

a newsletter by Presbyterian Preschool Services

# THE TBG DIGEST

stories, thoughts and updates from our centres

TRUTH • BEAUTY • GOODNESS

## HAPPENINGS ON THE GROUND

Significant events in Term 1

## LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming events

## PARENT-CHILD ENGAGEMENT

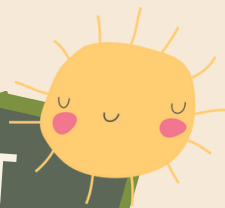
Ideas on how to  
connect and communicate  
with your child better





# THIS AND THAT

Note from our Executive Director  
Lim Ee Tuo



Dear Parents,

It has been a blessing to journey with you for the first quarter of the year. We appreciate your support and cooperation thus far, ever since stepping into the new year together as Little Olive Tree.

In January, we unexpectedly had to deal with a fire at LOT AMK. Where fire destroys, love restores - we thank God that no one was hurt and that our community came together to restore the preschool within just 3 weeks.

Two weeks ago, we had our most fun and enriching Learning Day yet. We conducted over 20 kinds of staff-led workshops for all to pick up a new skill or interest, under the categories of cooking, art, dance and more! PPS is always committed to finding new and exciting ways to equip our teachers with new tools and skills that they can use in the classroom.

We were also thrilled to have connected with so many parents at our LOT Open Houses in the month of March. Teachers were proud to showcase the learning environment and lessons that the children enjoy on a daily basis.

Thank you, parents for the continuous encouragement and faith that you put in us to nurture your children.

*\*Please refer to the Appendix for the Mandarin translation.*

We look forward to meeting you again in the next few months during the Parent Engagement Session and Parent Teacher Conference, where we will provide timely updates on the curriculum and your children's progress.

Creation C.A.R.E 2024 is around the corner - our annual community project that inspires, encourages and empowers children to care for creation and the environment. The project will culminate in a public art showcase at One Punggol (16-19 May). Do bring your family and friends along to show support!

Last but not least, I would like to share about our latest fundraising campaign - A Place for Every Child. Our special needs programme, the Educational Support Programme, endeavours to give a chance to every child who comes through our doors to grow and glow. Thus, our lofty desire is to provide a place for any and every child who is in need.

In 2024, we intend to provide education support for 120 children. This will cost us S\$2.16 million. We welcome financial support of any kind; where it is not possible, please share this with those that you know. More information can be found at [bit.ly/aplace4EC](https://bit.ly/aplace4EC).



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**A Place for Every Child**  
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Term 1 Highlights



## Back to School as Little Olive Tree!

The first day of school this year was especially exciting, with us starting the year with a new, refreshed brand – Little Olive Tree (LOT). As our 11 Presbyterian Preschools were rebranded as Little Olive Tree Preschools with effect from 1 January 2024, we now have a total of 16 LOT Preschools islandwide!

To kick off the new school year, we gifted an LOT school bag to each of our children as part of the 'My Little Bag of Dreams' initiative. We hope that their Little Bags can be a stepping stone to their Big Goals of becoming independent and responsible individuals.



The LOT bags were carefully selected so that children can manage their bags without assistance, which boosts their self-esteem and gives them a sense of accomplishment. Through exploring the significance of a school bag, it promotes a sense of ownership of their belongings as well.

Being accountable for their own things, learning to pack the essentials and to keep things tidy instils a sense of responsibility that extends beyond just the backpack to other areas of their lives.

The teachers have been facilitating this fresh start and opportunity for the children to re-invent themselves by helping them to explore the contents in their school bags and understand the importance of taking care of their personal belongings.



We continue to encourage parents to partner us in cultivating a new culture at home, where children collaborate with parents to discuss what goes in their bag and children get to pack and unpack their own bags.

All in all, we want children to express their individuality and thoughts, for us to celebrate their small wins and to continue engaging parents as our partners.

The next time you see a little child carrying their school bag, remember that it's more than just a bag. It's a representation of their journey, their hopes, and their dreams. It's a backpack full of dreams and possibilities!

