The Cottage Kindergarten in Helensburgh has been named ‘Nursery of the Year’ in a competition against other nursery schools from across the UK. The prestigious award is sponsored by Nursery World.

The Kindergarten had previously been told it had been shortlisted for the award during the summer and that it was the only Scottish nursery school to make the final shortlist. Owner and Manager Helen Baynham said she was delighted to have made the final shortlist but was over the moon when they heard they had actually won.

The Nursery has been open for just three years, and started with a handful of children when it first opened its doors. It is now very close to capacity with a maximum of 23 three and four year olds attending for three hours either in the morning or afternoon during term times.

The Play Talk Read Roadshow will once again be visiting Argyll & Bute next year. The smaller bus will be spending two weeks in February and a further two weeks in March touring the area. The bus hope to visit throughout Argyll & Bute but destinations will include Dunoon, the Isle of Bute and Campbeltown. These FREE events are open to parents, carers, childcare workers and childminders. A programme outlining dates and venues will be distributed early next year.

Wishing all our groups, staff and young people a very Merry Christmas.
Badden Farm Nursery preschool children enjoyed dressing in their Halloween finery this year. Behind the children is a fantastic wall display of the 'Witch on a Broom'.

Photo courtesy of Jean Evans, Badden Farm Nursery, Lochgilphead

BORROW A BOOK
BORROW A BAG

Children at Clyde Cottage Nursery, Dunoon have recently enjoyed their new 'Borrow a Book', 'Borrow a bag' initiative.

The library started off with a small number of books but has grown since, with children bringing their own books in, which widens the choice and allows other children to borrow.

The library (which has no stamping in and out process) allows children who don’t always have access to many books to choose one, put it in one of the borrowed bags, take it home for a few days, enjoy reading it with their parents then bring it back and choose another one.

However if a book has been particularly enjoyed by any of the children, they are allowed to keep it!

Join I CAN for the Chatterbox Challenge 2013
The Mad Chatter's Tea Party with Humf
March 2013

Calling all nurseries and pre-schools

I CAN is inviting hundreds of thousands of little Chatterboxes to have fun with a tea-time theme for the biggest Chatterbox Challenge yet!

I CAN are also very excited to have an extra special guest - Humf, from the popular preschool TV series currently airing on Nick Jr.

To register and pick up free resources, visit their website:

www.chatterboxchallenge.org.uk
Forest School activities are underway again and the children, sporting their new waterproofs, are as enthusiastic as ever! Lochgilphead Joint Campus Pre 5 Unit was very fortunate to have Gunnlaug Tjelmeland, who is involved in outdoor education in her native Norway, on campus throughout the month of September. She was keen to join in with our Forest School sessions and introduced some new activities using ropes. The children are able to balance, hang upside down, turn somersaults, pull themselves up slopes and manoeuvre commando style along the rope! They have a great time no matter what the weather!

Photos and article courtesy of Helen Dickie

Bookbug Primary 1 Family pack

This year all Primary One pupils across Scotland were gifted the Bookbug Primary 1 Family Pack containing:

- The 3 books shortlisted for this year’s Scottish Children’s Book Awards, *Jack and the Flum Flum Tree* by Julia Donaldson, *Solomon Crocodile* by Catherine Rayner and *The Day Louis Got Eaten* by John Fardell
- An activity book filled with games and activities for Primary 1 children and their families to complete together.

This year, for the first time, all schools were provided with an extra set of books for P1 teachers, allowing them to become familiar with the pack that the pupils will receive and build the pack gifting into lesson plans for the term.

Lochnell Primary held their gifting event during Book Week Scotland.

“As part of Book Week celebrations the Early Level children at Lochnell Primary and Nursery invited parents into school for a reading play date. Grown-ups could bring in their favourite book to read or choose to listen to another person read and we had some brilliant stories read to us.

Matthew’s Dad read *Lost and Found*, Adam’s Mum read *Mr Magnolia* and Olivia’s Mum read *Stick Man*. Rachael’s Dad read *The Giant Jam Sandwich*, Lewis’ Mum read *The Selfish Crocodile* and Megan and Alexander’s grannies read *A Squash and a Squeeze* and *Alfie Gets in First*. What a treat it was.

To say thank you, Primary 1 helped Mrs Cameron read *Jack and the Flum Flum Tree*. We had found granny’s patchwork bag full of all of the things in the story – everything from tent pegs to tom-tom drums.

