

Helping your child to settle into school

Starting school can be an anxious time for both parents and their child. Many parents and carers worry about how their child will cope with the expectations of a school day, the playground, lunchtimes and all the other new experiences that their child will encounter.

Many parents ask how they can help their child settle smoothly into school. This booklet has been written in order to answer some of the questions you may have and to provide you with some useful information you may need during your child's first weeks at school. For further information you may find the school prospectus useful or our school website:

www.whiteleyprimary.co.uk





Things to do before your child starts school

Visit the classroom

Before your child starts school in September, there will be opportunities for you and your child to visit the school in order to become familiar with their teacher, teaching assistant, classroom and surroundings.

Your child will be invited to visit their classroom with you as part of a small group for two afternoon sessions. They will be able to spend time with their teacher and teaching assistant and half their new class - hopefully, you will be able to leave them for a short time to join other parents in the school hall for refreshments. These are valuable opportunities to become familiar with both the indoor and outdoor classroom areas, and to help prepare them for September.



Home visits

Each child will have the opportunity for their teacher and teaching assistant to visit them at home during the first week of the Autumn term. These visits are invaluable as they provide **you** with the opportunity to:

- Meet and talk with your child's teacher and teaching assistant in the quiet of your own home
- Share your views and experiences of your child
- Discuss any issues in confidence (medical, personal etc)
- Share information which may support your child's learning and future happiness
- Receive advice on ways in which you can support your child in their early days at school

A successful home visit helps the **teacher** to:

- Begin to build a partnership with your family
- Gather information about your child, their development and their interests
- Feel better informed about your child's needs

Your **child** will:

- Get to know the people who will look after them in school
- Ask and find out about the things they want to know
- Share some of their favourite toys

Helping your child become more independent

One of the most noticeable changes for your child when starting school is that the child:adult ratio increases significantly. Your child will be in a class of 30 children with the teacher, teaching assistant and occasional parent helpers. It is therefore important that your child can be as independent as possible when at school.

There are a number of simple ways in which you can prepare your child for this:

Dressing/undressing

- Encourage your child to dress and undress independently at home in preparation for school.
- Help your child by choosing clothes that are easy for them to put on. Choose tops that fit easily over the head, elasticated skirts and trousers, shoes with Velcro fastenings etc.
- Help your child to practise putting on, fastening, taking off and hanging up their coat.
- Provide your child with a PE kit in a named PE bag. The bag does not have to be the "school green". A different colour, picture or pattern will help your child to recognise it more easily. Please label every item of clothing clearly with your child's name, including shoes and coats.

Your child will feel more confident if they can manage without much help.

(PE kits are stored in the cloakroom areas of the classroom and will be sent back home for washing at the end of each half term.)

Personal Hygiene

- Encourage your child to be completely independent when using the toilet.
- Establish thorough hand washing as good practice.
- Encourage your child to use tissues to blow their nose.



Mealtimes

- If children are having a school meal they will be expected to use a knife and fork to eat their dinner. They will, of course, be given a little help if needed, but your child will feel more confident if they have practised at home. The government now pays for a hot meal for all children in their first year of schooling. More information regarding school meals will be given at the first parents' meeting.
- If your child is going to bring a packed lunch, then they will need a clearly named lunchbox. You may find it useful to play "picnics" at home so that your child becomes used to opening their lunchbox and any packets and containers inside it! It is a good idea to avoid lots of 'fiddly' foods like raisins and fruit flakes as they take children a long time to eat.

Independent skills for the classroom

- Helping your child to recognise their own name allows greater independence within the classroom. Encourage your child to identify their name on coats, shoes, clothes, book bags and other personal belongings. Some children find it helpful if a small key ring is attached to the handle of their book bag to make it easier to locate! The children will need to be able to find their own name for self-registration when they arrive at school.
- It would be helpful for your child to develop their pencil control skills prior to starting school. You can help with this by encouraging them to hold a pencil in the correct "tripod" grip and to encourage mark making, colouring, tracing, dot to dots etc.
- Help your child to develop their language skills by reading lots of stories and rhymes to them.
- Develop your child's early mathematical skills by saying the number names in order as you climb the stairs, counting out sets of objects together (we need 4 spoons for our ice cream), singing number rhymes (eg. 1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive), playing dice games/dominoes, completing number puzzles. Games which involve matching and sorting are also useful.
- Develop your child's social skills by helping them to share and take turns with you and other children. Turn-taking games are good for this eg. picture dominoes, pairs games etc.

