

Starting School

*Important Information
for Parents and Carers*



Working Together



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For A Bright Future

Welcome to Reception at The Ridge

- ☺ A typical day in Reception is all about learning through play.
- ☺ We want the children to enjoy their learning – to be happy, confident and independent.
- ☺ Life in Reception is an extension of nursery, kindergarten or pre-school.
- ☺ Our 'Early Years' curriculum covers seven equally important areas of learning: Personal Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, Physical Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design.
- ☺ The environment is planned so that everything is accessible to enable children to become independent learners. We encourage children to look after things in the environment by taking care of everything and putting it away in its correct place.
- ☺ We have an indoor and an outdoor area – this is an exciting area with space to learn and investigate, a wooded area and our Trim Trail too.
- ☺ A typical day in Reception will look like this:
 - Phonics – this is where we learn letter sounds to enable us to learn how to read and write.
 - Talk for Writing – we base our English sessions on Talk for Writing. This is fantastic as children learn to retell a story using a story map rather than reading it. They then create their own story maps to help retell and write their own versions of the story. Children will be working with an adult in a small group or be choosing from a range of learning activities based on the story.
 - Reading – children will be in a small group with an adult for a Guided Reading session or be sharing a story as part of the class.
 - Break time – children join the rest of the school on the playground and have their fruit.
 - Maths – children will be working with an adult in a small group or independently choosing activities based on what we are learning about.
 - Lunchtime – children eat their dinner in the hall and then go onto the main playground.
 - Kinetic Letters – this is our handwriting programme to help children make their bodies stronger and begin to write.
 - Exploration time – this is when children will be able to access both the indoor and outdoor environment to apply their learning in different areas. Children can independently choose what activities they would like to take part in.
 - Story time and milk – we share a story whilst having our milk, then get ready to go home.

General Information

- ☺ All children are entitled to a free school meal. Children are also able to choose a grab a bag, which consists of a sandwich, fruit, yogurt and a biscuit/cake. The children are all provided with drinks of water or squash the dinner hall, so they will not need to bring any lunchtime drinks into school. We have staff to provide help when needed, however children are encouraged to be independent when feeding themselves and using cutlery. Your help and support with this will be greatly appreciated. We will advise you of our system to order school dinners in September.
- ☺ Children are asked to bring a water bottle into school each day that they can access throughout the school day. These are to be filled up at home but can we please stress that it must be water in them and not include squash, juice or fizzy drinks. Please don't keep them in school bags as we have had a few leaks in the past which has damaged books. Can you please ensure that the bottle has a name label on it.
- ☺ The children come into school via the reception outside door. On your first day there will be someone to direct you. Please form a queue along the path and leave the area via the large perimeter gates once you have dropped your child off. To enable the children to be able to come straight into class can we please ask that you don't use this time to talk to the teachers about anything in detail. If you would like to speak to us then please come and see us after school once all of the children are safely with their parents. If it is a very quick message then you can let us know or hand us a message. If you need a message passed to us during the day then please ring the school office and they will be able to get the message to us. Thank you in advance for your support in this, as you can understand it is a very busy time and our main priority is to get the children safely into school. Some children may get upset from time to time coming into school. We completely understand that this can be upsetting for both you and your child, but we do find the best thing you can do is to leave them with us and we can settle them into school.
- ☺ Home time – home time collection is 3.05 – 3.15pm. This is slightly earlier than other year groups as this gives time for parents with other children in school to go to the correct place to collect their other children. The children will leave through the reception class (exterior) door. Please can you form a queue along the path and we respectfully ask that younger siblings stay with you at all times. We will then release your child when you are at the front of the queue. It is an ideal time to speak to us once all of the children have been safely handed over, so please stand to one side if you would like to see us. Due to the size of our outside area we politely ask that you don't gather in there after you have collected your child and make your way out through the large perimeter gates. We really appreciate your help in this matter.
- ☺ Please let us know if there has been something happen at home that may play on your child's mind, as we want to be there for your child if they are worrying or upset.
- ☺ If you are returning any letters can you give them to us on the door rather than leave them in your child's bag. Unfortunately due to our busy day we are unable to go through every child's bag individually. If you are bringing any money in, again can this be handed directly to us on the door or posted into the box that is located next to the school office. Please ensure that it is in an envelope with your child's name and class on. If we have any events where money is required then please have money in a named envelope too.
- ☺ Always let us know if someone new is to collect your child or if you are running late. Ring the school office to do this rather than e-mailing us so the message can be passed onto us as soon as the office are advised. If you know the day before then you can always let us know at the end of the previous day.
- ☺ Over the year we will be doing lots of exciting things including trips, a Christmas production, a class assembly, sports day and we will also be inviting you into school to work with your child.
- ☺ We provide before and after school care, please ask if you would like the details of this.
- ☺ If your child has any medical conditions then please make staff aware during your first meeting and also on any relevant paperwork. Please keep us informed of any changes.
- ☺ We will discuss your child's transition at our Induction meeting.
- ☺ We will be liaising with kindergarten and other nursery settings over the next half term.
- ☺ School jumpers, cardigans and ties are available from the school office. We will provide your child with a blue book bag when they start school.

