



# Parent Handbook

The Early Years Foundation Stage



Reception Year: A Start to School Life



# Welcome from our Headteacher

Dear Parents,

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you as your child prepares to join us at St Margaret's Academy in 'Acorns'. We are delighted that you have chosen to send your child to our school and look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure that your child is safe, happy and receives the very best start to their education.

We have prepared our Parent Handbook to help you gain a greater understanding of our school and to guide you through our daily routines. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information or have a specific query you would like to discuss or have answered.

Tim Hughes  
**Headteacher**



# Our 'Acorns' Reception Team



**Mrs Leanna Russell**

Reception Teacher and  
Foundation Stage Leader



**Miss Jo Watkinson**

Reception Teacher and  
SENCo for Early Years



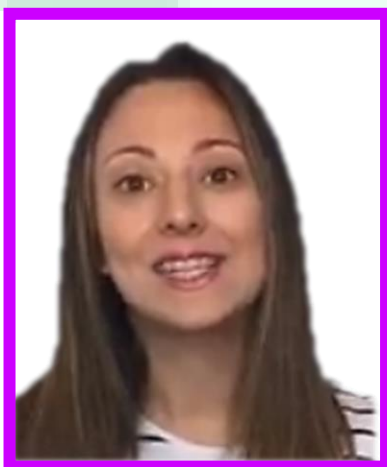
**Miss Kathryn Leworthy**

Higher Level Teaching Assistant



**Mrs Marie-Claire Christie**

Speech and Language Teaching Assistant



**Mrs Gemma Duggan**

Teaching Assistant



**Mrs Michelle Heavisides**

Teaching Assistant



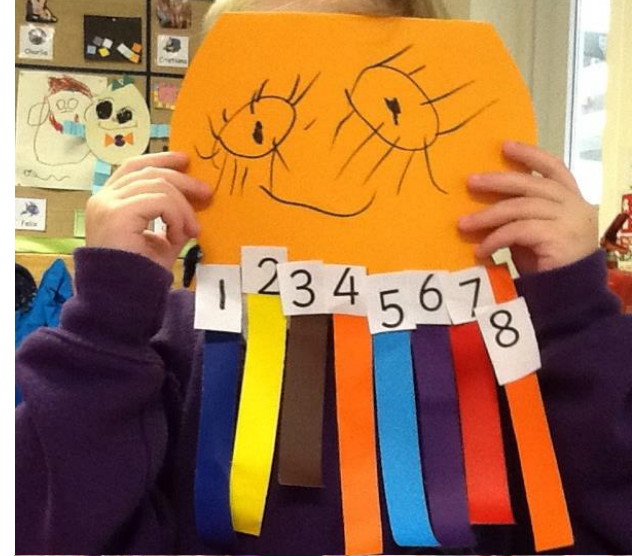
**Mrs Anna Peart**

Teaching Assistant



# Our School Vision

We want ourselves and the children in our care to be successful, resilient and inquisitive learners who are happy and well-equipped to participate positively in the community and wider society.



# Our School Values

Our school values are an essential point of reference on all of our journeys. British values play an equally important role. More information about our school values is available on the 'Curriculum Information' page of our school website.



Our four school values are:

Aspiration

Respect

Kindness

Responsibility







# Our School Day in 'Acorns'



## On arrival

Our day starts at 8:40am. You and your child will come into the Acorns Building together to help put away their belongings and get them busy with play. As soon as you feel your child has settled into this routine, we would like you to try to encourage them to come in by themselves; this is not only good for their independence but also means the environment is calmer and quieter. Your child must be in school by 8:50am before the register closes. Our key priority is to welcome the children safely into class at this time of day and it can therefore be a difficult time for us to talk to you. If you have an urgent matter which needs to be discussed, please wait until all the children are in class and a member of staff will be able to meet you.

