

Casual vs. Core Staff

When we have students, summer cover or casual staff, it might sometimes look as though there is yet another member of staff, but they're not actually part of the core staff ratio. New faces don't necessarily mean that core members of staff have left, and our core staff ratios are always maintained. We have a strict policy of never allowing more than one member of staff from the same room to go on holiday .

Not all our members of staff are that young, of course, and many of our managers have been with us for a number of years, often moving between locations as the chance for promotion arises.

The impact

We really are aware of the impact that staff changes can have on the children and parents who have built up relationships with them, and we do try to do everything we can to minimise this impact.

BUT

Up till now we've tended not to advise you of staff departures until we have a replacement in place; but we realise now that this has sometimes meant too little time for you and your child to get used to the idea, and has resulted in some upsets.

This, together with our overall lack of communication about new and departing staff, has definitely caused problems, so we're going to try and improve the situation with the following:

- A chance for you to meet all new staff during a parents' evening or at pickup times, so you can say hello and discuss your child's needs with them. We will try to do this even before new staff members join us, whenever practicable.
- A regular newsletter (or 'Hot News') with information about new staff as soon as we know they're coming on board.
- Communication via 'Hot News' and Newsletter when we know a member of staff is leaving, followed by the steps we're taking to replace them, by when.
- A notice/ photo board at each location with pictures and information about all staff, temporary and permanent, new and existing, and the regular casuals who join us over the summer or provide holiday cover.
- Continuity by having the same trained casual staff return year in year out, as far as possible.

In addition we're reviewing the contracted notice period for all new staff. usually there is a 2-week handover period, when the new member of staff gets the chance to work with their predecessor for as long as possible. We will continue to review how we might provide a longer handover and a smoother transition for you and your child.

More email addresses:

Email 3 Email 4

Email 5 Email 6

We recently undertook some research to find out what you like about Sixpenny Aldbourne – and more importantly, what you don't like. It's lovely of course to get the plaudits, and to hear that most of what we're doing really does work well for you; but it's a lot more use to find out what's not quite right, so we can do something about it.

We spoke to 10 of you, and thank you so much for giving us your time. That's about 25% of the total number of families bringing their child to Sixpenny Aldbourne, so we hope that the results are pretty representative of how you all feel. But if it isn't – and in particular where there are different areas that you think could be improved - please let us know.

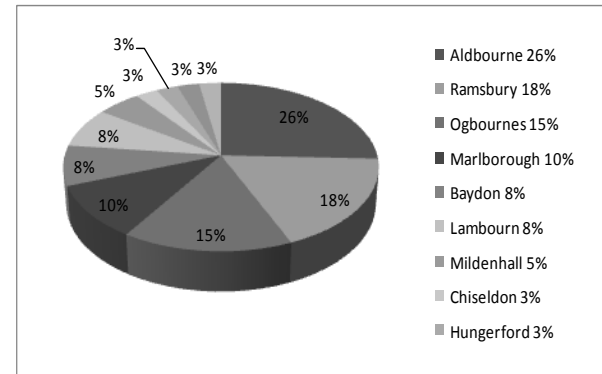
We hope you find this summary interesting. We hope too that it gives you reassurance that we are listening – and not just to the good stuff.

Jane & Kate

Jane Ingram & Kate Easter, co-owners, Sixpenny Childcare



1. Where the children come from.



A couple of comments about there not being many children from Aldbourne set us off on a trawl through our registration forms.

We included all the children who will be coming to us soon, as well as those who are with us here already – a total of 39 children.

The clear majority – 26%, or 10 children – comes from Aldbourne, with Ramsbury

(18% / 7 children) and the Ogbournes (15% / 6 children) coming a close second and third.

2. What you like about Sixpenny Aldbourne.

The same things came through time and again, and we hope that you all feel the same way about Sixpenny Aldbourne.

