

TOTS AND TODDLERS REPORT 2014/15

Our weekly session of Tots and Toddlers continues to be very popular. The number of parents, grandparents, carers, babies and toddlers dropping in regularly every week is very heartening, and to know that St. Mary's has such a welcoming and friendly reputation as a result is very encouraging to the team. The fact that we open every Monday afternoon during the year, including during holiday times, only closing for Bank Holidays and the week before Easter and Christmas, is much appreciated by those parents/carers who only have very young children as we are one of the few groups who do this, most working to term times. The number of families attending during the summer holiday period drops considerably, but those who do come are very grateful that we do remain open when all the other groups in the area are closed. At £1.00 per family per session they also think they are getting good value for money as they can consume as many cups of tea or juice, biscuits (and occasionally cakes) as they like. Our last sessions before Christmas and Easter are provided free of charge, with goodies such as Christmas treats, hot cross buns, Easter eggs etc. on offer, which is an added bonus.

Our team of volunteer helpers work together extremely well, and our aim is to provide a welcoming and safe environment for children and carers alike. We are very grateful to Maggie and Daphne for providing the occasional emergency cover, and also grateful to Daphne and Janet for their musical accompaniment, especially at Christmas and Easter.

Our craft sessions are very popular, and although we try to keep the basic techniques within the reach of the very young children we are catering for, many of the parent/carers enjoy joining in and encouraging their children to participate. Very much easier when in a group than trying to get your toddler to handle a glue stick in a responsible manner when you are on your own! Play dough is also very popular with children and parent/carers alike and encourages the children to act responsibly (don't eat it, and wipe your hands thoroughly before leaving the table!) The "Snack Spot" table next to the hatch likewise encourages the children to sit for their snack and drink, and they are encouraged not to bring their refreshments to the craft or play dough tables, for obvious reasons! We finish each session with a sing-song, and again the children are encouraged to sit and participate. It is encouraging to see how, even those who are reluctant "sitters", eventually enjoy participating. They are rewarded with a rendition of Sleeping Bunnies, which they all love, and a noisy blast with the percussion instruments.

After paying our expenses (craft materials, new toys, refreshments etc.) our surplus funds are paid into church funds, and we also collect for The Children's Society. Consequently we hope that, as well as providing an asset to the community, we are also contributing to the welfare of the family of St. Mary's

The Team