

Welcome to the Pre-School 'Explorers' Room



In preparation for 'Big' School

A Guide to the Pre-School Explorers Room

Welcome to the Pre-School 'Explorers' Room. We would like to take this opportunity to tell you all about our room and give you an understanding of what we do as Pre-School practitioners to support your child in their learning and development. Through providing them with many thoughtful activities and experiences over their time with us, we help them become more independent and support them to achieve their best so that they are ready for 'big' school when the time comes.



The ratio of staff to children in Explorers is 1:8.

Chelsea Brinkley – Senior Nursery Nurse – Monday to Friday - Level 5 Foundation degree



Chelsea joined the nursery in October 2017, taking on the role as Senior Nursery Nurse within the Duckling room. She moved to become full time Senior in Explorers in January 2021. Chelsea holds a Foundation degree in Early Years Practice and has previous experience as a Deputy Room leader in another Nursery, before taking on this role.

Nicola Monro – Nursery Nurse – Monday to Friday – Foundation Degree in Early Years, Childcare and Education



Nicola has been working at Babraham nursery since September 2015. She joined the team working part time whilst carrying out her degree. Nicola completed her foundation degree in 2018. She previously worked at another nursery in Newmarket for a number of years.

**Hanna Saltmarsh - Nursery Nurse – Monday to Friday - Level 3 in Children’s Care,
Learning and Development**



Hanna joined the Nursery in June 2008 as a part time roving Nursery assistant. She completed her Level 3 apprenticeship in Children’s Care, Learning and Development in 2010 and soon after this took on a full time position at the Nursery. During Hanna’s time at Nursery she has worked in each of the base rooms, gaining experience with all age groups. Hanna left the Nursery in 2015 to gain experience in other sectors whilst studying for her Certificate of Higher Education in Health and Social Care. In 2017 Hanna had her first child and after maternity leave decided to return to the Nursery in August 2018 as a full time Nursery Nurse in the Red Butterfly room. Hanna spent just under a year in this room before transitioning to the Caterpillar room in July 2019. Hanna covered a maternity leave position to become Senior Nursery Nurse within the Caterpillar Room in 2020. She has moved to Explorers, taking on the role of full time Nursery Nurse.

**Isabel Alvarez-Martinez – Nursery Nurse – Monday to Friday – Early Years Teacher
Status**



Isabel joined the Nursery in 2014 and has worked in various rooms around the Nursery, including Red and Purple Butterflies, but in January 2021 she moved to Explorers as a full time Nursery Nurse. Isabel has worked with children since she was a teenager and has completed her ‘Early Years Teacher Status’ on finishing her degree in Sociology

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In the Explorers room we follow a daily routine for activities, snacks, meals and group times. The gardens are open throughout the day for 'free flow play' and our children are encouraged to explore the garden in all weathers. When it's time for registration or 'group time' we clap our hands and gather together on the carpet. During registration, we all say our 'Good mornings', we then incorporate some activities to support our understanding of the world, for example; we name the day, date and month and then we look at the weather outside and decide what clothing we will need to wear when we go outside. We then use our developing Maths skills to count how many children are in today and write it down to help with our number recognition. Our group times provide an opportunity for us to support the children's developing listening skills, so we share stories and songs and play circle games too, for example; the 'Bean Game', parachute games and we also take part in 'Cosmic Kids Yoga' and dance with 'The Wiggles'.

Placing an emphasis on free flow play, which includes engaging each child in their own individualised play and learning, whilst also incorporating structured group activities into the routine, provides balance to a child's experiences. The support of a knowledgeable adult further expands upon this learning. We believe that this balanced approach develops the child's ability to freely explore and empowers them to direct their play and learning. Furthermore, promoting a child's confidence at expressing themselves as part of a group enables children to further grow, and this together is a great introduction to the structure of school.

In the morning...

When you arrive with your child, please sign them in and help them to register for the session by finding their name card and putting it beneath their key workers name on the signing in board. They can then put their belongings on their peg or in their 'pouch'; this is their space and staff very much encourages children to independently use it. As children are welcomed in and as they develop throughout the year a confident 'Goodbye, see you later' is encouraged. Occasionally children will struggle to say 'goodbye' and there are lots of things that we can do to try and make this easier – if you are worried that your child is anxious, please speak to your key person or any member of the team. Registration time is at 9.30am and as this is a really beneficial time for your child, we encourage you to arrive in good time before this, in order for them to participate.

Our activities...

Throughout the year we have topics to investigate and discover. Individually as key workers, we also have a weekly focus for our individual children that are taken from the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Key people work closely with their key children to follow any interests they are showing and plan 'next steps' for their learning based on these interests and their individual learning needs. We provide the children with adult led activities alongside thoughtful independent activities around the room to provide them with the opportunity to practice skills and learn new things. We provide a variety of activities each day in all areas, indoors and in the garden. We observe and assess their learning by sharing in children's play to support and challenge their learning further, taking observations and notes of their thoughts and ideas and compiling their learning journey throughout the year.



We truly value the importance of allowing children to learn through their play. This enables children to take charge of their own learning by experimenting with familiar activities which are relevant to them as individuals. This empowers them to be motivated learners – a skill which sets them up to be ready for school and lifelong learning.

‘Play is the highest form of research,’

Albert Einstein

We know from research that children learn through ‘actively doing’ things that capture their interest. Children’s brains develop rapidly and are already ‘pruning’ connections that they do not need or use.

Music and Movement...

Physical movement is driven by the brain’s need to create sensation, so we encourage our Explorers to move freely and connect with each other through lots of different ways. Wiggly bodies mean wiggly brains. It means children’s brains are active and curious, looking for more stimulation, new ideas and greater challenges.



We further support and channel their energy throughout our weekly ‘Music and Movement’ sessions where children are supported to develop their physical skills and abilities at the same time as having lots of fun alongside their peers. These sessions familiarise the children with changes to routine and develop their exploring and listening skills while in an open space, like they will during their P.E. lessons at school. To support them further we ask that you provide a ‘P.E. kit’ so that they can practice independently changing their clothes and shoes in readiness for school, we ask that this comprises of a t-shirt and a pair of shorts/jogging bottoms (weather dependent) and a pair of trainers or pumps. Teachers that we have liaised with all seem to share the same challenge when they start with their new Reception class; that the children struggle to dress and undress themselves, and/or be able to change their shoes independently, thus taking up most of their allotted P.E. slots supporting them to do so.

Is my child ready for school?

When it comes to the transition to school, many parents feel that their child has to be able to write their name, recognise numbers 1-20, say the alphabet in sequence and recognise letters. However, this will all come. All children develop at different rates and in different ways and it is our job as experienced early year’s practitioners to build on the child’s skills to enable them to do this when they are ready. An example of how we support a child’s mark making, or writing as it is better known, is by planning and offering sessions of ‘funky fingers’ throughout the day. This is when we provide activities that work the children’s shoulders, elbows and wrist pivots which enables them to strengthen their muscles and movements, and finger co-ordination; this, in turn, will lead to the promotion of their fine motor movements which will overall lead to supporting their early writing skills.



We work very closely with all of the local schools to ensure a smooth and happy transition for your child to ‘big school’. At Early Years cluster meetings, we talk with Reception teachers to share practice and find out their main priorities for children’s school readiness. Teachers tell us that providing children with a language rich environment supports children in the skill of listening, which is the foundation of early reading and writing. In the Explorers room, we follow the ‘Letters and Sounds’ phase 1 framework which promotes lots of rhythm and rhyme activities and listening games, as well as exploring sounds through instruments and body percussion. We provide lots of opportunities for the children to experience regular, planned activities to teach them to tune in their ‘listening ears’ and to talk extensively about what they hear, see and experience; which all, in turn, supports their developing phonetic skills and vocabulary development. These are the early foundations we support them



with here that they will develop their skills with further at school, in order to learn to 'decode' and 'encode', or read and write as you will more likely know it. If a child is showing a natural ability and desire to stretch themselves further, we will of course provide them with opportunities to do so. After Christmas, we introduce our 'Sound of the week' - this is where we have a weekly focus of a particular sound and we encourage the children to find the most obscure and interesting objects that incorporate that sound at home and ask that they bring them in to put on our interactive display table for that week. You will receive a copy of the list of dates and sounds nearer the time, so that you and your child are fully prepared for this.

Local teachers are also very keen for us to continue to focus on the personal, social and emotional aspects of the children's development. This ensures happy and confident children are able to leave us ready to start their new adventures at school and be able to confidently interact and communicate with their new environment, adults and peers and enjoy a successful school experience.

Our planning wall demonstrates what the children have been doing, what they're interested in and how we have enhanced their play for learning. We show this through observations, photos and captions we overhear or are told throughout their play, or alongside their artwork and creations.

Our room expectations...

We want you and your child to be happy. We give all children a safe, caring and stimulating environment where friendship groups are formed, feelings and emotions are recognised, explored and supported, and lifelong skills are gained.