- Happy children
- Rural location
- Outdoor area
- Homely and safe
- Small and friendly
- Great staff

Our **gorgeous rural village location** and the **outdoor play area** are obviously very important to you all, with the trips round the village to feed the ducks, visit the local shops and go to the park being a big part in your choosing Sixpenny. **Georgie the rabbit** also helped; you felt that having a tame rabbit lolling around the garden says a lot about Sixpenny, quite apart from the enjoyment the children get from the rabbit and her (somewhat frequent) families.



The **smallness, friendliness and homeliness** were also important, with the **great range of toys and the wonderful staff** getting just about equal mention! (perhaps the staff won by a nose).

Other important things that came out were;

- the delicious home-cooked food (from Sue Brady Catering, with meat from the award-winning butcher Sumblers in Marlborough)
- parents' evenings
- different weekly themes for learning through play
- different activities such as crafts, cooking, music and yoga
- being open during the holidays

Here are some of the quotes you gave us.

"It had a really lovely feel about it".

"Great place, great setting."

'It's a great place, just brilliant.'

'It's really small and I love the position, right in the middle of the countryside.'

'It's like a small friendly little home.'

'It's small – that's what I love about it. I love the friendliness of the staff and the position is fantastic.'

'The staff are brilliant – just great.'



3. What could be improved.

There were two things that everyone felt could be improved upon; these were communication, and staff turnover.

Communication

Although we do try to make sure you all get your newsletters in good time, as well as information about parents' evenings, visits and other important activities, it became obvious we haven't always succeeded. But now that we know we don't always get it right, this is what we're going to do about it.

1. Send more communications by email. With paper there's always a chance that we'll think you've had something when you haven't; or it falls out of a bag or gets lost in the car. While we'll still have newsletters and other documentation available on paper, and of course still give you the choice, we're going to start using email wherever we can.

Hence the tear off slip: we need to collect the email addresses from all of you who are happy to receive communication by email, so please fill in the form and drop it in to us. And please feel free to give us as many email addresses as you like – work and home, yours and your partner's.

2. Weekly 'Hot News' emails, with information, news and reminders. These will only go out in email format so while we'll still have the usual paper-based information, the 'Hot News' round-up of everything relevant to that week will be delivered straight to your inbox.

We're going to start this from mid-October, and will welcome any feedback. Does it improve things? Doesn't it make any difference/? What else could we put in place? Please let us know.

Staff Turnover

We've obviously not been getting this right, because a number of you mentioned the concern you have over the apparently high staff turnover. We feel that this is a mixture a lack of communication on our part, plus perhaps a perception issue.

National childcare sector turnover

This is an industry that attracts young people, and this youth element is reflected in a national staff turnover in the Childcare sector of around 21%. Our turnover of staff is around 10%, including transfers to other rooms and other Sixpenny locations. So compared to the national average of staff leaving, we are not doing too badly.

No 'Job for Life' anymore.

The other trend has been away from 'job for a life' and towards having a number of jobs over a lifetime. Recent research has indicated that 'the number of jobs per working lifetime has increased markedly in the last 30 years, with most workers now having 10 or more jobs in the period between joining the workforce and retirement.'*(Reed Consulting)*.

Because our staff tend to be young, a lot will inevitably move on, to other Sixpenny locations, other nurseries, or out of the industry. Many staff use childcare as a stepping stone to teaching, or will move up through internal promotion to become a deputy manager in Sixpenny if the opportunity arises.

Summer period

In addition, many staff in the childcare sector leave, move on or go on holiday in the summer with their parents and families, which is why you'll see a number of familiar and not-so-familiar faces each summer as we bring in trained casual staff. Lots come back time and again, and most of them are at college studying childcare. e.g. many students come from Swindon College because Sixpenny gives them such a perfect environment to learn about excellent childcare.

Please let us have your email address(es). Use the back of this slip if you need more room, and hand it in to us next time you're at Sixpenny Aldbourne.



Your name (s).....

Email 1 Email 2