## Our morning session

On a typical day we begin the morning with our phonics 'Read Write Inc.' session teaching the children to read and write. Afterwards our 'Busy Time' begins when the children are 'playing to learn'. During this time your child can make choices about what they wish to do and have free access to all areas of the Acorns provision. They use a little photo card of themselves to indicate their choice. The role of all adults is to facilitate and observe this play and step-in to challenge and move the learning forwards. Staff also plan for adult-led learning during this session, usually in the form of a small group activity.

During the morning your child will have access to a fruit snack and a cup of milk (free for under-fives). At the end of the morning, we all gather together for Learning Review Time where we will talk about our achievements, challenges and next steps.



## Lunchtime

We use the toilet, wash our hands and walk over to the Lunch Hall in the main school building (known by our children as 'The Big School') in time for 11:45am. All children from Reception to Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal. If you wish for your child to have a school meal you will need to login to 'School Gateway' remotely and order their lunch before 8:00am that day - further information is included in your Welcome Pack. Your child may bring in a healthy packed lunch from home if you would prefer this option - you will also find a packed lunch leaflet in your Welcome Pack which will provide ideas for healthy options; please ensure you do not send food products containing nuts as we have children with severe nut allergies in school. Our Acorns staff and friendly team of Mealtime Assistants are available in the hall to help your little ones during lunchtime. Please inform us of any dietary requirements or allergies your child may have and we will work closely with you to support them with this. After eating your child will return to the Acorns building for lunchtime play in the garden and a calming story time.

## Our afternoon session

After a short whole class teaching session on the carpet, the children again return to their Busy Time, playing to learn. We end the afternoon with a story and often a sing-song. We then support the children to collect their belongings and sit on the carpet ready to be dismissed.



## **The end of the day**

The school day finishes for Reception children at 3.15 pm and parents are asked to wait in the school carpark outside our Acorns Building. The children are dismissed from our central door into your care or that of a nominated adult. If for any reason you are unable to collect your child yourself, please inform us who will be collecting them as soon as possible by contacting the school office. In addition to this we will ask you to create a password for your child and any adult who is not familiar to us will be asked for this.

Safety is paramount at this time of the day. We ask the children to sit quietly and calmly on the carpet as they wait to go home. They are not permitted to leave the classroom until they have been dismissed by the member of staff at the door and collecting adults must not call their child out of class. We will send two children from each class out at a time. Please leave the car park area as promptly as you can with your child in order that the next two children can be dismissed.

Members of our Acorns Team are available to talk to at the end of the school day however we would ask you to wait until all children have been safely dismissed.

## **Breakfast Club and After School Club**

Through our Breakfast and After School Club we offer wrap-around care for your child from 7:40am to 5:20pm. These clubs are run by members of our school staff team. Further information is available in your Welcome Pack. Please contact the school office if you wish to book a place for your child.