# Teacher's Commencement Day : God is doing a New Thing

*"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19*



This year, we joined hands with New Life Preschool Services to hold a combined Commencement Service. It is our collective desire to see greater unity amongst the Christian Preschool Ministry in Singapore, where resources, expertise and the love for one another is made all the more evident in spite of our various heritage and denominations.

Together as partners in the Christian Preschool Ministry, we thanked God for 2023 and started the new year together.



Mr Lim Ee Tuo, our Executive Director shared a very real perspective of how collaboration usually works in the secular world: the parties involved usually have the objective of establishing a win-win partnership with mutual benefits.

However, as Christian organisations, he urged us to think deeper than that. "The Bible reminds us that when we come together, the priority is always to love each other first before anything else. We must have the willingness to give all that we have to those around us, sometimes at the expense of our own well-being.

Indeed, teachers are no strangers to the act of pouring so much of themselves into the children's lives," shared Mr Lim.



We had Reverend Doctor Chua Chung Kai, Associate Pastor of Covenant Evangelical Free Church share the message of the day based on Isaiah 43:19. Rev Dr. Chua posed everyone there a challenge: This year, will you pay attention and trust God?

Just as we greet our loved ones in the morning, he encouraged us to simply begin the day talking to God and reading his Word. This way, we can be more sensitive and aware to the new things that God is doing in our lives. During dry seasons, He makes a way for us in the wilderness when we cry out to Him.

The service ended off with our teachers and staff pledging and committing ourselves to the work of loving and nurturing the children and giving our best in the upcoming year, especially as our preschools begin the new year as Little Olive Tree.

**Read more here: [bit.ly/TCD24](https://bit.ly/TCD24)**



# Little Olive Tree Open Houses 2024!

Little Olive Tree welcomed both existing and potential parents to a series of Open Houses this year across several locations, with the intention to connect with the community, showcase our curriculum to parents, and provide an opportunity for teachers to speak to parents in a more personal and intimate setting.

Across all the schools, we conducted lesson experiences for parents to understand the day-to-day lessons on a deeper level. We also brought parents on school tours for them to explore the environment and learning spaces that children learn, play and interact in daily.

## LOT Bukit Arang (BAR)

At BAR, they had an exploration trail, which encouraged families to intentionally visit stations all around the school, reflecting BAR's philosophy of learning through exploration.

The Wonder Room, which followed the theme of camping in the forest, was the most intriguing and popular. Children could engage in Dramatic Play, 'roasting' marshmallows over a 'fire', as well as entering a mystery cave - relying only on their hands to feel the texture of the items in the dark, dark, cave.



"One of our existing parents came to understand that our curriculum readers for the module **Stories from the Bible** were written intentionally to reflect our principles of Truth, Beauty & Goodness, and was very impressed that PPS went to such lengths (even publication of books) in order to stay true to our values.

She was pleased to know that her child gets to benefit from such an initiative," shared Daphne, Principal of BAR.

## LOT Foochow Methodist Church Farrer Park (FMCFP)

Parents who visited FMCFP could choose to join one of 7 different rooms showcasing various activities and mock-up lessons, such as Key To Learning Construction and water play. They were also invited to a parent and child Tang Yuan-making session, where families got to make the dessert from scratch and taste it after that as well!



Parents were happy to see their children thriving in their learning environment, with one parent even telling the principal this: "My child doesn't want to go home! I also wish that I am a child again so I can come to school." Some principals from the other LOTs also came by to help out and exchange learning pointers with the teachers in FMCFP. It was such a heartwarming sight to be able to see staff come together to support each other.

## LOT Woodlands (WDL)

For WDL, they had an exciting carnival with lots of fun and games for parents and children to bond over, such as feed the monster and pass the ping pong ball!





# Little Olive Tree Open Houses 2024!

## LOT Ghim Moh (GHM)

The children had a blast at the sensory bottle station at GHM, where they could fish out water jellies and drop them into recycled bottles along with other interesting materials.

