

Katie takes her job as a Childminder very seriously, and that is why she values an East Reading Children's Centre in supporting her role



Katie Stranks is a childminder and lives in Reading with her husband, Kevin, and their sons Jack, six and Arron, four.

Fitting in with family life

Katie has been a Childminder for three years before which she had a career as a Nanny so her experience in childcare is long established. Wanting to carry on working following the birth of her own children, Childminding was an obvious choice and has fitted in well with her family life.

A great resource

At East Reading Children's Centre, Katie has found a perfect place in which to combine her roles as mother and Childminder and has now taken over the running of the weekly Childminder Drop-In, together with other Childminder volunteers.



**East Reading
Children's Centres Team**

A place we play and learn together





“What I have always liked about the Centre is the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff, and the fact that there is always so much for the children to get involved in, to play with and to entertain them,” she says. “For a parent it is somewhere to meet and make friends and the children have a stimulating and educational environment in which to socialise. It is such a great resource for local families.”

Support for Carers

As a professional Childminder, Katie has also valued the support of both staff and other carers in many ways. “Having a dedicated Childminder Group means that we can share ideas and help each other with the necessary paperwork and administration involved. We also have access to the facilities which are particularly important when looking after other people’s children, such as our own toilet – a Childminder may have responsibility for two or three children who can’t be left with a friend, so having washroom facilities close by makes life much easier,” she says. “The Centre really has made a big effort to support us in our jobs and that means that the parents of our minded children benefit, too.”

New ideas

The expertise of the Centre staff and the resources offered have also been beneficial in that Katie has picked up new ideas on ways to amuse her children.

“One of the best things they have done is the messy play sessions, where playing with shaving foam, jelly and plastic insects is a toddler’s paradise!” she laughs. “I’ve replicated similar activities at home – in the garden on a sunny day! – and it’s just another thing to make a change in routine. I have picked up lots of tips like this and it’s all been an asset to me in my job.”

A local presence

Apart from its role as a support network, the Childminder Drop-In plays a useful part in putting parents and childminders in touch with each other. “Obviously, the Centre can’t recommend a particular childminder, but because we have a presence at the Centre and are all local families, we are accessible and generally known to each other, and I feel lucky to have made close friendships with the parents of the children I mind,” Katie says. “Parents really need to trust the person who is looking after their children and the bond between parent, childminder and Children’s Centre significantly helps to create that trust.”

A better option

Katie is such a strong advocate of the Centre that she encourages the parents of her minded children to sign up in their own right, and particularly wants fathers to make the most of what it offers. “The Dad’s Club is fantastic and I have known several dads becoming regulars, even if they were reluctant at first. For dads who want to spend some time with their children at weekends, it is a much better option than the expensive, impersonal play centres and encourages male carers not only to bond with their children but to form relationships amongst themselves. I’m sure that the free bacon sandwich they get has nothing at all to do with it!”

Tears and laughter

As far as Katie is concerned, East Reading Children’s Centre offers her children, her minded children and herself something she couldn’t expect from any other facility. “It’s somewhere I know I can get what I need, whatever I feel like on any given day. It might be a good laugh or a shoulder to cry on, but it’s always there.”

For further information contact your local Children’s Centre:

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