



Reception Handbook

for parents and carers

2025/26



Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Families

Welcome to Whitchurch! We are delighted that you have chosen Whitchurch as your child's school. We know that for some of you this may be the first time that your child will have left your care for the entire day. We appreciate what a big step starting school is and we want you and your child to feel happy and secure with us. This handbook is intended to be a brief outline of what you and your child can expect at Whitchurch. We hope that it will provide you with much of the information you will need. If it does not, please feel free to ask us.

Best wishes

Ms Rachel Inniss
Headteacher

Learners
today,
leaders
tomorrow



Meet the Reception Team

Tigers Class (RTP)

Mrs T Patel
Class Teacher



Mrs B Tikam
Early Years Practitioner



Lions Class (RJP)

Miss J Patel
Class Teacher



Mrs S Dhrona
Early Years Practitioner



Jaguars Class (RLW)

Mrs P Leigh and
Miss N Ward
Class Teachers



Ms F Mouhoub
Early Years Practitioner



Leopards Class (RDW)

Mrs R Dodia and
Ms J Whittington
Class Teachers



Ms R Azward
Early Years Practitioner



Mrs T Patel
Reception Leader
tpatel@whitchurchps.co.uk

Miss N Ward
Assistant Headteacher for Early Years
nward@whitchurchps.co.uk



School Attendance

Once your child starts in Reception they have started statutory school and therefore attendance and punctuality is super important. We need to work together to make sure they do not miss a minute of their precious learning time. We expect every child to be at school when they are fit and healthy. We do monitor attendance very closely. This is to enable us to identify families who may need to support as we know that the children who attend regularly and arrive on time for school often make the best progress.

Home/School communication

It is very important that you keep the school office informed with the most up to date contact telephone numbers and emails for you and your nominated emergency contacts in case we need to contact you regarding your child. At Whitchurch, we use our School Spider communication app to send messages, emails, letters and documents straight to your smartphone; therefore it is vitally important you download the app onto your phone so you can access information quickly. At Whitchurch we use the school website to keep parents/carers informed of key events and key information such as assembly dates, school term dates, contact details, Governing Body information, school policies and much more. In addition, our weekly Whitchurch newsletters are posted on the school website on the day of publication and also sent out by the School Spider App. We would encourage all parents to check the school website regularly for updates.

Working in partnership with parents and carers

We appreciate that parents and carers are a child's first and most important teachers. We know that your children have already learnt many things from you and at Whitchurch we aim to work with you to build on this foundation to help your child to flourish. We really want you to be involved as much as possible in not only the learning but the life of the school as well. We will host workshops throughout the year to support you in helping your child to learn. We have an open door policy but it is usually best to catch us at the end of the day. All we ask is that you wait for all the children to be safely dismissed to their grown-up.

Tapestry

We use an online Learning Journal called 'Tapestry'. This is a brilliant way for you to keep up to date with what your child is learning and also add photographs, videos or comments of your own. Each child has their own unique and secure profile where staff record 'wow' moments for your child. Tapestry is also used weekly to upload whole class learning, share school experiences and phonic videos. It is vital you check Tapestry regularly to stay informed about your child's learning and ways you can support them in the home environment.

Learning Review meetings

Twice a year we have parent/carers' evenings. The meetings are an opportunity to discuss how your child is doing in class and in school generally with their teachers. They can help decide how best to work together to support your children's development and learning.

Helping your child at home

We feel that the most important ways to help your child to learn and develop are to:

- **Talk, talk and more talk!** Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and mental development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and other children throughout the day is crucial.
- **Make time for them every day to play a game or do something of their choice** - that continued adult contact with lots of speaking and listening is so important.
- **Try and find special time to talk to your child about any Tapestry posts that are added.**
- **Also reading to/with your child every day is critical** if they are to develop a love of books and become successful readers themselves. If you can read to them every night as part of their bedtime routine, you will be laying the foundation for a successful school life. You can read to your child in English or your home language.



Continuous provision and the outside classroom

Not only will your child have access to their own classroom for most of the day, they will also have access to the outside classroom, which all Reception classes share. For much of the day, your child will be able to decide where they would like their learning to take place. We call this 'continuous provision'. The teachers will have planned and organised activities both inside the classroom and in the outside learning spaces. We encourage everyone to spend some time outside each day, as there are important skills that can only be learnt outside - such as running, riding our wheeled toys, playing at the sand and water trays, making dens and using their 'big voices'.