We have some Golden Rules in the Explorers and they are:

- To be happy and have fun!
- To share and to care, for each other and our toys
 - We use our listening ears
 - We keep the classroom tidy
- We use kind hands and kind words
 - We use our walking feet inside
- We have tidy legs and listen quietly when we sit on the carpet



We would be very grateful if you could reinforce these at home and use the key phrases in your own behaviour management. This will support the children in becoming familiar with and learning our boundaries, so that we can best ensure the Explorers Room is a fun and safe place for everyone. We practice sustained shared thinking with the children which supports their ability to independently problem solve and work with us to manage unwanted behaviour within the room. We take every opportunity to support the development of their vocabulary and understanding and to take their creativity to the next level, by encouraging the children to think for themselves; as this is an invaluable life skill for them to develop. We do this through using open questioning and encouraging them to think about things in a different way and from others' perspectives.

Outside and Mess...

We get very messy at nursery! Children are encouraged to play outside whatever the weather and they experience high levels of learning, engagement and wellbeing whilst in the woods and playing in the mud kitchen. Please provide your child with a change of clothes and footwear every day and a coat/splash suit/hat/wellington boots/sun cream as needed for the weather. Nursery sun cream is provided at a small cost; however you are welcome to provide your own. We do advise for your child not to wear any items of clothing that are precious as, as we said; messy play is encouraged in the Explorers room.

To help keep track of your child's clothes, shoes and belongings, please make sure that everything is clearly named. Nametags and labels are cheap and easy to order online but permanent marker on the labels already in clothes works just as well.

So much goes on in the Explorers room – please get involved and try to read all of our notices. If you would like more information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak to a member of the Explorers team.

Top Tips for learning at home:

- ✓ Sing and tell nursery rhymes
- ✓ Talk about the numbers, colours, shapes, words and letters you see when you are out and about
- ✓ Use open questions and statements when you communicate, for example; 'Wow! I really love what you have made, can you tell me about it?'
- ✓ Allow your child to cut and stick pictures from magazines and use clean recycling 'rubbish' for junk modelling
 - ✓ Cook/bake/eat together
- ✓ Play and be active together – rolling around and being active is good for making brain connections
- ✓ Use the weather – shadows, rain, puddles, snow, wind, mist and sun – to extend your child's vocabulary
 - ✓ Share a book
 - ✓ Talk to your child and listen to them when they talk to you
- ✓ Encourage your child to carry out activities independently, for example, support them to put on their own shoes/coat and wipe their own bottom when they go to the toilet

The opportunities for learning are endless.

We are developing some 'Home Learning' bags so that we can begin lending you resources to explore together at home.

Things your child will need while they are in the Explorers room

- Spare clothes and underwear (in case of toileting accidents or an over-indulgence in messy play!)
- A 'P.E. kit' for our movement sessions (this can comprise of; shorts/jogging bottoms depending on the weather, a change of top/t-shirt and some pumps/trainers)
- A Splash suit and other appropriate outdoor clothing, including wellington boots that can be left at Nursery
 - A sun/winter hat and gloves (weather/season dependent)

Eating

Nursery provides your child with food and drink for the day. All food is prepared and cooked on the premises by our cooks; Clare and Faye, who are assisted by Adam, on a job share of Monday-Wednesday lunchtime and then Wednesday lunchtime-Friday.



We operate a 'rolling snack' where children are able to independently access their snack during the morning and afternoon free play sessions. This comprises of a healthy snack such as fruit, vegetable sticks or bread sticks and a cup of milk or water.

At lunchtime, all the downstairs children sit together in small family groups. Staff serve up the meal to the children directly and each child is encouraged to try at least a small portion of their meal. There is often enough left for 'seconds' for healthier appetites! Fruit is offered as an alternative to dessert.

In The Explorers Room children are encouraged to be mealtime helpers to encourage their independence, they help to lay the table and clear away the dishes, with the support of an adult. The 'downstairs' children join together for tea, in small family groups and any siblings have the option to sit together.

Good hygiene practices are encouraged before each mealtime when children wash their hands in the bathroom and at the end of each meal the children each have a disposable wipe (provided by nursery) to clean their hands and faces with.

Menus are displayed on the notice board in the hall nearest the cloakroom and copies are available from the office. If your child has any vegetarian, medical or cultural dietary needs please inform the nursery in writing (an accompanying doctor's letter is needed for allergies and medical needs) and our cook will be pleased to prepare a suitable alternative meal. The whole nursery follows the 'Eat Better Start Better' guidelines, from The Children's Food Trust to encourage our healthy eating ethos.

Children have access to water each meal time and have access to fresh water throughout the day. Explorers provide a water bottle for each child to enable independent access to water throughout the day.