Behaviour Expectations

You can help your child to settle in by beginning to introduce certain behaviour expectations at home before they start school. The following give some simple ideas to help introduce these expectations, if you haven't already:

- We have a no 'rough play' rule in the playground - if your child is very physical in their play with other children, it would help if you could begin to set boundaries regarding what is and is not appropriate when they are playing with others.
- If your child is used to getting an adult's attention immediately they ask for it (very common if they are an only child or the youngest sibling), help them to understand that at times they might need to wait. Teaching them to say 'excuse me' and then giving them praise when they are able to wait for you to finish a short job or finish your conversation with another adult will help prepare them for the 'hands up' expectation we will introduce in school.
- We have a high focus on developing listening skills in school - you can help your child develop in this area by using their name and waiting for them to stop and look at you before giving instructions. If they find following instructions difficult, try breaking them down into simple steps.

Starting School

Uniform

The basic school uniform is a grey skirt/trousers, white polo shirt and a bottle green sweatshirt or jumper. School sweatshirts and polo shirts can be purchased at 'Skoolkit' in Fareham, through the supplier 'AJ Embroidery' (details on the website - order at the school office) or from the Tesco online (see back page for website). PE -shirts in our house colours are only available through AJ Embroidery - your child will be allocated a 'House' team nearer to September so that you will know which colour to purchase. Our suppliers also offer a number of other approved uniform items with the school logo, although you may prefer to provide your child with plain items in the school colours from elsewhere. There will be the opportunity to browse and purchase uniform during some of the induction visits. Please ensure that **all** items are clearly labelled with your child's name.

Arriving at school

The school day begins at 8:50am (classroom doors open at 8.45am) and finishes at 3:15pm, but we will be operating a staggered entry for the first half term. More details of the induction arrangements for this year are provided for you in the welcome letter. The gate to the Reception playground is kept locked between 9am and 3.00pm when pupils are using the outdoor areas. We ask that parents wait outside the gate until a member of Reception staff opens it at 8.45am.

All children should enter their classrooms via the classroom patio doors. When your child comes into school in the morning, there are two adults to look after them. Most parents initially wish to help their child organise their belongings inside the classroom to ensure that they are settled. Please feel free to do this for the first few sessions, whilst bearing in mind that we have found that children tend to settle more quickly if parents do not linger unnecessarily! Once routines have been established, we will encourage children to come into the classroom independently in the mornings as otherwise the number of adults and siblings who can be in the classroom at drop-off time can be a daunting experience for children.

We find that the majority of children settle quickly into the morning routines and are happy to come into the classroom. However, on occasions a child may find it difficult to detach from their parent to begin with. If your child does find this difficult, we may suggest that you arrive slightly later to the classroom on the next day when there are fewer people around to give a calmer start for your child. If the drop-off continues to be difficult, we can set up a 'meet and greet' with a member of staff at the school office for a short period so that we can ensure your child is calm before they enter the classroom. Any tears are usually very short-lived, but we know it can be distressing to leave your child if they are crying. In our experience, we find that parents can help their child to settle in by staying calm and 'smiley', and keeping goodbyes brief. If you are anxious about leaving your child, try not to let them see this, but do discuss your concerns with a member of staff so that we can give advice to support you and your child.

Late arrivals

If your child arrives after 8:50am, please bring them to the school office where they can be registered. A member of the office staff will then take them down to the classroom.

Whenever possible, children's medical/dentist appointments should be arranged for school holidays or after the school day. Where this isn't possible, please inform the office or your child's teacher of the details - children need to be signed in/out at the school office and a copy of the appointment letter/card will need to be provided for our records.

Illness

If your child is ill, please phone the school office. The office is open for calls from 8am, although you can leave a message on the answer phone before this time. If your child is off for longer than a day, you do not need to phone again. The first phone call is very important for us, so that we know your child is safe at home and should not be in school. Please note that if your child suffers from sickness or diarrhoea, they should not return to school until they have been clear of symptoms for 48 hours.

If your child is unwell during the school day, they will be taken to the school medical room to be dealt with by a first aider. We will contact you if they need to go home. It is therefore very important to keep the office up to date with any changes of contact details, including mobile numbers.

Home Time

At the end of each session, please wait outside your child's classroom patio doors. The teacher will see each child safely out one at a time when they have seen you. If another adult will be collecting your child, please let the teacher know in advance.

Older brothers and sisters

Older siblings of Reception children are able to enter school in the mornings via the door from the YR outdoor classroom to the KS1 corridor - this means you do not have to walk them to the other side of the school.

