance policy to temperatures we may be forced to ‘red card’ a number of children over the next little while.

We will continue to try to enable illness swops, but it may not always be possible.

We have not changed our terms and conditions, all registered attendance remains chargeable regardless of actual attendance, but we will try to assist where we can. However, nursery attendance lost due to illness does not automatically accrue future credits.

### **Vehicular Issues:**

**Car Park Etiquette:** Please keep the flow through the driveway rather than blocking whilst waiting for parents to return to their cars. We appreciate that sometimes the busyness of the nursery frustrates close to house driveway parking, but, like Waitrose, if you keep circulating eventually you get lucky!

**Pedestrians Exiting Driveway - wahayyy madam!** A parent had an enormous shock recently as she swung her car into the Ellingham entrance driveway to be confronted by an adult and child leaving the nursery on foot via this access. No accident occurred. But, please when exiting the nursery as a pedestrian or driver, please use the driveway exit adjacent to the churchyard wall as premature grey hair or worse could be the result if you don’t!

### **Speeding vehicles, Speeding vehicles, Speeding vehicles, Speeding!**

I am regularly lambasted by parents for the speed at which parents travel down our lane and especially on the Somerley gates corner.

**Please Go Slowly** along the lane, 10 MPH on the corner and really, really slow on entering the driveway. Please kindly concur and drive accordingly – naming and shaming in next edition!

**Potholes in the lane:** Hampshire Highways Dept. have been most efficient in delineating with white paint those pot holes in Church lane that require repair. The works however, are not proposed until the autumn. I am badgering them on this front!

The grass verge at the junction is also an issue with tall grass compromising vision. It has been reported (21508291) and should be mown soon.

**Communication News - Tapestry** - is our on-line children's developmental record system. Parents are able, via secure log-in systems, to view their child's developmental file comprising all our usual staff observations, photographs and pieces of children's work.

The benefit of this approach is that parents themselves are able to download photo's or information onto their child's file, thus building a much more rounded and fulsome picture of their child's growth and development in a most interactive way.

**Parents please be reminded that you must not upload anything from your Tapestry file onto social media and any contravention of this requirement may force the closure of your child's file.**

### **ParentMail: -**

All parents should already be on this service, however, one or two of you may have fallen through the admin. net and accordingly if you do not receive Ellingham text messages to your personal mobile phone please ask your room staff for the ParentMail form.

**Earlier start to the nursery day** - allowing early arrivals from 7-50 a.m.

For those parents who really, really, really, really need a few extra minutes to get to work we are happy to welcome children into the nursery before the official 8-00 a.m. start time. However, so that staffing (ratios/shift lengths) can remain unchallenged, please restrict your use of this 'golden' early start to when necessary.

### **Session Time Collections Discipline:**

Morning session finish – Afternoon session start is 1-30 p.m. – please could collecting parents be prompt to the 1-30 p.m. collection time – thank you.

**Two Year Old Developmental Progress Check:** When your child is aged just over two years, we will be sharing with you (having a chat!) a development progress check which looks to a number of key (prime) areas: communication & language, physical development, as well as, personal social & emotional development. This is a statutory initiative and is a part of *The Early Years Foundation Stage*. Emma will have responsibility for this conversation with you which normally takes about forty minutes or so.

**The Nursery Education Grant:** Parents will be aware that their children become eligible to benefit from this scheme, commencing from the academic term after they have celebrated their third birthday. Unfortunately, whilst government freely uses language such as 'free 30 hours', it fails to admit that **for those hours we receive less than the operational cost of our provision**. For this reason we have a special flexible hourly rate for attendance outside of NEG term-time.

**Bottom line is that fees payable equate to standard fees less the full grant that your child is eligible to receive.**

The Nursery Education Grant is split into two 15 hour entitlements (30 hours in total for a maximum of 38 weeks per academic year) – the first fifteen hours (The Universal Entitlement) to which all children are entitled and then the second fifteen hours (The Extended Entitlement) being subject to eligibility criteria. Please speak to Hugh or Jan for further information.