"...when children are playing outdoors, they are exercising their intellectual and emotional muscles as well as their physical ones. They are developing their powers to think, to feel, to do, to see and to understand, to represent and to express. They are imagining, puzzling, exploring, befriending and sharing" (M.J. Drummond, 1995, Can I Play out?)

At Whitchurch, we encourage children to play outside in all weathers and so sending them into school with appropriate clothing for the season is really important. Learning in the outdoors offers so many different learning opportunities come rain or shine!

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

At Whitchurch, our first aim is to settle the children happily into the school, as happy children are ready learners. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is split into seven 'Areas of Learning':

- **Personal, Social and Emotional development**
- **Physical development**
- **Communication and Language**
- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the World**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

At Whitchurch, we employ specialist teachers so that in addition to the key aspects of learning the children enjoy specialist Music lessons with Mrs Leutfeld our Music Director, P.E. skills lessons taught by experienced and qualified coaches, time in our school library with our Librarian and also French lessons with Mr D'Amore. These specialist lessons are timetabled to take place weekly alternate half terms and are designed to enrich our already fantastic Early Years curriculum.



Characteristics of Effective Learning

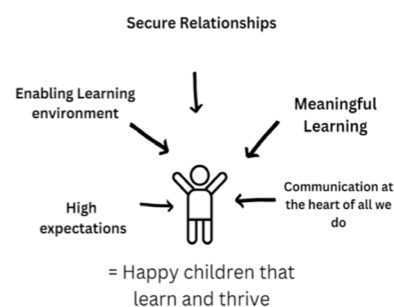
The COEL are divided into three areas:

- **Playing & Exploring**
- **Active Learning**
- **Creating and critical thinking**

These skills and attitudes are fundamental to every child as a lifelong learner. We support children to be engaged in their learning, challenged and resilient. We believe in developing an 'I can do' attitude.

Our Early Years Pedagogy

Our early years pedagogical principles are the key ingredients that guide and influence our early years practice.



Play

In Reception, well-planned play is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. Through play, children explore and investigate learning experiences which help them to make sense of the world, without fear of failure. We aim to challenge all the children and provide them with a range of opportunities and teaching strategies to extend their learning.

Planning

At Whitchurch, we offer children a broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities for children to choose from a range of activities and learn independently. Planning is focused on 'learning', high-quality interactions and experiences. Teachers plan for:

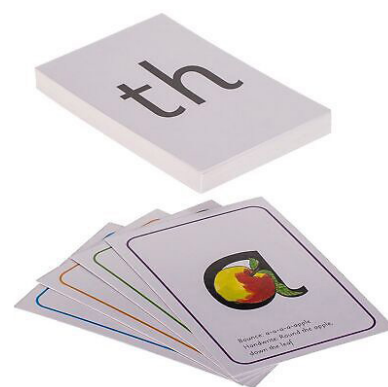
- **Adult led learning** where teacher or early years practitioners (EYPs) working with a small group of children. Children should be grouped according to their attainment or skill development during these sessions.
- **Adult directed learning** where the teacher sends a group of children to do an activity and then the children report back on their learning to the teacher or the class. Adult directed groups need an opportunity to show what they have learned to the teacher and this is another valuable assessment opportunity.
- **Independent learning** where children choose an activity.

Reading at Whitchurch

At Whitchurch we have an amazingly well-resourced school fiction library and class book areas. Your child will visit the school library every other half-term for a weekly library session. They are able to choose a reading book to take home weekly from our class book areas and read with family members or perhaps a family friend. The children choose books for pleasure, not necessarily books pitched at their level of reading competency. If reading books are lost there will be a £5 charge to replace the book as we need to ensure all our books in the library are in good condition and plentiful supply. All children need a bookbag. We ask you to send this into school every day. The book bag will be used to send home reading books, home learning books and any notes or messages.

Read Write Inc. Phonics

We are a Read Write Inc school. Read Write Inc. is a government backed phonics scheme designed by Ruth Miskin, which through systematic teaching and consistent routines, enables children to achieve high levels of reading success. At Whitchurch, we believe that reading is the key to all learning and we are fully committed to making sure that every child is a reader by the end of KS1.



Fruit, Milk & Water

Every day the Government provides your child with a piece of fruit and milk - there is no charge for this. The children also have an unlimited supply of drinking water and we ask that you send your child to school each day with their own clearly labelled drinking bottle.



School Day / Times

At the start of the school day

Reception classes keep the same time as the rest of the infant classes. School starts at 8.55am (gates open from 8.35am) and ends at 3.20pm. Please use the EYFS playground gate where you can take your child to their class. Over the year, to develop independence, we will work towards letting your child come into school from the gate on their own.