Illness

If your child is unwell and is unable to cope with the normal nursery day then please keep him/her at home. If your child has an infectious disease then it is very important that you inform the nursery and that the child is excluded from attending according to Nursery Policy (we follow guidance from the Health Protection Agency). Children will only be re-admitted to the Nursery after an illness at the discretion of the Nursery Manager. If your child is not well enough to cope with a 'routine day' then you must refrain from sending them to Nursery. *If your child becomes unwell during the day, one of the Parents/Carers will be contacted to arrange collection of the child as soon as possible.*

Medication

Nursery is willing to administer medicine when necessary. You must complete a Medical Authorisation form each day your child needs to be given medicine. These are available from the Explorers Room. Parents must hand the medicine directly to a staff member so that it can be locked away securely in the medicine cabinet. During the summer, we spend as much time out in the sunshine as we can. We feel it is extremely important to protect their skin from the sun so we ask you to provide us with a sunhat and a clearly named bottle of suitable sun block unless you would like your child to use the nursery sun cream, in which case a fee of £4.00 is required.

Accidents

Unfortunately, occasional accidents do happen and these are recorded on an accident form. If your child is hurt or injured in any way during the day an entry will be made on an accident report form and you will be asked to sign this as parent/carer (you will also be issued with a copy of the accident report) a signature is required to acknowledge that you have been told about the accident. We may also contact you if we are concerned or consider it necessary to.



If your child has an accident at home, we ask that you let the staff in the room know. They will ask you to complete a Home Accident/Injury form.

All Staff in the Explorers Room hold certificates in Paediatric First Aid.

Blossom

At Babraham Nursery we use Blossom Educational, which is a software platform that has been created specifically for use within the childcare sector. This enables us to create a digital record of your child's development and daily activities during their time at nursery. Parents have access to the Blossom app, where we share our weekly observations of your child's progress and a daily diary of their activities.

Observations are completed every week using the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters' framework. This enables us to monitor and keep a record of your child's individual progress and development, it can also help us to identify and areas of development where your child may need some additional support. Your child's key person is responsible for completing their weekly observations and once they have been completed they will be available for you to view on the Blossom app.

General information

Throughout the year, the nursery and Parent Sub Committee organises many functions and events for all the children and their families to attend and enjoy. You will be kept informed of any forthcoming events in the monthly nursery newsletter. If you are interested in joining this committee please speak to the Manager; Alison or one of the Deputies, Philippa or Claire.

We encourage sharing information about your child with other settings if they attend one. This would include 4 monthly reports, safe guarding forms, transition to school forms and any other relevant information. Please fill in the permission form below and return to the room as soon as possible.

Group and Individual photographs are taken each year. Although you are under no obligation to do so, parents may order a set (or sets!) of photographs.

I/ We do/ do not give permission to share information with other settings

Child's Name:

Signed: Date:.....

Our Daily Routine

A guide to the Explorers room routine is as follows:-



- 8.45 am** Nursery opens.
- 8.45-9.30** Children arrive and are settled into the free play session and are encouraged to use the self-registration board, children can also use the small outdoor free flow space.
- 9.30am** Registration time – children gather on the carpet and we all say ‘Good morning’. We discuss the day/date and month and then describe the weather. We count how many children there are before going for snack or to an activity.
- 9.40-11.00** Rolling snack is available while the children continue to explore the environment and activities
- 10.00 am** Free flow play, children have the opportunity to investigate the garden area or visit other rooms independently.
- 11.15 am** Tidy up time followed by Group time all together on the carpet
- 11.45 am** Bathroom time and hand washing for lunch.
- 12.00pm** Lunch time.
- 12.45pm** Quiet time and free play around the Explorers environment – this is also the time we use to explore our garden, have our music and movement sessions and small group times on different days throughout the week
- 2.15pm** Children have free access to the rolling snack.
- 3.00pm** Garden time
- 3.45pm** Garden time finishes
- 3.50pm** Bathroom and hand washing
- 4.00pm** Tea time.
- 4.45pm** Free play/Free flow session.
- 5.30pm-5.45pm** Tidy up and Story time.
- 5.45pm** Nursery closes (**5.15pm on a Friday**)

For the daily exchange of information it is encouraged the parents/carers please arrive **BEFORE CLOSING TIME** if they want to hear about their child’s day. As you can appreciate, it is a long day for the Nursery Staff and they like to leave promptly.

Nursery closes at 5.45 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 5.15 p.m. on Fridays. A fine will be levied if you collect your child after these times - it will be £5 up to the first 10 minutes late and then £10 for every period of up to 5 minutes thereafter (as by the Nursery radio controlled clock)

When you enter the Explorers Room...

You are a Scientist

You are **Important**

You are an **Explorer**

You are *Loved*

You are Respected

You are a **Friend**

You are the Reason

We are HERE