Parents and children also showed off their creativity making flower boards with fresh flowers they could pick from the vibrant 'flower shop'. The artworks turned out so fresh and beautiful!



## LOT Bukit Batok (BBT)

Over at BBT, children had fun adding little olives to a tree painting with their little thumbs to take attendance when they arrived! Families also enjoyed themselves at the photo booth and craft stations.

Ramona, Principal at BBT shared, "An educator who was a prospective parent felt that the teachers and staff present were very helpful and took initiative in speaking to new parents; she and her daughter felt welcomed and the school felt like a happy place to be in!"

Check out more exciting moments at our Open Houses:





# A Staff Learning Day designed for us to Play!

The morning was bustling with energy and shrieks of "eh, hello!!" as all our teachers and staff gathered together for our very first Learning Day of the year last Friday. This round, the theme for the day was 'Don't Play Play!', which reminded us not to underestimate the power of play at work and in our personal lives.



We started off the day with worship, thanking God for his faithfulness and his new mercies for yet another day. Our Executive Director, Mr Lim Eetuo, then shared about why Play matters. Play enables us to grow and be grounded by our curiosity and childlikeness; outstanding achievements only happen when our hearts are fully in it, and when we are playful and curious.

And play we did. To appreciate the various talents of our staff and to promote the spirit of learning from one another, we had 3 sessions of workshops going on throughout the day, with every workshop being led by a staff.

'mua chee' and dumplings from scratch. "I saw teachers working hard to wrap the dumplings, including the younger and older ones. I really saw them living out the the '活到老学到老 (live until you are old, learn until you are old).'  
mantra," shared Zhang Jinglin from LOT Hougang.

There were so many classes on art techniques using a diversity of mediums too, which was a testament to our colleagues' inspiring talents and abilities!



"I gained a new perspective that it's ok to be messy as it is part of art. A mistake or mess can turn into a beautiful masterpiece. The workshop was fun and light so it was a good break for the teachers," shared Tomas Princess Anne Gilo from LOT Holland Village.



At the kitchen and courtyard, participants whipped up a feast for the senses as delectable ingredients were transformed into interesting dishes with delightful aromas. We had staff from HQ doing live demonstrations on how to cook vegetables with the healthy 'water frying' method as well as how to make

Yet others were looking for ways to move their body and get active, or hoped to learn a new instrument. Through dance classes, playing the ukulele and more, participants really expended their physical energy to play! Everyone powered through 3 sessions with smiles on their faces, whether they were sharing their knowledge with their peers as a facilitator, or learning from their friends as a participant. Indeed, playing with our hearts allows us to learn with freedom!



# Be You-nique Day: Fearfully and Wonderfully made



In the month of March, our preschools celebrated our first Be You-Nique Day, a day where we appreciate the uniqueness of every person who is created fearfully and wonderfully in the image of God. It is also a chance to instil fun in our everyday preschool programmes.

At LOT Bethany, they had Story Hat Day going on, where children were invited to craft a hat that narrated and showcased a personal story.



Children were also amused and excited to take a peek at their friends' baby photos and guess which classmates were in the photos!

The Wacky Hair Day at LOT Marsiling saw children and staff all donning their favourite hairstyle – some fun, some beautiful, and yet others, outrageous! Children had a chance to do a catwalk to flaunt their fashion choices. Thereafter, they created Wacky Self-Portraits to immortalise what they looked like with interesting materials like pompoms and leaves.



Priscilla, Principal of LOT Bethany explained, "Story Hat Day was dedicated to fostering creativity and individuality, allowing children to express themselves through the art of hat-making. The sky's the limit – their hat could be decorated with beloved animals, or could showcase their interests, dreams, or hobbies."

LOT Pasir Ris 21's theme was "I Am Special", so children had the freedom to choose the clothes that they wanted to wear on that day. They brought their favourite toy for show and tell, as well as their favourite fruits to promote healthy eating too!