After all of the stories, the children were given book bags from BookBug. We couldn’t believe how lucky we were to find out that all 4 of the books we have read in the last few days were in the bags AND we got to take them home and keep them. Thank you BookBug.

Recently twilight training sessions on effective gifting of the Bookbug Pirate Pack for 3 year olds have taken place across Argyll & Bute, so please share with us any stories and photos you have of gifting events involving parents and carers.

*Linda Burgar, Early Years Development Officer*
Rothesay Primary and Pre-5, along with parents, carers and friends, celebrated the 'Grand Opening' of our new outdoor area on Wednesday 3rd October.

The area was planned, almost 2 years ago, by our present P2 when they were in the nursery and it has taken a lot of hard work and determination for it to develop into the challenging, exciting and beautiful space it is today.

The children decided they wanted a workers area, a quiet place, a secret hide-out, a place to plant flowers and vegetables, a slide and a tunnel, a huge sandpit and lots of music... and a place to find creepy crawlies and to fly with butterflies. With the help of a brilliant landscape designer (and lucky for us - pre-5 parent) Susan McFarlane, we were able to turn the children's dreams into reality. So, today the children dropped the ribbon at the gate and with three cheers for Susan and our whole community we opened the garden and enjoyed an 'autumn buffet' made by the children and staff.

We can't thank everyone enough for their support with this project and feel very lucky to have this wonderful new learning area for our early years, which the children have named 'The Flower Garden'.

Maureen Shaw, Depute Head Pre-5 to P5

Healthy Start is a UK wide Government Scheme to improve the health of pregnant women and families on benefits/tax credits. Eligible women and families will be sent vouchers which can be exchanged for liquid cows' milk, infant formula and fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables. Vitamins are also available for pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children.

For more information, ask parents to contact their local midwife, Health Visitor or GP or direct them to the website www.healthystart.nhs.uk Tel: 0845 607 6823.

Children and Families Social Work Grant applications for 2013/2014 will be available week commencing Monday 7th January 2013. If you wish to apply for funding for your group, please contact Sheena Stewart Tel: 01369 708517 or email sheena.stewart@argyll-bute.gov.uk

The Scottish Government’s National Parenting Strategy was launched in October. To download a copy, use this link:
The children at Campbeltown Nursery are keeping fit this November - they are going swimming at the local leisure centre (Aqualibrium), and using up a lot of energy in the soft play and ball pool. Many are returning to nursery in the late afternoon to take part in a Yogabugs club, where they are acting out stories by stretching their bodies in different postures. They are learning all about building their strength and stamina and improving their flexibility.

Article and photos courtesy of
Viv Campbell, Manager

Last session we began our Early Level Class and we didn’t know if such a big change would be a success! Now one year on, the positive results of this change can be seen:

- Motivation of the children from 3 year olds to P2
- Positive comments from parents
- Children of different ages sharing their skills
- Enrichment of language for the 3 & 4 year olds
- Positive relationships formed between staff team and a wider range of children.
- Strong and effective joint working by the Early Level team
- Teacher input at the preschool level
- Staff strengths used to benefit a wide range of children
- Increased focus and challenge in activities
- Increased Forest School provision
- Reorganisation of resources to support focus and challenge

Article and photograph courtesy of Fiona Johnson, Headteacher
The children and staff at Smarties Nursery, Oban, recently enjoyed two outdoor learning days; one at Ganavan beach and the other at Dunstaffnage Castle. The children had a fantastic time working as a team and exploring the area. At Dunstaffnage Castle, the children found monsters and caves and tree swings. When they returned to nursery the children used their imagination along with photos that they had taken to come up with a fantastic story called "Bears, Monsters, Ponies, Trees and Leaves at Dunstaffnage Castle". Here are a couple of extracts from the story........ "I went into a puddle and went down that hole, it was dark" "There was a strawberry monster in the tree trunk house, it was going to jump in his puddle, then he came back to meet us" "There was no monster, he was shopping. I think he was buying carrots." The children had great imaginations with this story and each child had their turn at writing a bit.

Article and photos courtesy of Leanne MacKay, Manager

Pre-five Mini Movers & Parachute Festival 2012

Last month 15 pre-five groups came together in the OLI area for the Pre-five Mini Movers & Parachute Festival as part of the biennial Oban & Lorn Sports Festival at Atlantis Leisure. The event which was established in 2008 ran for the 5th consecutive year and was organised and delivered by a partnership between Active Schools, Early Years, Community Learning, and Atlantis Leisure. The event was once again supported by ABCD - Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease.