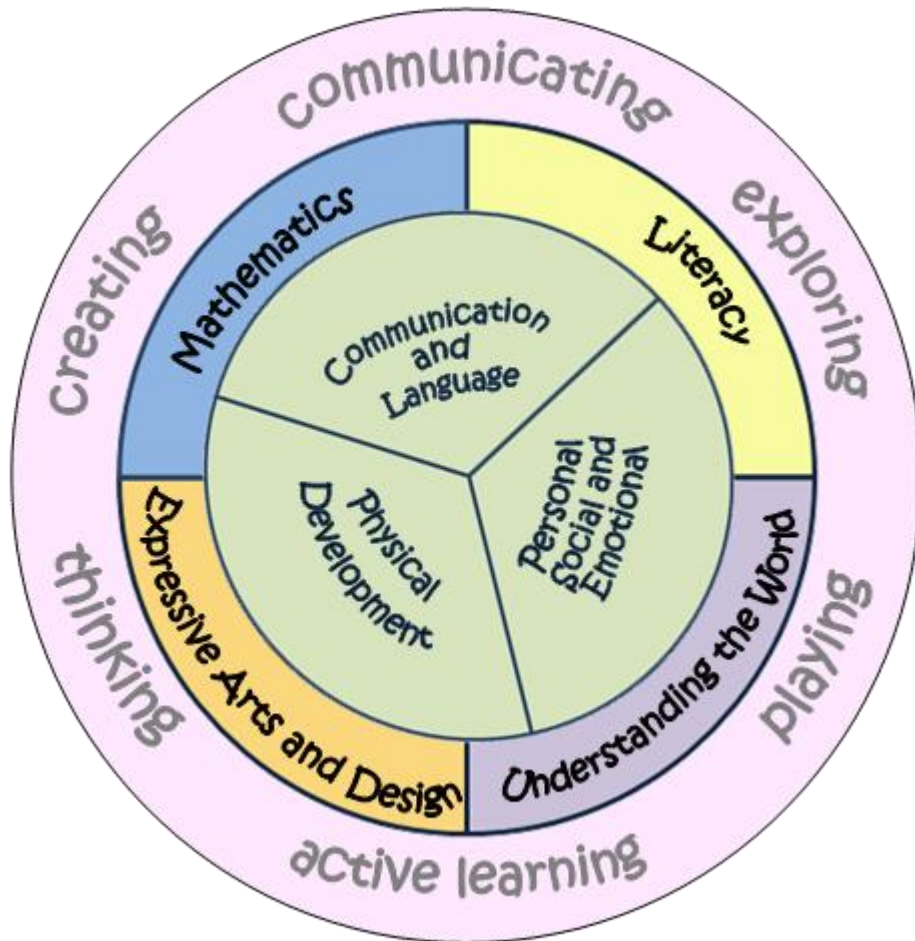




# Enjoying and Achieving

## Our Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) tracks the developmental stages through which a child progresses from their birth up to the age of 5. This means that for the duration of their Reception year we will continue the learning journey they have begun by delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. This curriculum is formed of seven areas of learning and development, all equally important and interconnected.



### The Prime Areas of Learning:

- Communication and Language.
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

These areas are crucial in developing your child's ability to listen, understand and communicate; to form positive relationships and to physically access their environment. These areas underpin all other areas of learning.

### The Specific Areas of Learning:

Literacy	Understanding the World
Expressive Arts and Design	Mathematics

### The Characteristics of Effective Learning:

These are essential learning behaviours for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm and enabling them to independently access the curriculum. We support your child to develop these skills by teaching them the language of learning and modelling the behaviours.



# The Seven Areas of Learning:

## 🌱 Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The experiences provided in Reception allow the children to develop a positive attitude towards their learning and each other. Through play they build relationships and develop the skills needed to cooperate and work harmoniously. Children are given the time and space to develop their emotional responses to everyday situations within clear and secure boundaries.

## 🌱 Communication and Language

Reception provides a wealth of opportunities to enrich and develop children's early language skills. In their play and within adult-led learning experiences they are encouraged to listen carefully and communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings. These skills enable the children to build and maintain positive relationships and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

## 🌱 Physical Development

Physical development is about improving the children's skills of coordination, control and manipulation in fine and gross motor movements. Children are provided with a range of tools, objects and mark makers of various sizes to enable them to develop their control and understanding of safety. Continual access to the outdoor environment allows the children the space to play and experiment with larger resources. Through stories, play and real-life their understanding of self-care and of the benefits of having a healthy and active life are developed.



## Mathematics

Mathematical understanding is developed through a variety of engaging and purposeful play experiences, songs and rhymes and real-life problem solving activities. The children develop their understanding of numbers, calculation, pattern, shape and space. Through play we are developing the children's understanding and use of mathematical language. Much of the children's learning is practical using concrete objects however we steadily develop their awareness of graphical representation encouraging them to make marks to show their learning which can be in the form of pictures, symbols, words and numerals.

## Literacy

Stories and everyday experiences provide rich contexts to encourage conversation and extend the children's vocabulary and understanding of language.

In Reception we are developing children's early reading skills. Our fundamental aim is to encourage children to enjoy their reading experiences. Alongside learning to read words, the children develop skills of handling books correctly, listening to others read, responding to what they have heard and retelling familiar stories.

