

Fringford Primary School - EYFS Robins class - Information for new Parents

Dear Parents,

I would like welcome you all to Robins class!

Although recent times have seen great change and uncertainty, we have tried to keep things as normal as possible for the children in school. With this in mind, I will set out our plans for your children's transition to Reception but please bear in mind that sometimes things can change very suddenly. The welfare of the children is always paramount to us and we will do all we can to ensure that starting school is as straightforward and exciting as possible.

Induction: Due to Covid restrictions, we cannot manage our usual weekly visits for parents and children. Instead, we will welcome the children in small groups during the weeks commencing July 12th and July 19th. Further details of these visits will follow. When school begins in September, the first two weeks will continue the small group visits and your child will be offered daily morning or afternoon sessions. We found that this worked very well in September 2020 and the children soon settled in with their new friends and adults, without becoming too tired from the new routine. **During induction weeks in September, your child should wear their new school uniform and bring a named bottle of water to drink. They can also bring a piece of fruit as a snack.**

The daily routine:

Our usual school day begins at 8.50 am and ends at 3.15pm. During covid-restrictions, start and finish times have been staggered. We will let you know your start and finish time in due course. During induction weeks, the session times are likely be 9.05 – 12.05 and 1.30 – 3.00pm. We will confirm this as soon as possible.

At first, the routine is very flexible and incorporates a large amount of self-chosen activity. The **Foundation Stage curriculum** is a play-based, child-centred curriculum in which there are 7 areas of learning – Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design. We set up the classroom in order to promote learning across all areas and we adapt the environment in order to meet the distinctive needs of each child. As time passes, the proportion of adult-led activities increases, so that children become used to working in small and large groups alongside an adult. We work towards the Early Learning Outcomes for the Foundation Stage Curriculum. More information about the goals will be provided in September.

Term dates are published on the school website. Please note that holidays are not authorised during term-time. The expectation is that Reception children attend full-time, after the initial settling in period at the beginning of the Autumn term.

We have **healthy snack time** in the morning, providing a variety of fruit/vegetables and milk/water to drink.

We are embracing the Healthy Smiles Initiative and do not provide any sugary food or drinks through the school day. Your child should bring a named bottle of water that can be re-filled if necessary.

Lunch is usually from 12.15 – 1.15pm. If you provide a packed lunch, please be aware of our healthy eating policy.

For birthdays, we ask you not to send in cakes or sweets. The children get to wear a special birthday hat and we all sing happy birthday.

Our children wear **school uniform**. Trousers or leggings and shorts are best for girls and boys because we do lots of physical activity, both inside and outside. Separate PE kit is not needed initially for exercise as we will minimise the need for changing clothes. Plimsolls are worn indoors to ensure that the classroom remains clean and safe for sitting and playing on the carpet. Messy play is encouraged so it is a good idea to provide an old shirt or apron that we can keep in school. Please provide plenty of pants in case of toilet accidents. Please do label all clothing. We do our best to keep belongings safe but it is difficult to match every child to their school uniform if they are not labelled.

On arrival in class, children are encouraged to **self-register** by finding their own name cards so it is useful if they can already recognise their names. We make our name cards with an accompanying picture that begins with the same sound as the child's name, e.g. Annie apple. This gives a clue for children who do not recognise their names and also helps us to develop children's skill at recognising words that begin with the same sounds.

We have a morning **welcome circle** in which we sing hello to welcome each other. We clap the syllables in the word 'hello' and in the children's names. This helps the children to develop attention and listening skills and helps them to develop sensitivity to spoken sounds. As the year progresses, we sing hello in different languages. If you have a family language other than English, please do let us know so that we can incorporate the language into our learning. During covid restrictions, we have adapted circle time, sometimes using the parachute outside and sometimes, separating into small groups inside. Each arrangement has worked really well and this will continue next September if it is still necessary.

We incorporate **mathematical activities** into our morning circle, such as counting how many children are present, learning the days of the week and months of the year, recording the weather and singing number songs that involve adding and taking away.

The remainder of the day is divided into a mixture of adult-led activity and self-chosen play. The balance of this changes as the year progresses. We start learning the required skills for reading and writing from the beginning of the year. Most of our children are able to read and write with some fluency by the end of this first year – it is a very exciting time!

The font that you see in this letter is the style of handwriting used with the children. If you are already doing some mark-making with letters at home, please use this style, only using a capital letter at the beginning of your child's name. If you have already started talking about letters, please make sure that you say the sound of the letters when writing. We do teach letter names but not when beginning writing. We use a scheme called Floppy's Phonics – you will receive more details of this later.

HOME LEARNING:

We have done a lot of this now! We always knew that children make the most progress with learning when there are good links between home and school but this has become even more important in recent times. So, while we recognise that children will be tired when they get home, there are a few activities that are strongly encouraged.

READING: At first, children will bring home picture books to share with you. Later on, they will bring home graded reading books so that they can have a go at reading themselves. It is really important that children practise using the phonic skills we teach so all graded books will be phonically decodable. Your child should share a book with an adult at home every day. It is better to do a couple of pages daily than a whole book once a week.

HANDWRITING: Once we begin teaching letter sounds, children will bring home sound sheets, to practise letter formation. You should keep these at home so that you can re-visit them often. Handwriting is a physical skill and as such, requires constant repetition to build muscle memory. Other activities that help develop the fine motor skill required for pencil control are bead threading, Duplo/Lego building, jigsaw puzzles, play dough, painting, drawing and colouring. Please do lots of drawing and other mark-making at home over the summer so that your child feels comfortable holding a pencil. We teach the children to pinch the pencil between thumb and first finger, with the second finger providing support.

FAMILY PHOTOS:

Please send us pictures of family members and pets for our VIP board. The children love to look at these and it helps us to identify people who are picking up your child.

PREPARING FOR SCHOOL: People always ask me what they can do to help children be ready for school. There are many skills to learn in the first year but these things are the most useful at the start:

Talk lots! Play board games, do jigsaw puzzles, sing nursery rhymes, share traditional tales. When shopping, help your child to count items and coins. When driving, look for signs and landmarks in the environment. Play I-Spy. Enjoy the park and the swimming pool, collect souvenirs and talk about your experiences. Paint and draw. Use scissors and glue to make collages. Invent stories about your pictures. Have quiet times. Take turns to speak so that your child learns to listen and can wait for others to finish. Help your child be independent when using the toilet. Let them dress themselves! Have early bedtimes and get used to getting up at school times. Most importantly, look forward to this momentous time in your child's life, trust that we will take great care of your children and enjoy!

We really look forward to meeting you and your children soon.

Vanessa Benjamin-Smith (Class teacher/SEND/CO/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead)