**Pre-school Play and Learning Newsletter for 20th – 24th January 2020**

**Chinese New Year, chopsticks, Gang Hay Fat Choy,**

Wonder words to use with your child:

**Play and Learning Highlights:**

 Chinese New Year is currently being celebrated around the world - a lovely festival for children to learn about and become aware of the difference and similarities between themselves and others. The Flying Fish and many of the older starfish children have watched the cbeebies programme ‘Let’s Celebrate’ which shows how one family celebrate the festival – a great way for young children to understand a rather abstract concept given that we have no children or adults who celebrate it at the pre-school! The children have used the facts they found out from the programme in their role play in the home corner – cleaning the house for the ‘New Year’ and decorating it with red decorations. They have also been making little ‘new year’ envelopes which families give to their children with money inside.

Unsurprisingly the element of the festival which most of the children have been particularly interested in is the dragon which is always part of Chinese New Year carnival celebrations. We have sung songs about these dragons which also include lots of actions and dancing to the beat and the children have asked if we can make our own pre-school dragon next week.

The other part of our learning about Chinese New Year which has fascinated them is . . . chopsticks! There has been lots of talk about who uses chopsticks at home and lots of the children have had a go at using them to eat snack – with some very interesting ways of tackling certain fruit and vegetables! We have read the book ‘Cleversticks’ which is a story about recognising and celebrating the fact that we are all skilled at different things, one of them being a little boy who can use chopsticks. This has generated lots of talk about the skills we can/can’t do ‘yet’ and how practice helps us gain those skills.

In the Rock Pool Area the Starfish have really enjoyed working together using the extra large soft blocks to build towers taller than themselves and then knocking them down (without any fear of bumped heads!). They have also enjoyed the peace of no Flying Fish in the mornings ☺ to build castles together with the large wooden blocks outside, working as a team to create it.

**Out & About sessions:**  A wonderful week of Out & Abouts with us being able to get out four times this week – a record for this year!! The little beach provided us with some great opportunities for scientific exploration and observation as the sand was actually frozen on Monday. The children were able to see and feel the differences between frozen and normal sand and discover the effects of the sun shining on patches of sand.

 The Out & About challenges this week have been to notice, copy and create patterns using the resources available on the beach, noticing patterns as we walk to the area we were visiting, and using the space available at the beach and park to create action patterns – e.g. jump, run, jump, run and to also play ‘Ready, steady . . . . gorilla’ games, a super game for developing self-control.

Every session this week has brought up new conversations (the walk there is always great for conversations between the children), supported mathematical and early science skills and provided opportunities for lots of huff and puff – a wonderful reminder of why these sessions are so important and why we love to run them.

 ***Sounds and Letters/language focus:***

The Flying Fish have continued to focus on blending and segmenting ‘consonant – vowel – consonant’ with the ‘cross the river’ game and ‘bingo’. They are working really well on developing this skill – an essential foundation to their phonic knowledge.

 The Starfish have had fun listening to dragon songs and rhymes, following the actions and working together to create a dragon dance. This has really helped support their listening and attention skills, physical development and working together to have fun. They have also been matching shapes on dragons and singing the 5 little dragon song to support their counting and early subtraction skills.

***Ideas to support your child at home:***

* If you get the chance let your child watch the cbeebies programme ‘Let’s Celebrate’ Chinese New Year it would be lovely for them to see it again and then chat to you about what they have seen. We will be continuing with this focus next week so another viewing of the programme will help consolidate the new ideas and information they have heard.
* Chopsticks – using chopsticks is a fantastic way of developing children’s fine motor skills. It is very tricky and takes lots of practice but children as young as three and four are capable of using them and they all love having a go eating food with them. Let them have a go if you happen to have any at home.
* Little two year olds – if you have any books about dragons at home it would be great if you could look through these with your child before next week so they have a good idea of what dragons do, look like etc. This will help them with the games and play opportunities they will experience at pre-school next week.