Simple Christmas Traditions at Hambledon Nursery

As the festive season approaches, there's nothing quite like experiencing the wonder and magic of Christmas through the eyes of the children at Hambledon nursery school to bring warmth and joy to the hearts of the adults working with them. For families with young children, creating their own cherished memories during this time of year is a heartwarming time. Traditions become important as they come to be repeated year on year and so at the nursery, we value many of these key traditions as we come to explore them once the countdown to Christmas begins.

Deck the Halls

The first step to a memorable Christmas is surely the act of decorating our homes, or the nursery school together. Allowing the children to assist in the hanging of baubles, stringing up of lights, and adorning the Christmas tree helps foster their sense of belonging and membership to the community of the nursery. Not forgetting to blast some classic carols in the background to set the mood and make the experience extra special. Watching the children's faces light up as they place ornaments on the tree is priceless.

Christmas Cards

We encourage the children to write Christmas cards and post them in the post box, which magically appears in the reception area of the nursery from the 1st of December each year, topped in tinsel. Parents at home support in the endeavour of having a go at mark making in their Christmas cards, providing valuable additional pencil control practice, but more importantly to share in the joy and excitement that comes in both giving a card and showing someone that you have thought of them and in receiving one at nursery and knowing that you have indeed been held in mind.

Christmas Crafting Magic

Nothing says ‘Christmas’ like the cards and decorations that the children have made themselves. From a Christmas tree card made from their own handprints to wreaths made from paper plate rings, coloured pasta and gallons of glue, the possibilities are endless, and the fun is guaranteed. Our top tip would be that anything that includes glitter is a winner, and we consciously use biodegradable glitter which is kinder to the environment and helps teach the children about looking after the natural environment– even if we will be finding glitter until Easter!

Letter to Santa

Now, here comes a classic and heartfelt tradition – writing a letter to Father Christmas. Encouraging the children to express their Christmas wishes and gratitude in their own words. It’s a wonderful way to teach them the spirit of giving and appreciation. This year we also embarked on a special journey on the local community bus to the Hambledon village shop and post office. Each child experienced buying a stamp at the counter and making their Christmas wish as they posted their letter.

There’s then nothing more exciting than when they receive a letter back from The North Pole at home a few days later. The nursery created a beautiful reply letter from Santa that was personalised with each child’s name and individual details that only Santa (and their nursery teachers could know).

Baking Bliss

The aroma of freshly baked gingerbread biscuits, mincemeat pinwheels or even individual Christmas cakes has brought the warmth of festive cookery to the nursery school. We regularly involve children in cookery throughout the year but the baking that happens in the run up to Christmas is even more memorable and adventurous! The children learn that their treats have made the perfect gifts for their friends and family, and they get to experience the happiness of giving and sharing which is so important at this time of year. The children were excited to bake Christmas brownies and decorate Christmas shaped biscuits with their parents at our themed ‘Stay and Bake’ session and during the Christmas fair.

Advent Calendar Excitement

Counting down the days until Christmas is particularly exciting for young children and will be a tradition that they will be familiar with from home. We hope to show the children that Christmas is a time to spread joy and to learn valuable lifelong attributes such as kindness, forgiveness and understanding. Kindness in the way of giving something to someone else, tangibly or in acts of kindness. Forgiveness in the way that Christmas is a time to be happy. Understanding in the way of coming to understand that there are many different beliefs and how they celebrate Christmas may be different around the world.

Christmas Stories and Sweet Dreams

At this time of year, we end the morning and afternoon sessions at the nursery with a Christmas story and choosing a book from our special Christmas selection becomes a feature of the nursery routine at this special time of year. Reading tales of festive adventures and Santa’s magical journey can fuel the children’s imaginations and fill their hearts full of wonder. The books that come out for the book rack at this time of year become firm favourites and the children can relate to some of the themes, like ‘Topsy and Tim Meet Father Christmas’ which for many children is enormously exciting and for some they are not quite so sure!

A Good Old-Fashioned Nativity

To children, Christmas is magical, and Christmas is simple. Learning simple, enjoyable songs for the annual nativity performance is always the highlight of Christmas time at Hambledon Nursery School. Helping the children to appreciate that Christmas goes deeper than their excitement to see what Santa will bring them. Yes, that is a BIG deal, but Christmas is more than this to them. Christmas is the feeling that is in the air, the sights and sounds of Christmas. Inviting parents into the nursery and coming together to enjoy the nativity performance we celebrate being together, cherishing the love of family and friends and relishing in that feeling quite simply of belonging. This year our performance is entitled, ‘Everybody Loves a Baby’ a retelling of the traditional nativity from the viewpoint of the children of a Bethlehem Innkeeper who aren’t so sure about babies until they discover news that a special baby has been born which gives them a good excuse for a party to celebrate!

Magical Spaces and Transforming the ordinary into the Extraordinary

At this time of year, the nursery is created to be truly magical everywhere, including the new role play areas to spark the children’s imaginations. Children can visit the soft toy Christmas shop and fill their trolly’s and pretend to buy and wrap their purchases. The younger 2–3-year-olds are enjoying a gingerbread house that has appeared in their room. Dressing as an elf and ticking toys of a Christmas list and they pretend to make them ready for delivery to their friends.

A Winter Wonderland

Christmas is also a wonderful time of year to talk about changes in the season, of Wintertime and the wonder of a snow day at the nursery brought this learning to life this year. Making the most of this rare weather event, we all went outside to catch the snowflakes on our tongue and build tiny surface top snow figures! Wrapped up in warm coats, a hat, gloves and scarf the child learn about changes in the weather and signs associated with the season.

The Nursery Christmas Fair

Finally, one tradition that is now firmly set on the calendar as we enter the festive period is the nursery's Christmas fair. This special event brings together parents and families who are currently at the nursery with those who have left to start school but return to join the magic of this special Saturday morning event. The children learn about being part of a community and are nurturing a sense of belonging while helping to decorate the nursery. All are thrilled to meet Father Christmas in the shed outside!

In the end it really is the simple things, like putting decorations on a tree and singing Christmas songs that mean the most. These 'traditions' are positive reinforcements that the children will no doubt carry on and then eventually pass onto their own children one day in the future. Christmas viewed through the eyes of children, reminds us of the messages of peace and joy of the season. The magic of Christmas as experienced by the children at Hambledon Nursery who truly and passionately 'believe' is a privilege we get to enjoy as staff members working at the Nursery school.