Children develop their awareness of print by looking for familiar letters and matching words. Through our Read Write Inc. phonic programme they are introduced to letters and sounds and are taught how to blend them together to read simple words. Some words that children come across cannot be blended (sounded out) and we introduce these as our 'Red Words'. We have a wide range of reading materials in school which we review and extend on a regular basis. Your child will read with an adult in school each week and the book will be sent home for you to share. Our 'Reading Diary' forms a written contact between home and school and also provides a special place for your child to respond to their reading book either through pictures or words.





## 🌿 Understanding the World

In Reception, children's knowledge and understanding of their world is based upon relevant first-hand experiences. It is through an increased awareness of themselves, their family and their immediate environment that children may begin to make sense of the wider world, its people, places and events. Opportunities are provided to explore, observe, experiment and take safe risks. They gain confidence in solving problems, making decisions and developing their questioning skills. The children will have opportunities to work with a range of toys and equipment including technology.

## 🌿 Expressive Arts and Design

Creativity is fostered through a variety of different mediums including art, imaginative role play and small world, music and movement. Children are given the freedom to express their creative potential whilst carefully guided in developing the skills needed to respond thoughtfully to their environment. They are encouraged to share their ideas and talk about the choices they have made.



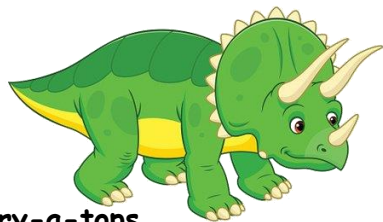


# The Characteristics of Effective Learning

In Reception we spend lots of time teaching the children the behaviours they need to be an effective learner. These are recognised in our curriculum as the Characteristics of Effective Learning and they enable your child to access and flourish within the seven areas of learning and development. They are divided into three key categories:

- **Playing and Exploring:** Linking up with other children or adults, using their imagination and developing ideas for play.
- **Active Learning:** Being motivated and having high levels of involvement in what they are doing whilst sustaining good levels of attention so they can complete what they have set out to do.
- **Creative and Critical Thinking:** Having good observation and thinking skills. Ability and approaches to problem solving.

Some of the language for learning can be quite complex and abstract for little ones so we introduce this in a child friendly way enabling them to identify and talk about how they have been learning. The learning behaviours are represented by a dinosaur character; we refer to these characters when we teach and also when we notice the children independently using them in their play, labelling their behaviour e.g. "You have been a Stick-a-saurus, you didn't give up when it got difficult for you!"



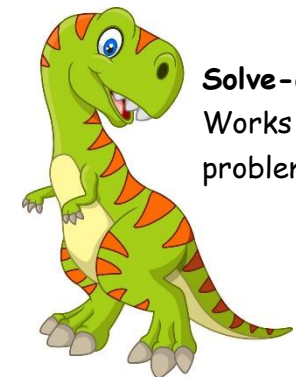
**Try-a-tops**  
Tries their hardest in all they do.



**Share-onyx**  
Shares ideas and resources.



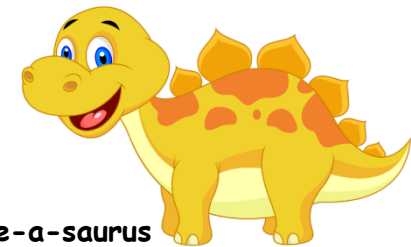
**Think-a-docus**  
Listens and thinks carefully about their learning.



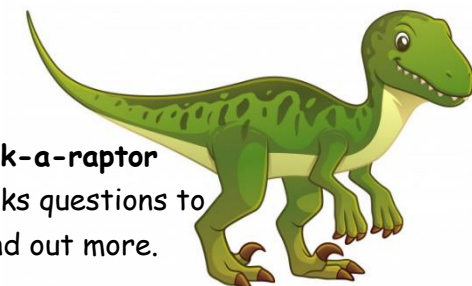
**Solve-a-saurus Rex**  
Works hard to solve problems.



