

Report to Ashby St. Mary Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting,  
Thursday 23rd April 2009  
From Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Pre-school and  
Parent Baby and Toddler Group

**Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Pre-school** currently has 21 registered children attending up to five sessions a week. From January we have been able to offer two back-to-back sessions on Tuesdays with lunch club, which has proved very popular with the children and parents alike.

We have been working closely with Mrs. Innes, Headteacher of Thurton Primary School to improve transition for the children starting school in September. We have compiled a programme of visits to the school and of visits by the teachers to pre-school through the summer term. It is especially important this year as we have fourteen children starting Thurton School in September and one child going to Seething School.

Last September the new Early Years Foundation Stage became mandatory and this has led to us revising our practice. Two members of staff gained The Certificate in Early Years Practice level 4 with the Open University in December and one member of staff the Diploma in Pre-school Practice level 3 last July so I am pleased to say we have a highly qualified and experienced staff team to put the new Foundation Stage into practice.

In practical terms it means we put the child at the centre of practice and plan for their interests, helping them to make choices in play from a well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment. The children have enjoyed the freedom of choosing outdoor play throughout the year, except in really bad weather conditions, eventually we would like to provide an all weather shelter so they can have uninterrupted play outdoors.

As you can see by the number of children leaving in July the amount of children attending in the Autumn Term will be very low and consequently our income will be drastically cut. The Committee has worked very hard to build up our finances by supporting village events and through our own programme of fundraising including a very successful Christmas Bazaar but we will need to attract new families. We are planning to hold open days to promote the group and later in the year to celebrate our Fortieth Anniversary.

We are very grateful to Ashby St. Mary Parish Council and the local community for their continued support and hope to carry on providing a valuable early years service for many years to come.

**Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Parent, Baby & Toddler Group** had a short break over the winter months but with an enthusiastic parent and her support team it is now open every week again. The group offers parents the opportunity to meet and chat and the children to play and socialise together. It is also very important to pre-school as it gives parents an introduction to our provision. Toddler group has a planned programme of events each week, which has included growing cress seeds and making wild animals masks and will start the new term off with 'St. George and the Dragon' theme.