On the day 212 children were given an opportunity to experience parachute games including cat and mouse, blast off, rollerball, and twister. "Mini movers - mini kickers" games were led by the Atlantis team. The parachute games were ably supervised by SVQ students studying CCLD from Argyll College who recently attended TOP Start TOP Tots / Parachute Games training delivered by Active Schools and Early Years.

The pre-five practitioners and children who attended all enthusiastically participated in the games and activities on the day.

The annual event has been well attended over the years and is a highlight for many who have taken part. The event would not be possible without the excellent partnership working at local level between 3rd sector, further education, volunteers and statutory services.

Article from report by Dale Kupris (Active Schools) and Margaret Dalgleish (Early Years & Family Support Worker, OLI).
**Ready Steady Baby!**

NHS Health Scotland has launched a new smartphone app – Ready Steady Baby!

This free app is designed for new – and soon-to-be mums, as a guide to pregnancy, birth and early motherhood. It offers support and advice direct from the NHS that will help to keep new mums informed throughout pregnancy and beyond.

The features include:

- Pregnancy timeline that helps you track body changes and baby development
- Week-by-week reminders for folic acid, exercise and infant feeding
- Video clips to help with breastfeeding and effective communication

[http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk](http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk)

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**Continuous learning made e–asy with SCMA**

SCMA has announced that four Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshops will be available through an e–learning platform in 2013.

Infection Prevention and Control, Child Led Planning, Safe & Secure: Child Protection and GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) will be available next year to childminders as active learning resources.

Childminders who have been unable to attend our group–based workshops due to their location or circumstances, will soon be able to take part in SCMA’s training opportunities; this will allow childminders to progress with their development from the comfort of their own home.

[www.childminding.org](http://www.childminding.org)

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The Argyll & Bute Council Community Childminding Service works to support families experiencing a temporary time of crisis to prevent situations deteriorating to a point where more substantial intervention is required. Crisis situations may be around substance issues, birth of a child, domestic abuse, mental or physical health problems. The primary focus is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child, but engagement through advice and signposting also takes place with the parents. If you would like any more information about becoming a Community Childminder please contact Early Years [early.years@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:early.years@argyll-bute.gov.uk) Tel: 01369 708517.
**CHRISTMAS TREE COOKIES**

You will need

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 cups unsifted all-purposed flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
Red and green coloured sugar and/or gumdrops

In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter with the sugar for two minutes or until creamy with an electric mixer. Beat in the eggs one at a time, followed by the vanilla extract. In a large sifter, measure the flour, baking soda and salt. Sift this over the egg mixture and beat on medium speed until a soft dough forms. If the dough seems a little sticky, beat in two to three additional tablespoons of flour. Scrape the dough out of the bowl and form it into two balls. Cover and chill for one hour. Preheat the oven to 375°. Line a large baking sheet with greaseproof paper. Remove the dough from the refrigerator about 10 to 15 minutes before you plan to use it. Knead briefly on a floured work surface. When the dough is fairly pliable, roll it out with a floured rolling pin to about 1/8 inch thickness. Cut out cookies using a tree-shaped cookie cutter. Using a spatula, transfer the cookies to the baking sheet. Sprinkle the cookies with red and green coloured sugar and/or gumdrops. Bake the cookies for 8/10 minutes, rotate oven dish once. Transfer onto a wire rack to cool.

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**CHRISTMAS**

Christmas comes with children singing
Christmas comes with sleigh bells ringing
Christmas comes with frosty nights
Christmas comes with snowball fights

Christmas comes with Santa Claus
Christmas comes with snowy floors
Christmas comes with all the Reindeers
Christmas comes with children’s cheers

Christmas comes, wish it would last,
Christmas comes, like in the past,
Christmas comes after such a long wait,
Christmas comes and it will be great.

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**MAKE IT!**

Glass ball ornament
White craft glue
Wide paintbrush
Seed beads
Bowl
String for hanging

Place the seed beads into a bowl. Pipe glue all over the ornament and spread it around with a paintbrush, creating an even coat. Hold the ornament by the hanger and roll it around the beads. You can lift beads with your fingers and sprinkle them on to fill any missed spots. Run some string or ribbon through the ornament hanger and hang somewhere safe to dry.

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The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Early Years or of Argyll & Bute Council