**Stick-a-saurus**  
Doesn't give up if things get tricky.



**Explore-a-saurus**  
Uses their senses to explore all around them.



**Ask-a-raptor**  
Asks questions to find out more.



# Home Learning

We recognise that children learn best when parents and school work together and we value the important role you play in your child's education. During the school year we will run parent information meetings to keep you informed as how to best help your child.

## **Sharing home learning experiences**

We love to hear about what the children have been doing with you at home, so please do encourage them to bring something in from a visit, holiday or trip out and about to share with us all.

## **Reading with Your Child**

Each week, following a shared reading experience with an adult in school your child will bring home a book to read with you in their book bag; we also encourage them to choose a picture book from our library. Reading experiences should be fun and children will often choose their favourite book time and time again; familiarity and repetition is a key to reading success! If your child is tired, then sharing a picture book together at bedtime is equally as valid as practising their reading book from school. Any experience you have with your child, may be recorded in their Reading Diary. We love to know how they are getting on at home.





## Exploring our Themes for Learning

Within each of our themes for learning we may from time to time provide a small activity for the children to complete at home. This not only allows you to have a greater insight into what your child is learning in school but also provides opportunities for your child to reinforce their learning with you at home. Returned homework is always celebrated in school.



## Our wider community

We provide opportunities for the children to experience and make links with their wider community. This takes various forms including our visit to Pennywell Farm, walks in our local environment, visits from people who help us such as health professionals and the fire service, and also visiting arts such as theatre and music groups and storytellers. We love to make these experiences as meaningful as possible and are always on the lookout for parents and family members wishing to come and share a learning experience with the children e.g. a new baby, a craft experience or cultural celebration.







# What your child will need

## School Uniform

Our smart school uniform is comfortable and practical and gives our children a common identity. It can be purchased at [Riviera Schooldays](#). Please help your child develop their independence by choosing clothing that they can manage themselves. Simple fastenings such as Velcro on shoes really helps! Good quality, second-hand uniform can be purchased from the PTA and further detail is available from the school office. Please make sure every item of uniform is clearly and permanently marked with your child's name. This enables them to develop responsibility for their own belongings.

Boys – Day Wear	Girls – Day Wear
Black shoes; flat soles with grip *	Black shoes; flat soles with grip or plain simple black boots during the winter months *
Grey trousers or grey tailored shorts	Grey trousers, grey tailored shorts, grey pinafore or grey skirt **
White polo shirt (with or without logo) or white shirt with collar	White polo shirt (with or without logo) or white shirt with collar
Purple sweatshirt with logo	Purple and white check summer dress or purple and white check summer all-in-one skort
Plain black, grey or white socks	Plain grey tights, plain white socks or grey socks
	Purple sweatshirt or cardigan with logo
Boys – PE Wear	Girls – PE Wear
Trainers (coloured allowed) or plimsolls for dance and gym (barefoot otherwise)	Trainers (coloured allowed) or plimsolls for dance and gym (barefoot otherwise)
Plain black PE shorts or black tracksuit bottoms	Plain black PE shorts, black leggings or black tracksuit bottom
Purple PE t-shirt (with logo)	Purple PE t-shirt (with logo)
Optional purple PE hoodie for cold outdoor PE	Optional purple PE hoodie for cold outdoor PE



This is a snapshot of information from our website. Please look in the 'Parents and Carers' tab for more detailed information.

## **Book Bag**

The school Book Bag is an essential item which can also be purchased from the uniform shop. They must then bring this bag with them every day. Your child will have their own drawer in school to place their bag in. Please ensure you check inside your child's book bag every day as you will find important letters as well as lovely work! Your child may wish to add a keyring to the handle to help them identify their bag - please ensure only one item is attached and it must be no bigger than a ping-pong ball.

At the start of the year your child will bring home a school library book in this bag. Please ensure this book is returned in good condition each day ready to exchange. As soon as your child is ready to begin to apply their phonics skills we will send home a reading scheme book. You will be able to record their progress at home in a Reading Diary which will also be provided. Further information will follow as we begin our phonics teaching.