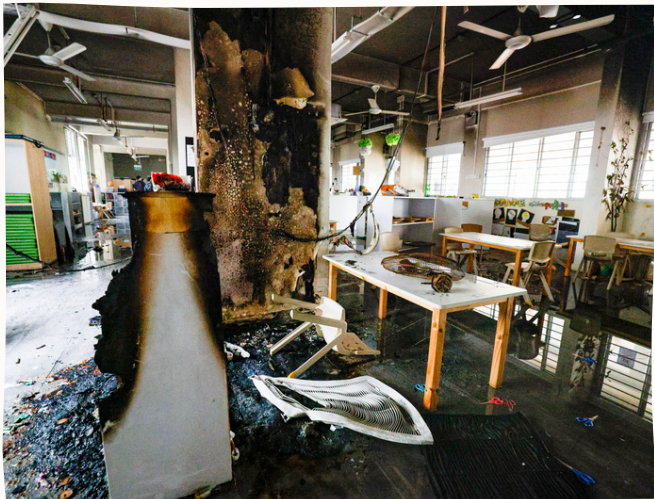
Our first Be You-nique Day was such a hit amongst both children and teachers alike as it gave everyone a platform to let loose and not be afraid to truly be themselves. The next one will be even bigger and better, and might we say, even more You-nique!





## Where Fire Destroys, Love Restores

On 15 January, a fire broke out at LOT Ang Mo Kio (AMK). Despite the initial feelings of shock, panic and loss, it was by God's grace that we were able to restore the school in just 3 weeks. From start to end, it was really a 'kampung' effort that helped us to overcome this adversity.



Firstly, it was a network of neighbours in AMK that allowed the news of the fire to reach us as soon as possible so that we could respond swiftly.

The following two days, all AMK teachers along with staff from HQ were mobilised to begin the restoration process. The backbreaking work included cleaning up the soot and water over and over again, packing up the items that could be salvaged, shifting and disposing damaged furniture, washing the children's chairs, and more.

However, it was tough for the teachers as they were still processing their emotions towards the incident. Teacher Anita initially found it hard to face her classroom that was destroyed after all the hard work was put in.

Thus, she was brought to tears when the first few staff from HQ arrived and started work immediately, cleaning and pushing furniture without hesitation even if it meant getting their clothes or shoes dirty. To top it all off, they did all these with smiles on their faces, constantly asking her and her teachers if they were okay and asking how else they could help.

"In that moment, I remember telling myself I'm in the right organisation. The AMK teachers could not operate as efficiently if the HQ team didn't arrive. I also remember how Ms Shuang and Ms Bea (Principal and Vice-Principal) just humbly being one of us to build the school again," Teacher Anita shared.



As the days went by, we saw how our community who offered help included our beloved parents and guardians.

During that period, there were many changes to daily operations such as having children report at the void deck in the morning and having them be transported by bus to LOT Bukit Arang. Parents and grandparents were not only understanding, but also kind to help out without being asked.

We are so blessed to have our community and family in the good times and bad. Indeed where fire destroys, love restores. It has been a journey of transforming ashes to glory.

# ON THE GROUND

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Words of Thanks from Parents

If you would like to encourage our teachers and principals, please submit your words of appreciation in this form: [bit.ly/LOTwordsofthanks](https://bit.ly/LOTwordsofthanks)



## LOT Woodlands Parents of Luke - Infant Care (2024)

We are thankful to have Luke at Little Olive Tree. The staff and teachers went the extra mile to help him feel comfortable with them and the new environment so he could enjoy school.

They have been loving, patient and nurturing in their interactions with him and meeting his needs to the best of their ability. We appreciate the regular feedback from the teachers and this partnership we have for Luke's growth and learning.

My daughter Naira's progress in various areas, including academics, behaviour, and extracurricular activities, is attributed to the positive environment at Little Olive Tree.

For example, she can now express her feelings effectively, is more independent, and demonstrates proper care for her toys and belongings.

Our respected principal, Madam Ten creates a welcoming atmosphere by being consistently present during pick up and drop off times. A heartfelt thank you to all the staff for their dedication.



