



## Welcome to Reception!

2019 - 2020

Firstly, we would like to offer a warm welcome to you and your child, as they begin their Reception Year with us.

Starting school is an important and exciting milestone in your child's life. However, we also appreciate that it can be a little daunting and over-whelming for them at first. There's a lot to take during your child's first weeks at school - from finding their way around their new environment and learning the routines and expectations, to meeting new people, both big and small, and building relationships with them! For this reason we operate a 'Soft Start' at the beginning of our day, where you are most welcome to come into the classroom with your child to help them settle and begin their learning. By the same token, if your child is confident to wave you goodbye at the gate and come in alone, that's fine too. Our aim is to help your child have as happy and positive start to their school life as possible!

In Reception, the majority of your child's learning will take place via open-ended, play-based activities. Teacher directed learning is kept minimal at first, but gradually builds over the year so that the children smoothly transition from brief one-to-one adult focussed activities to working in groups, and even whole class activities, by the end of their time in Reception.

Play is at the heart of your child's learning. Through it they develop valuable skills for their future, formal learning. By climbing, running, painting or manipulating toys, your child

develops core-strength and coordination which are vital skills that ultimately help them hold and control a pencil.

As they interact and play with others using small world toys or the home corner, your child develops both their imagination and their social/communication skills. Their ability to speak, listen and share their ideas ultimately helps your child structure their ideas when writing and develops their reasoning skills. This is why play is so important in the Early Years curriculum!

Adult focussed work is typically woven through a series of topics which include: Superheroes, Celebrations, Dragons and Once Upon a Time. For example, as part of our work on Dragons we read and write stories about them, develop our fine motor and creative skills by making dragon eggs from clay, we draw dragons using ICT and compare and measure dragons in our Maths.

In addition to our topics, phonics is taught in discrete daily sessions, where your child will learn to recognise graphemes and develop their ability to use them to blend (read) and segment (write) words. Our phonics flash-cards are printed in the school's cursive font, so the children become familiar with it from the start of Reception. They practice 'air writing' sounds using this font during phonics and, when they are physically ready to do so, will write using it. As they move into Key Stage 1, your child will ultimately learn to adopt a cursive, joined style.

Over the year, in Maths, we learn to count, read, and order numbers to 20. We use practical resources and objects to help us learn to add and subtract, count on or back, and to double, halve and share quantities. We make comparisons and order items by weight, height or capacity and learn to name and describe common 2d and 3d shapes.

In English, as well as learning to read and write sounds and words during our phonics sessions, we also love to share lots of story books together, discussing the texts and making predictions. From the beginning, the children take home books to read with you, initially these are usually wordless discussion texts but, as they become more confident at blending, your child will receive worded books.

During their Reception year, your child will learn to write words, captions and sentences that they and others can read back. They also learn to write some common exception words from memory (for example 'the', 'I' and 'to'). However, in Reception, we encourage the children to be 'brave writers' and use their phonic knowledge to try and spell other words. The children also have lots of exciting opportunities to explore mark-making and writing during their self-initiated learning, and it's wonderful seeing their desire and ability to record their ideas grow as the year progresses.

We hope your child will really enjoy their Reception years and will embrace and grow from the activities and learning opportunities that await them.

If you have any questions about any aspect of your child's learning, please do not hesitate to catch me before, or after school, or to make an appointment in the office so we can meet at a later date.

Kind regards,

Mrs Moore and Mrs Mander

## Supporting your child's reading development



Knowing how best to support your child's reading development can be a little daunting for parents, especially those who did not learn to read using 'Synthetic phonics' themselves. So I've put together a few suggestions and tips which I hope will be useful to you.

### 1. Regular practice

Try to read with your child, or go through their phoneme flash cards with them, on most school days. 'Little and often' is best. You will receive books, either with or without words in them, twice a week, as well as four new phoneme cards (on a Friday)

### 2. Pure sounds

We follow the Letters and Sounds phonics scheme and encourage the child to use 'pure sounds' when reading. Pure sounds are the shortest possible articulation of each grapheme, eg "mmm" for the letter M, rather than "mu". I will be adding a video of me articulating the phase 2 sounds to your child's Tapestry account shortly which I hope will help you. We will also be running a phonics workshop in the next few weeks which we hope you will be able to attend.

### 3. Communicate

Your child will have a received a home/school diary in their book bag. Please try to communicate regularly with positive comments or any concerns. Your child will see that you are interested in their progress and that you value reading (it also lets me know how things are going at home).

#### 4. Talk about the books

There is more to being a good reader than just being able to read words on a page. Just as important is the ability to understand what has been read and to develop the ability to infer and make predictions. Always talk to your child about the book; about the pictures, the characters, how they think the story will end, their favourite part. You will then be able to see how well they have understood and you will help them to develop good comprehension skills. This is the reason why our wordless books are an important way of supporting your child as a reader, helping them to develop these vital skills.

#### 5. Find a quiet time

When hearing your child read, set aside a quiet time with no distractions. Five to 10 minutes is usually long enough.

#### 6. Make reading enjoyable

Make reading a positive time. Sit with your child. Try not to pressurise them if they are reluctant. If they lose interest then do something else, or even read a story to them!

#### 7. Use of illustrations

Picture books offer lots of visual clues which really help your child when reading a text. Discuss each illustration before attempting the sentence. However, children can sometimes start to rely too heavily on using illustrations and begin to 'guess' the sentence. If this begins to become a habit, consider covering the illustration after first looking at it to refocus your child on decoding the words on the page.

#### 8. Be positive

If your child says something nearly right to start with that is fine. Don't say 'No. That's wrong,' but 'Let's read it together' and point to the words as you say them. Boost your child's confidence with constant praise for even the smallest achievement.

## 9. Developing fluency

When your child first starts to read, chances are that they will be sounding out virtually every word. Once they have sounded out a word, encourage them to say it, for example, 'c-a-t...cat'. After they have sounded out each word in a sentence, encourage your child to read the whole thing, eg 'a cat on a mat'. As they develop as readers, your child will begin to recognise a growing number of familiar words, but they may still try to sound them out when reading to you. Do let them know that it's quite okay *not* to decode familiar words.

## 10. Develop sight vocabulary

Our most confident readers are those children who build up a sight vocabulary and use their phonics to decode unfamiliar words. We will be emailing you a pdf of the first 100 High Frequency Words shortly, which I have broken down into blocks of 10 or 15 words in colour groups. The order of the words is linked to our phonics phases. Please use the word cards in the pdf, working on one colour band at a time to encourage your child's sight vocabulary. Once your child has mastered the first (red) set, begin to add words from the orange set.

# Welcome to Reception

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## Show and tell

Show and tell - the highlight of many children's week! - happens on Thursday morning. Your child is welcome to bring in one toy or item to talk about and show the class. We try to break the class into smaller groups at first to help them listen to each other and maintain focus in the session.

## Communication

Always feel free to speak to us with any concerns or questions. As mentioned earlier, either catch me at the beginning or end of the day, or arrange an appointment to speak to me with the office.

## Reminders

We have a number of key days for different things:

- Monday and Friday - reading books are changed if the children have read them (once they are on worded books, children will be encouraged to change their own books).
- Tuesday - PE (we will not change initially) and Library (please return your child's old library book so they can borrow a new one).
- Thursday - yoga
- Friday - New phoneme flash cards are sent home.