Being Independent

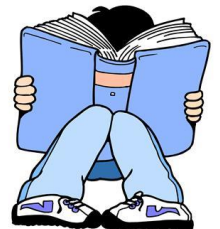
- ☺ Encourage your child to come into school on their own, carrying their own things as early as possible in their school lives. They need to be aware of what they are bringing so that they can keep track of where to put it in the classroom and check that they have everything at the end of the day! Give them that responsibility at home too. Ask them 'What do you need today?' 'Have you got everything?'
- ☺ Can your child dress and undress themselves? PE is a fantastic lesson and everyone loves it, but thirty children getting changed all at once is very interesting! It is always immediately apparent which children are used to dressing themselves and which children are used to being dressed by a grown up. Therefore some children do become upset at this time if they don't know how to dress themselves. If you have practised doing and undoing buttons, (amongst other things) it's no big deal to do it for yourself when changing for PE. Can they put their shoes on the correct feet? Can they turn their clothes the right way round if they are inside out? Can they tuck their shirts in themselves? Can they put their own coat on? And fasten it? Some shirts now have Velcro at the top instead of that tricky top button. Children currently come to school in their PE kit when taking part in PE. We will let you know about this in more detail when your child starts school. If you can bring a named PE bag with pumps and spare underwear and socks into school when your child starts school please. This will then be kept in school.
- ☺ Can your child go to the toilet independently? Can they pull their trousers up and down and know how to hold their skirt? Do they know how much toilet paper to use? Can they wipe themselves clean? Do they always flush the toilet – themselves – as a matter of course? And can they wash their hands properly – themselves? They need to do all of this for themselves at school.
- ☺ Children can go to the toilet whenever they need to and we are always here if accidents happen. But please make sure that your child is totally at ease in going to the toilet on their own and is perfectly confident in what to do. We send the children to the toilet at different points throughout the day but please talk to them about telling a teacher or dinner time staff if they need to go at a different time – just so they are not thinking that they can't go.
- ☺ **Labels** in clothes are vital! Thirty children all wearing the same clothes is fine until they start to take them off! Part of our 'training' is to teach children to look after their things, but when it is PE we always end up with odd items of clothing without any names in! Please label absolutely everything including things like shoes, coats, scarves and gloves! Show your child where you put the labels so that they get used to looking for their own name themselves. Life is so much easier and fewer items get lost if we can see who the jumper that we have just found outside in the playground belongs to. Please check these regularly as sometimes they can fade or come out in the wash.
- ☺ Fruit – children have fruit supplied every day at morning break-time. However, unlike at pre-school our fruit is simply washed. It is not peeled or chopped up. So do get your child used to eating the skin on apples, for example.
- ☺ We understand that children starting school can get very tired. Please try hard to establish a bedtime routine at home, where they will get lots of sleep as this will help them when they come into school.
- ☺ Your child will be given access to Doodle Maths. This is a fun and exciting way to develop their maths skills online. Please encourage your child to access this regularly. Usernames and passwords will be sent out once your child has started school.
- ☺ When children start school they are given a 'buddy'. Their buddy is a child in Year 6 who will help them to settle in. They check at playtime that they are ok and chat to them if they see them around school. Throughout the year we will plan activities where they meet up with their buddy. We have found that this works brilliantly and the children in both year groups love it.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage

- ☺ Children's progress is assessed against the Foundation Stage Profile, which helps us to plan the next steps in children's learning. This consists of lots of statements set out in each of the areas of learning mentioned above. It is expected that children will achieve the goals set out by the end of their year in Reception. However, children are all different and achieve at different rates in different areas. We use the Profile to track their progress so that we can see how they are getting on.
- ☺ Learning Journeys are kept for each child and are added to constantly. We create an electronic learning journey which is added to regularly. This is where we record lots of information. You may have had one of these from their pre-school setting, so you may be familiar with the idea. It is important to say that we welcome contributions from home for Learning Journeys too. Photos, messages, e-mails are all welcome and help to paint a complete picture of your child's learning.

Learning to Read and Write

- ☺ We rely on your help and support with this vital area of learning. We teach children through a daily Phonics session, learning the sounds letters make (e.g. c-a-t spells cat, not C-A-T using letter names). We will send information home regularly so that you can see which sounds we have been learning. There is also a really useful video on our school website which shows you how to say each letter sound. We hope you find this really useful as it is vital that each sound is pronounced correctly. We encourage you to view this regularly to help with your child's learning.
- ☺ Some words however are not to be 'sounded out'. Words like 'the', 'was', 'no' and 'go' are sometimes called 'tricky' words, at The Ridge we call them words that can't be sounded out. These have to be learned on sight.
- ☺ Your child will have a 'Wonderful Word' book which will show you the sounds we have been learning, tricky words and also examples of words that you could try reading and writing at home.
- ☺ We will also send books home to share. These will be picture books to start with and we encourage you to ask your child lots of questions about what they can see and what they think might happen next. Reading books will follow when we feel that your child is ready for them. Children will also get to choose a library book to bring home each week.
- ☺ We find that children who practise lots at home definitely make the most progress, so your support is vital. Please write in the Reading Record we supply to show you have heard your child read and whenever you read them a story or share a book.
- ☺ We will change your child's reading book once a week. We will let you know what day this will be on. Please ensure that you have signed to say that you have read their current book as this will enable us to give them an exciting new one.
- ☺ Please send your child in each day with their reading folder inside their blue bag. We may hear your child read on different days and like to let you know what we have been reading in your child's reading record. Could you also keep their Wonderful Word book in their bag too.
- ☺ Over the summer please spend some time helping your child recognise their name and have a go at writing it too.
- ☺ We teach children to write using a scheme called 'Kinetic Letters'. This is all about building core strength by lying on the floor to write and using a multi-sensory approach to learning letter shapes. These skills combine to make writing automatic and easy. It is also really important that children are encouraged to use the correct pencil grip at all times.
- ☺ We will be holding a Parent's Information Session in the autumn term to tell you more about how we teach phonics, reading, writing and Kinetic Letters and how you can help your child.



Finally, please remember that ...

- ☺ If you have any concerns you would like to discuss at any time please don't hesitate to see us. Alternatively, you can e-mail Mrs Melia on lmelia@ridge.dudley.sch.uk
- ☺ If you do want to speak to us, it is best to do so at the end of the day, when possible.
- ☺ Similarly, make sure you tell your child that they ask if ever they are unsure about anything. Plus remember that a worry that you might think quite trivial can be a really big deal to a 4 year old – so any worry no matter how big or small, please let us know.
- ☺ We are here to make life easy and stress free and to make learning fun. If we all work together, that job becomes so much easier!
- ☺ We look forward to meeting you for a fun and exciting year ahead.

