

## *Heathside Parent/ Carers Group*



### **Last newsletter before Christmas**

Wednesday 17th  
December 2008

Hello,

Well, this is the last newsletter before the children break for the Christmas holidays (hooray, you say), and I thought I would take this opportunity to thank you all for your support in the Parent Group sessions, which Odran kindly arranged every 2 weeks. It was nice to see those who attend regularly and lots of new faces at sessions.

The Holiday Club will also start its services during the Christmas holiday, and we hope that it is a huge success.

We have just had our last informal session, but watch this space because Odran will arrange the sessions as soon as he is able. I know there are plans to have a Pampered Chef session, which means eating food and buying gadgets for your home.

I hope that those of you who have managed to get to the school plays have enjoyed them and I'm sure we would all like to extend thanks to the staff and the children for putting on 2 wonderful performances. I also understand that Goldilocks made an appearance at the performance on the 16th.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a joyful, peaceful and calm festive season, and we hope you have a prosperous New Year.

Vivienne Tincombe

### **No Limits**

In case you are unaware of No Limits, this is a joint partnership between Suffolk County Council, Children and Young People's Service and Health. It is a register of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities in Suffolk. Everyone who registers receives a quarterly newsletter, with all sorts of contact details in it, stories and activities. To register is free, and you can contact No Limits on 01473 341878, Email: [info@nolimits.org.uk](mailto:info@nolimits.org.uk) or visit their website on [www.nolimits.org.uk](http://www.nolimits.org.uk).

## Bonus for Disabled Children and Carers

It was announced in the Pre-Budget report that disabled children and their carers are set to receive a £60 bonus. The payment is on top of the annual £10 Christmas bonus given to those in receipt of DLA and Carers Allowance.

The chancellor announced that between January and March 2009, an extra £60 will be paid to disabled children and carers receiving the qualifying benefits.

For further information about the Christmas bonus and to see if you qualify, please visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) or telephone the Contact a Family Helpline on 0808 808 3555.

## Visit by Claire Gwatkin on 5th November

We were pleased to welcome Claire Gwatkin, our link social worker to the Parent Group session. Some of you may know Claire through her drop in sessions she has run this year in school. She came to talk to us about the role of a social worker and told us a little about her background and how she got into the job. The session was well attended, and was a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Claire explained to the group that the social workers role is to support the child and the family. She also explained that while she cannot provide all the support that the parents needed, she may be able to give you some advice on where to obtain the help needed. She also explained that while it is not necessary to have a social worker involved in your child's care, it can sometimes 'open a few more doors' for you than not having one.

She also explained that she is happy to meet with any parents or carers who either don't have a social worker or would like advice on how to get one. You can contact her via the school, or you can see her when she does her drop-ins next year.

If it is something you would like to have a group session on, then maybe we can arrange it as one of the Parent Group sessions. Please let either Odran or myself know and we can put it forward as a suggestion.

The session was really informative, and Claire was thanked by the group for taking the time to attend. We look forward to her attending again in the near future.

## Tony and Elaine from Acorn Village

At the parent group on Friday 5th December, we were delighted to welcome Tony Green and Elaine Baalham from Acorn Village, who had agreed to come and tell us about the work they do.

Acorn Village is an organisation which is a community within the local community of Mistley, Manningtree and Lawford which is able to provide various living options with the residential and supported living schemes and therefore has a variety of properties ranging from single flats, double flats, group houses of 6, 8, 5 or 3 on-site and four houses in the local community. It covers 14 acres and the residents can meet for social interaction, work and therapeutic activities. They support residents with Learning Disabilities and believe that 'Life is For Living'.

Tony took the time to explain what kind of activities are available both in the community and on-site, and that support is given to the residents based on their needs. Staffing is often recruited within the local community, and they have approximately 200 staff, depending on the level of support needed.

Tony explained that he regularly visited schools and groups to promote understanding among children and adults of the work of Acorn Village.

The parents who attended the group found it very informative, and one parent has visited the site to have a look around.

The parents thanked Tony and Elaine for taking the time to visit us.

To contact them, you can view their website which is [www.acornvillages.com](http://www.acornvillages.com), and go through to the 'Contact Us' page, or alternatively you can telephone them on 01206 394124 or email [info@acornvillages.com](mailto:info@acornvillages.com).

## Aiming High

You might have heard of the 'Aiming High' project, if not then you might be interested in this. The title is Suffolk's Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks Pathfinder Programme, and the vision is to develop a 'Travel Agency' model and electronic booking system, which will enable families to access a wide range of new and exciting short break opportunities.

There was a recent Consultation Event at Trinity Park which was attended by approximately 250 children, young people and parents (nearly 70 families), carers and volunteers from across the county. Childcare had been laid on so that families could attend the presentation, while their children were being looked after.

To learn more about this opportunity or to share your thoughts about short break provision by completing the Family Carer Questionnaire visit

[www.nolimits.org.uk/aiminghigh](http://www.nolimits.org.uk/aiminghigh) or contact the Aiming High Development Team on 01379 873666 or email [aiminghigh@cyp.suffolkcc.gov.uk](mailto:aiminghigh@cyp.suffolkcc.gov.uk).

## School Re-Organisation Meeting on 4th December

Following the consultation evening in October, it was thought that it might be a good idea to hold an additional meeting for those who could not attend the evening, so that they could give their thoughts about the re-organization of the special schools in Ipswich. We were delighted that Cheryl Sharland, Kate Thomas and Adrian Orr came along from Suffolk County Council to talk to us about it.

Adrian said that there were some issues which had been raised in October which had given them food for thought and they had found it useful. Parents asked the question about Transport, especially the fact that the children will have to go through the town to get to the new school which is planned for co-location on the site of Westbourne School. Kate mentioned that it was something they planned to look into very closely, but they said they accepted the concerns that were raised. Children who have dual placements will continue to access their local mainstream school but for other children, where some time in a mainstream school is appropriate, they may access Whitehouse Primary School for some of their educational provision.

Another parent then asked why there were plans to put the new school on a mainstream site. Adrian explained that the Building Schools for the Future money is only given if the special school is co-located on a high school site.

The parents were then shown a project which had been built in Swindon in 32 acres of land, which showed primary and secondary mainstream and special schools on the same site, but with a separate provision.

One parent asked how secure the funding is for this project, considering the current financial climate. Kate said that the £150million is secure for Ipswich, however she could not say about other stages of the change.

When asked why no other school was chosen, it was mentioned that other schools either didn't have the space to accommodate a new building, or that they were not in that wave of changes. Westbourne was the biggest site.

All three schools involved are putting together a 'Strategy for Change' report, outlining their vision of what would be needed in their schools. Kate said that nothing was set in stone, and the first step is to put the proposal to the Cabinet on January 13th 2009. More will be known after that date.

### Contact Details

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