## LOT Foochow Methodist Church Farrer Park Mother of Naira - K2 (2024)



## LOT Hougang Mother of Avelynn - K1 (2024)

This year is going to be a challenging year for Avelynn, the year without her jiejie(s) accompanying her in school. Teachers are amazing at Little Olive Tree, making her comfortable so she is enjoying herself in school even without her sisters' company.

She has been adapting well and looking forward to have water play with her friends every Wednesday. Everytime, she would come back and share with us on the activities that she does in school. Looking forward to see more of her accomplishments.



# Parent Engagement Session & Parent-Teacher Conference



## LOOKING AHEAD

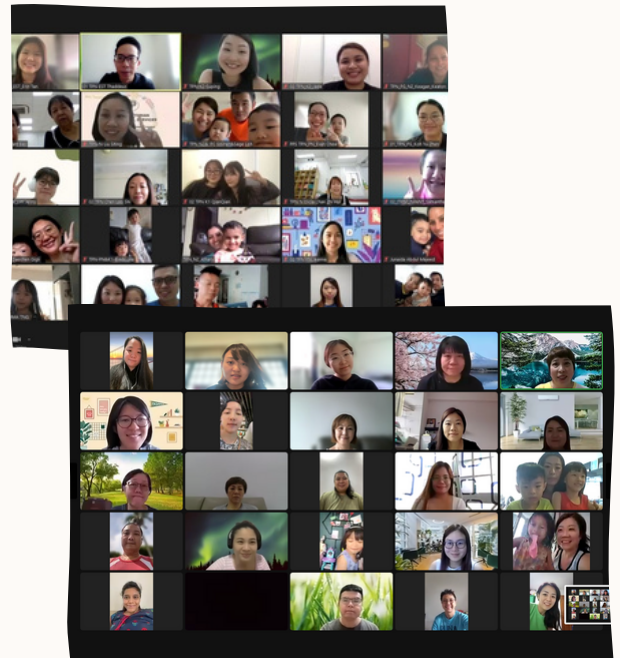
What's Next?

Parent Engagement Session (PES): 13 April 2024  
Parent-Teacher Conference (PTC): 20-24 May 2024

Both the PES and PTC are a platform for LOT to connect with our parents regularly as we value our parents as partners in their children's growth and learning. At the PES, we provide timely updates on curriculum, operational matters and more.

During PTC, teachers facilitate communication and collaboration between parents and teachers regarding a child's holistic development. These conferences serve several important purposes such as goal setting, two-way feedback and problem-solving, just to name a few.

These open conversations play a crucial role in creating a collaborative and supportive educational environment for the benefit of the children.



## Creation C.A.R.E 2024: Be A Tree!



Creation C.A.R.E (Children's Action to Rescue Earth) is a community project that inspires, encourages and empowers children to care for creation and the environment.

This year, the theme is "Be A Tree!" and we hope children will stand tall and stretch their branches to the sun. With their roots growing deep into the soil, and branches reaching to the sky, they are beautiful and resilient structures that provide shelter, food and more for animals to thrive.

Children will discover that just as trees shape the landscapes they inhabit, individuals can transform the community too.

This project runs from 1 April to 19 May 2024, culminating in a public showcase where children's artworks from participating preschools will be on display.

### Creation C.A.R.E Public Showcase

16 May - 19 May 2024

One Punggol

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To support the lessons in school, you may borrow the book "Be a Tree" from our public libraries. A narration of the book is also available on Youtube such as this video: [bit.ly/BeATreeYT](https://bit.ly/BeATreeYT).

The book talks about how humans are all like trees: our spines, trunks; our skin, bark; our hearts giving us strength and support, like heartwood. We are all fuelled by air and sun, and like humans, trees are social. They "talk" to spread information; they share food and resources. They shelter and take care of one another. They are stronger together.

#### Questions for Discussion:

- What do you like about the story?
- How are you like a tree?
- How is our family like a tree? (Draw it out together!)
- How can we care for the trees around our house and school?
- How can we care for the community around us? (Come up with a plan to bless someone/a group of people)



"Be a Tree" by Gianferrari, Maria

Download the app here:



## Connected App: Build a stronger relationship with your child!



Example of customised content

Connected is based on the premise that every child is different and every relationship, unique. Connected offers tools and resources to understand your child better so that you can appreciate what they think, say and do. Discover how you can:



Communicate more effectively



Reduce friction in your interactions



Appreciate your child's bright and flip sides

The discovery-based approach offers parents tips and practical handles encourage them to take what they learn into the real world.



Customised experience based on your unique personalities



Easy-to-digest content that fits into your everyday life.



Premium access to tools and resources designed to help you better understand and connect with your child.



## PARENT-CHILD ENGAGEMENT

## Useful Phrases children can learn to improve communication

### Asking Questions

"Where is it?"

"Who is that?"

"What is that?"

"Why must we do that?"

### Requests

"May I have it?"

"I need it."

"It is my turn."

"Can we go?"

### Self-Advocacy

"Don't do that."

"I don't like it"

"I don't want to."

"I can do it."

"I need to stop."

### Comments

"I like that."

"This is good."

"It is slow/fast."

"I see it."

"We did it!" "That is big/small."

### Expressing Emotions

"Today was a happy day."

"I love doing this with you!"

"I feel sad because.."

"I don't feel so good."

"This made me upset."

## Facilitating therapeutic conversations with your child

Why should parents facilitate therapeutic conversations with their children? Because it involves creating a safe and supportive environment for individuals to feel comfortable and express themselves through exploring their thoughts and feelings. This way, parents can get to know their children better, and vice versa.

### 1. Help your child with emotional regulation



- (a) Self-Regulation: For adult to be aware of own feelings
- (b) Co-regulation: Helping to manage your child's emotions
- (c) Teaching your child to self-regulate

### 2. Strategies for facilitating therapeutic conversations

- (a) Ask questions and listen attentively to what the individual is saying, both verbally and non-verbally
- (b) Reflect their thoughts and feelings to show understanding and validation
- (c) Paraphrase or ask clarifying questions to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences





## The Unremarkable Work of the ESP

Our Educational Support Programme exists for one reason: for every child who comes through our doors to grow and glow. Despite having the term "Programme" in its name, ESP is more than that. Instead, it is a journey and a commitment to walk with the children with additional needs alongside their families while they are with us in our schools.

When it comes to the realm of early intervention, there are strategies, methods and training. But at the heart of it all, there are no magic formulas, no quick fixes and no guaranteed successes.



Sometimes, life is just what it is and we desire to walk with families in need as long as we have the opportunity and ability to. Hence, we like to refer to our work in early intervention as an "unremarkable work".

### Why "Unremarkable"?

Unremarkable means "not particularly interesting or surprising". This might seem to be an odd word selection for the field of early childhood, let alone, special education since we are working with children, especially those with needs.



### The Unremarkable Work

Beyond the strategies, methods and techniques, we believe what sets us apart from other education providers is our commitment to journey with children with additional needs. Here are three ways we desire to pursue the unremarkable work:

#### 1. Sitting in the Mud with the Child

We are not interested in journeying with children only if they show promise in progressing. We recognise that every encouraging moment that we observe in the child's life is accompanied by many other ordinary, frustrating, stress-inducing moments that demand patience, love, graciousness and kindness from us.

We accept that this is the reality of life often times – that life can be painful and ugly in spite of our best efforts. While we live for the hope that the child will grow and glow eventually, what the child needs from us most of the time is for us to simply sit in the mud with them through their tantrums and frustrations until one day, they grow.

At Little Olive Tree, we commit to sitting in the mud with the children through the most unremarkable of days. Sometimes, this is the best way we can honour the child and their Maker.