**Currently the NEG rate that we receive from County is £4-55 per hour.**

**Keeping excited children safe:** During our nursery day the children are aware of room boundaries, and that we walk instead of running indoors for fear of going 'bump'!

Children are naturally very excited and get a little giddy when their parents arrive at the end of their session to collect them. Please keep them safe by trying to retain them close to you at this time.

## The Principal's Perspective:

I grew up during the Geoffrey Boycott cricketing generation and accordingly, 'batting on steadily and keeping one's wicket safe' is a part of my DNA. Thus, with the current predicament, keeping our heads down, playing on resolutely and calmly whatever 'bouncers' are thrown at us, is the only way we know.

The staff and children have been incredible and the early summer allowed for a period of reflection and readjustment. I love this place and the people who join us here. Challenges are meant to be overcome and it has been so inspiring to be surrounded by my truly valued staff and our parents who are achieving just that.

The phrase 'the Ellingham family' has indeed been used over the years, but, it truly has never been more a reality than during March, April and May of this year.

It has been a delight to welcome 'the family' back and having prepped the staff to expect a bit of an unsettled and bumpy ride during June, we have all been amazed at how happily everyone has settled back into old Ellingham routines. It has also been a joy to hear from some parents that as much as they were dreading 'lock-down' with the children, the reality of the experience has led to comments such as... "actually, I enjoyed it far more than I thought I would, and found out that I am really quite a good mum"!!!! – Happy days!

Looking forward positively, as we all must, the days ahead may well have their moments and challenge, but, we will meet them, and get through them, and apparent life will become the usual. Ellingham will continue to be an idyllic 'bubble' of normality for the children and hopefully for their parents too.

Take care chaps.

Toodle pip

*Hugh*

## Communication Is Everything!

Helen and I always wish to provide our parents with the service and care that they desire.

Please never hesitate to raise or share any queries or concerns with us and we welcome your feedback and any suggestions you may have.

## Outside activities / Naming of clothing

Please remember that the children need to be appropriately dressed for both indoor and outdoor play and for possible changes in the weather during the day. We are keen to spend time outside every day and so it is important that children attend nursery equipped with appropriate fickle "English weather" clothing and spare clothes for any 'accidents' during the day.

Inevitably, some children will have the same or similar articles of clothing or footwear. Staff do their best not to get clothing mixed up, but, dealing with young children is never an exact science, independent disrobing can be arbitrary, spontaneous or en masse and occasionally unnamed articles may go astray or muddles occur. Please bear with us when they do and **help us by clearly labelling clothing i.e. initials on labels. We will always apologise for 'lost' items of clothing, but we are unable to forward a refund.**

**Spare Clothing:** Occasionally children will require to use our Ellingham provided spare clothing, usually when more 'accidents' have occurred than spare clothes provided.

When this occurs, **Please, Please, Please return these loaned Ellingham clothes.**

## Additional Attendance:

Please do not hesitate to speak to Helen or your child's Room Leader if you require an additional day or session and if availability allows we will be happy to oblige.

## **Dates For Your Diary:**

### **Hairdressing:**

**Tia Webb of Fordingbridge**

will next be visiting the nursery on:-

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August**

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September**

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November**

If you would like your child to receive a haircut, then please either attend the nursery with your child or give instruction to staff member. The charge is £5-00 payable to Tia on the day.

### **Pre-School Leavers Party:**

The leavers party has always been a most pleasurable and important aspect of our school calendar year. A time of final cheerios and happily waiving goodbye to nursery days for parents and children alike. Unfortunately, this year we have to put a slight covid question mark over the ability to safely do so, dependent on the current pandemic conditions. For those Pre-School leaving parents and children who would like to attend, please 'pencil-in' the afternoon **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August** and if the weather Gods are also kind, it may be possible to enjoy a 'social distance' compliant children & parents picnic in the garden.

### **Individual Portrait Photographs:**

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November**

Fraser Portrait Photographers will be attending the nursery on these two days taking studio quality individual photographs of all the children. Ideal Christmas presents for grandparents!

## ***Ellingham House***

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**(Since 1995)**

**"Simply idyllic"**

**"Simply Unique"**

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