At home time, we would be grateful if you could arrange to meet older siblings (Y3-6) at a designated point away from the Reception base as this area can become very congested at the end of the school day. If older siblings are in Year 1 or 2, they are welcome to leave via the Reception classroom doors. Please could you ask older siblings to wait quietly at the back of the classroom areas so that the Reception children can be safely seen out first.



What to bring on the first day

Your child will need to bring:

- A coat with their name labelled clearly- we try to get outside whatever the weather!
- Their PE kit (House-coloured T-shirt, green shorts, plimsoles) - jogging bottoms (any colour) will be needed later in the term when the weather is colder
- A clearly named bottle of WATER - sport-type lids are best. (Please do not carry this in your child's book bag as they can be prone to leaking!)
- A book bag - letters will be put in here frequently and your child will use this independently in the classroom as a place to store work to bring home.
- A pair of wellies (clearly named). It is helpful if these can be left in school for the majority of the time so that children can go outside in all weathers - they are also needed for the big sandpit.
- A spare pair of pants and socks in a small plastic bag to be kept in their bookbag.

Your child will not need a pencil case, as all necessary equipment is provided by the school. **Please do not send in a rucksack** as we do not have the space to store these in YR.



Routines

Snack time

You do not need to provide a snack for your child. All children will be provided with a piece of fresh fruit or vegetable and under 5s are also entitled to a carton of milk (there is often enough for any 5 year olds who'd like it, too, in the Autumn term). Once your child is 5, if you would like to ensure that they have milk every day at school, there is the opportunity to order this via our supplier 'Cool Milk' at a subsidised rate. Further details will be provided to you after your child has started school.

Snacks are usually eaten inside the classroom at the snack café areas, although the children do enjoy an outside snack time on fine days.

To help us reinforce the healthy eating messages which we convey to the children, parents are asked not to send in cakes or sweets to share with the class on special occasions such as birthdays or after holidays.



Water

The children are encouraged to bring a named water bottle each day, as we recognise the importance of drinking adequate amounts of fluids and encourage the children to get in to the habit of helping themselves to a drink. There is free access to drinking water within the classrooms. We ask that only water is provided in the children's water bottle for the classroom. They may bring a fruit drink in their packed lunches if they wish (no fizzy drinks, please). Please could you ensure that your child's water bottle is non-spill and that it is not carried inside their book bag.

Playtimes

Reception children do not have a separate playtime as they have access to the outdoor classroom throughout the day. They will be introduced to a playtime with Y1 and Y2 pupils during the summer term.

Lunchtimes

All Reception children eat together in the dining hall with their friends. We take them in to lunch earlier than the rest of the school so that the Reception staff can stay with the children until they are settled. We then have 'midday supervisors' who take over the supervision alongside the classroom teaching assistants.

Since September 2014, school meals have been provided free by the government for all children up to Y2. Our school meals are provided by HC3S, who serve schools across Hampshire, and are cooked on site. A copy of the three week menu is provided so that you know what is on offer each day, and can help your child to choose whether they would like the 'red' (meat) choice or the 'blue' (non-meat) choice each day. Your child may choose to bring a packed lunch instead. Please can we ask that lunch boxes are **NUT FREE** (ie no peanut butter sandwiches/cereal bars with nuts etc.)

Reception children are given longer to eat their meal than other pupils, but once they are used to the routines, we do encourage them to eat more quickly to ensure that they do get to go outside with their friends at lunchtime. We find that pupils with packed lunches tend to take longer to eat than those with school meals. You can help by making sure that lunchboxes only contain the amount of food you know they usually eat for lunch, avoiding lots of fiddly foods such as raisins and fruit flakes, and ensuring that you only provide packets/containers which they are able to open themselves - there are older pupils and adults on hand to help, but this can slow them down.



After eating, the Reception children are provided with a separate play area with toys and activities, supervised by the Reception teaching assistants. Later in the Autumn term, the children will be introduced to an extended boundary for their lunchtime play. This enables them to play alongside children from all years and to take part in other adult-led activities. Brightly coloured bibs are provided for the Reception children to wear when they are playing with the older children so that

they are easily identifiable, with a different colour for each class.

The separate reception play area is available throughout the year for children who still prefer the security of this smaller area.



Outdoor Play

Children have access to the outdoor play areas on a daily basis. This enables them to participate in activities which support all areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in the outdoor environment.

Please could you therefore ensure that your child wears suitable shoes and brings a coat to school each day. A warm hat and gloves are recommended during the winter months. We also recommend that children bring a sun hat for protection during sunny spells, and would encourage you to apply an all-day sun protection to your child before they come to school in the morning.

Accidents

It is inevitable that at some point your child will fall over or get hurt when playing. We do have a **no rough play** rule which includes no Ben 10/Power Ranger/Dr Who type adventure games. The younger children often think they are invincible like their heroes, but they are not! We would be grateful if you could reinforce this at home.

If for any reason your child requires minor medical attention, First Aid will be given and a "bump note" will be sent home. If we have any concerns about an injury, we will let you know via the telephone.

Coming home from school

Most children are very tired at the end of a morning or day at school and some can be rather grumpy! Your child may need to spend some time "unwinding". They may want to spend time close to you or to be left quietly on their own. Only you will know what your child needs most. Please don't be concerned if your child does not want to talk about their time at school - this is perfectly normal.



Frequently asked questions

What happens if I am late picking up my child?

If for any reason you are delayed, your child will remain in the classroom with their teacher for a few minutes. After this time, they will be taken to the school office where they will be looked after while we try to contact you.

Am I able to come and help in the classroom?

We welcome parents into the school to help with a wide range of activities either in their own child's classroom or elsewhere in the school. However, we do not have parent helpers in Reception for the first half-term so that we can allow the children time to settle.

Each term, we also hold 'open' events where parents (or grandparents) can come and join in with activities in the classroom, or watch a performance from the children.

How will I know how my child is getting on at school?

Meetings are held with parents each term to share your child's achievements, progress and targets, and a written report is sent at the end of the summer term. All children have a 'learning journey' book which records key achievements. You are also welcome to make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher at any other time throughout the year.

Teachers are available at the start and end of the day to answer any quick questions you may have. If you need to make a longer/private appointment with any member of staff, feel free to contact the school office who will arrange this for you at a convenient time.

What sort of things should I do at home to help my child?

After their first half term in school, your child will be given a home/school folder. This will be updated on a weekly basis to keep you informed about what your child is learning and how you can support them at home. It will suggest ideas for things to talk about with your child or practical activities that support their learning in school. In the Autumn term, workshops are offered to parents of Reception children to explain how we teach phonics and maths, and how parents can support at home. We encourage parents to attend if at all possible.

We believe that reading to and with your child is one of the most significant ways in which you can help your child at home and would encourage you to get into these routines early - hearing and joining in with stories is a great way to help your child to develop their language skills.



When will my child bring home a reading book?

Your child will be encouraged to bring home books to share with you on starting school. There will be a range of books for your child to choose from. After half term we will direct your child towards a reading 'band' which will support them at the appropriate level.

Reading books are left outside the classrooms in baskets so that you are able to change their book as often as you like in the mornings/afternoons. Your child will also be able to choose a library book to share with you at home. Reading support guidance will be sent home as your child moves onto each new stage and is also available on the school website.



Will we be able to take our child out of school for a holiday in term time?

Government guidance states that parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term times. Schools can only agree to term time absence in exceptional circumstances (the fact a holiday is cheaper in term time is not considered special circumstances). Further guidance from Hampshire County Council and a 'Leave of Absence' request form can be found on our website, along with details of the use of penalty notices (fines) for unauthorised absences - we would encourage you to familiarise yourself with the guidelines before booking any term time holidays. Please note that the Headteacher is required to monitor all pupils' attendance and punctuality. Where there are concerns (attendance falling below 90% or regular arrival at school after 8.50am), these will be raised with parents in order that the school can work with the family to establish better attendance habits.

Who should I speak to if I'm worried about my child?

If you have any concerns about your child, the class teacher or the teaching assistant should be the first port of call. Please don't hesitate to speak to them if you have concerns. If you are unable to see the teacher at the start or end of the day, please phone the school office and leave a message and the class teacher will get back to you. If you have further concerns, you may want to make an appointment to see the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or YR/1 Phase Leader via the school office.

Are there any after-school clubs that my child can join?

We do not offer school-run after-school activities for Reception children. For younger pupils, a school day can be exhausting! There are lots of exciting, practical activities that happen in class, and at lunchtime the children can take part in a range of adult-lead activities every day if they wish. We begin to offer a taste of extra-curricular activities in Key Stage 1 (year 1 and year 2), with a full range of activities on offer to our older Key Stage 2 children (year 3 - 6).

Does the school offer any childcare before or after school?

A breakfast and after-school club are run in the school hall by Timeout Childcare. Contact details are on the back of this booklet.