## 2. Believing that Each Child's Trouble is Worth Troubling For

Meeting parents who are interested in enrolling their child into our Educational Support Programme for the first time is always an emotional experience. By the time our conversation happens, most of these parents have already been turned down by more than one school and are often at their wits' end on how they can help their child.

Raising a child is challenging enough without the additional obstacles that comes with raising a child with additional needs. It is always heart wrenching for us to hear about how their child is termed as the trouble-maker that other teachers cannot handle.

The reality is that nurturing children is messy and difficult work. Every child brings along their own sets of trouble. At Little Olive Tree, we believe that as long as we have the capabilities to support them, every child is trouble worth troubling for.

## 3. Rallying the Village around the Child and Family

Finally, all progress, no matter how remarkable is pointless if it is not translated across the various contexts the child lives in. Hence, we are not merely interested in observing the improvement in a child's behaviour within the context of the classroom and preschool, as important as this is.

Instead, we want to journey with families, and the village that surrounds the child (be it extended family, the church community or even neighbours) such that that child's progress can be observed across all contexts of life.

At Little Olive Tree, we want to walk with families and the village that will continue to journey with the child long after they have graduated from preschool.

## Closing Words

It is much easier to offer a programme that is committed to providing strategies and methods. However, our years of experience in the realm of early intervention work has taught us that true lasting work demands commitment beyond just a "programme". It takes time and effort to journey with others. This is the more challenging and arduous work. This is costlier work.



We hope that as we embark on this endeavour of providing at least 10% of our enrolment capacity for children with additional needs, you will come along to support us. We welcome financial donations of any amount.

In the event that financial giving is not possible, do share our stories and our effort with others around you. Support us financially here: [bit.ly/aplace2024](https://bit.ly/aplace2024)

**Read more here: [bit.ly/unremarkableesp](https://bit.ly/unremarkableesp)**



# Appendix

## 这个那个 (Executive Director's Note)

亲爱的家长们,

在今年的第一个学期里,很荣幸能与你们同行。自从我们以 "小小橄榄树 "踏入新的一年,我们非常感谢你们一直给与的支持与合作。

今年的第一个月,我们遭遇了 LOT 宏茂桥 的一场大火。大火无情,人间却有爱。感谢上帝,没有人受伤,我们的团队齐心协力,在短短三周内就修复了幼儿园,老师和孩子们一起同心启步。

两周前,我们举办了迄今为止最有趣、最丰富的学习日活动。我们安排了 20 多场由教职员工主导的工作坊,让所有人都能凭自己的兴趣学习到新的技能,课程包括烹饪、手工艺、绘画和舞蹈等等! PPS 努力的寻找新颖、令人兴奋的方式,让我们的教师团队和员工们掌握新的技能,以便在课堂上使用。

在今年三月份的 "LOT开放日 "活动中,我们也和众多家长们进行了交流,这让我们感到非常开心,感谢家长们给与的鼓励和信任,让我们能够与你们同步培养孩子。

在接下来的几个月里,我们期待在家长教师会议和家长将参与会议里和你们再次见面,届时我们将为你们介绍最新的课程和分享孩子们学习的进展汇报。

我们也兴奋的汇报今年度社区项目 "Creation C.A.R.E 2024 "即将来临,该项目旨在启发、鼓励和增强孩子们关心创造和环境的能力,将于 5 月 16 日至 19 日在 One Punggol 举办的公共艺术展上达到高潮。恳请家长们偕同家人和朋友们前来支持!

最后,我想和大家分享我们最新的筹款活动--"让每个儿童都有一席之地"。我们为有特殊需要孩子们的教育辅助课程,致力为每一个走进我们中心的孩子们提供有目标性的学习,让他们在成长中有绽放光彩的机会,为每一个需要帮助的孩子提供属于他们的一席之地。

在2024 年里,我们打算为 120 名儿童提供教育支持。这将需要花费我们 216 万元。我们欢迎任何形式的资助;如果无法提供资助,请与您认识的人分享。如果需要更多信息,请通过此链接 [bit.ly/aplaceforEC](https://bit.ly/aplaceforEC)。