At the end of the school day

Learning time finishes at 3.20pm and after this time the patio doors for each classroom will be open for teachers to dismiss the children. Parents/carers may wait at the inner gate until it is opened by a member of the Reception team and then wait for their children on the patio. We ask that parents wait patiently until the teachers dismiss the children. Our first priority is the safety of your child and to this end we will only let your child go home with someone you have told us about. We do not allow older Whitchurch siblings to collect Reception children. If someone else is collecting your child please tell us in advance and introduce that adult to the class teacher as staff will not release children to an unknown adult. To ensure the handing over of children is done safely (children are not released to the wrong parent/carer) we ask for your patience in allowing the class teacher to call children to the door. If you wish to speak to the teacher this is fine but you will need to wait until all the children are dismissed and safely.

What happens at lunchtime?

We are really very proud of our school meals at Whitchurch - the meals are all freshly prepared using nutritious well-balanced ingredients. Our Chef takes great pride in their work and you can taste this in the cooking! School meals are free for all children. If you are considering packed lunch please do check our packed lunch policy.

Lunchtime is 11.45am until 1pm.

For the first 15 minutes the class teachers and Early Years Practitioners will remain with children in the hall supporting children with collecting their food and sitting down. We will encourage them to use a knife and fork and make sure they eat all of their lunch. Once they have eaten their lunch they can go out to play.



After School / Childcare

At Whitchurch, we run many after school enrichment clubs; not all of these clubs will be suitable for Reception children but we always ensure there are a couple of choices. All our after school enrichment clubs are either run by school staff or outside agencies. We always recommend that children do not start enrichment clubs in the first half term as they need time to settle into the routines of school.

Junior Adventures Group, our wraparound care provider, is available on site if you require childcare at the start or end of the day during term time. 'Rise then Shine' Breakfast Club starts at 7.30am and runs up until the start of the school day (£8.05 per session) and 'Play and Stay' After School Club operates after school until 5.45pm (£13.55 per session) - concessions are available. More details can be obtained by visiting www.junioradventuresgroup.co.uk and searching for Whitchurch.

Uniform

School uniform is compulsory at Whitchurch and can be purchased from Uniform4Kids - Stanmore Pullens, 48-50 Church Road, Stanmore, HA7 4AH (020 8954 3850). The school colour is red and children should wear:

- **Red school sweatshirt or cardigan (with or without school logo)**
- **White polo shirt**
- **Dark grey skirt/trousers**
- **Black school shoes with black or white socks**

The full school uniform policy can be found on the school website. Your child will also need a P.E kit consisting of black shorts, a t-shirt in their house colour, a school tracksuit and trainers). You will find out your child's house colour in the first few weeks. Children come to school wearing their P.E. kit on their designated P.E. days.

Clothing / Jewellery

First and foremost, all your children's clothing should be clearly labelled with their name. Sometimes learning and having fun can be messy; because of this we ask that you do not send your child to school in expensive, favourite or special clothes (coats/gloves/hats etc). Make sure that your child is appropriately dressed for the weather every day - we go outside rain or shine! Also, please do not send your child in clothes they cannot do up or unfasten themselves - so please no shoes with laces, belts or clothes with excessive fiddly buttons until your child can fasten them by themselves. Also, some younger children can have toileting accidents when they first start school (this is totally normal). If you feel this may be an issue you may leave us with a spare set of clothes on their class peg so we can change them into their own clothes. The school policy is that we do not allow children to wear jewellery.

Celebrating birthdays / food in school

We realise a birthday is a really important occasion for so many of our young children and we want to celebrate this special day in school, however we do not allow food or party bags to be sent in / distributed. Many of our children have serious food allergies so we do not allow any food to be given out to children that has not been prepared by us. When your child has a birthday the teachers will get the class to sing a celebration song.

Accidents do happen

Young children may regularly bump and graze themselves. When this does happen we will treat and record it in our medical accident/incidents book. On those limited occasions when a child bumps their head or has a more serious injury, we will of course telephone you to make you aware and closely monitor your child's health at school.

Settling

Some children take transitions in their stride and settle in with very few bumps, others do better than you would ever have expected. Some children need a bit more support with transitions. If your child finds school a bit tricky to begin with, don't panic, as they will get there in the end by us working together. The best things you can do to support and encourage your child is to accept their emotions, stay positive and have a goodbye routine. Please speak to your child's class teacher who can provide further support if required.



Staff Contacts

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**We hope that this booklet is useful and that you are really excited about the year ahead. Please do approach us if you have any questions.
Miss Ward**

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