

St Paul's Pre-School Report on 2020 for Church APCM 24/5/2021

On Sunday 1st March 2020 over 100 people gathered for a Service of Celebration for 40 years of St Paul's Pre-school. Past & present leaders, staff, volunteers, pupils and parents joined together to give thanks for the dedicated service of the many who saw the need to help young families in our community. The Bishop of Tonbridge attended a special lunch for parents and children on the Monday, along with special guests, Jean Pogose the first leader, Judith Frost, and Lindsey Lamb representing all the other current church members who had an association with the pre-school.

Four weeks later the staff and parents were saying premature farewells as the pre-school closed due to the pandemic restrictions, not knowing when the pre-school would open again.

Staff kept in touch with parents and the 36 children with face-time sessions and sending worksheets and play activities. During the summer we held an outdoor, socially distanced, by-appointment, rolling end-of-year presentation ceremony for children moving on to school.

In the end the pre-school did not return until September with 20 children registered as several parents chose to defer sending children to pre-school. Numbers rose steadily after half-term with Lorraine and the team continuing to implement covid-safe measures including additional cleaning and social distancing amongst the staff. These measures restricted other adults coming into the setting so at Christmas the nativity was videoed, thanks to the support of Anna and Simon Dalwood, and shared with parents and grandparents.

Not surprisingly 2020 was a difficult year and ended on an uncertain note as the pandemic restrictions post-Christmas put the January re-opening on hold. So as not to leave this on a cliff-hanger, unlike other settings who have folded completely, St Paul's Pre-school was in a position to get through the period of loss of income, helped in a small part by the Job Retention Scheme, and is now in a good position moving forward.

Liz Spencer

Chair, St Paul's Beckenham Pre-School

21st April 2021