## **PE Kits**

In September, we will let you know which day of the week your child will have their PE session. We would like them to come to school dressed in their kit on this day.

## **Art and Technology**

All classes have painting aprons to protect children's clothing during messy activities including cooking, art and technology. Please practise rolling up sleeves at home to help your child to learn to be independent with this.



## 🌿 Spare Clothing

Items of spare clothing are kept in school should your child need to change for any reason however we would appreciate it if you could wash and return items as soon as possible after use. When children have grown out of their uniform, donations of these items are very welcome.

## 🌿 Money in School / Payments

Other than donations on charity days, we ask you to make payments using our on-line system 'School Gateway'. Further information can be found in your Welcome Pack. If for any reason you need to send in cash, please ensure it is in a sealed envelope and that it is clearly named.







# In partnership with you

We believe that children learn best when parents and school work closely. We know you are the experts when it comes to your child and so we value the important role you play in your child's education.

Communication is fundamental to this partnership. We aim to keep you informed about all aspects of your child's education through the following means:

## Reception Newsletter

Each week we publish our own Reception Newsletter containing information about the children's learning, links to home learning, notices and dates for your diary. As a means of reaching everyone and reducing the paper mountain we use an online system called 'Schoolcomms'. This enables us to send letters and messages directly to you via email or text message. Further information is included in your pack.

## Online information

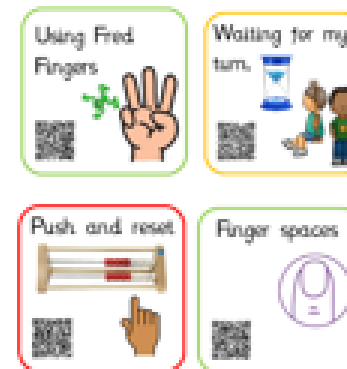
Full information about our school including policies, curriculum information, class blogs, newsletters and much more can be found on our school website

[www.stmargaretstorbay.org.uk](http://www.stmargaretstorbay.org.uk) We aim to keep this site as current as possible and new information is being frequently so do keep a close eye. You can email the Foundation Stage team directly on: [foundation@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk](mailto:foundation@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk)



## 🌿 Learning Prompts

To support the children to remember the new skills and concepts we have taught them we have made short learning prompt videos which the children access from our school website by scanning a QR code with an iPad in the classroom. You can also view these videos on our website by visiting the 'Curriculum in action' section.



## 🌿 Parent consultations

Parent consultation meetings are held twice during the year. These meetings provide the opportunity for you to discuss your child's progress and attainment individually with a Reception teacher. Further information will follow nearer the date and you will be asked to book an appointment online. A full Record of Achievement report will be written at the end of the Summer Term. If you wish to discuss this report further you will be able to request an appointment with your child's class teacher.

## 🌿 Stay and Play

Each term we offer a block of 'Stay and Play' sessions, usually just before the end of the school day, where we invite you to come into class and spend time playing and learning with your child. It is a chance for the children to share their school environment with you and for you to see some of their learning on display. To enable you to feel confident in supporting your child with their learning at home we often theme these sessions, providing ideas and strategies for developing your child's skills and knowledge.





# Staying Healthy and Safe

## Health and Safety

Health and Safety checks are regularly carried out in school by the Governors and Headteacher to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and staff. There are some daily practices that need to be adhered to. Therefore, please:

- Keep us informed of any changes in contact telephone numbers so you may be easily contacted in an emergency.
- Do not allow your child to run around the parked cars in the car park either at the start of the school day or at the end of the day when they have been dismissed.
- Parents should park on the roads outside the school site. Please take care when parking your car as this is a very busy area at the beginning and end of the school day. Please be mindful of local residents when you park.

## Jewellery

For safety reasons, children are not permitted to wear jewellery in school. If your child has pierced ears then earrings must not be worn on P.E. days and should be removed before they come to school.

## Accidents or illness

If your child has an accident in school or is unwell we will contact you if we have any concerns. We may recommend you come to school to assess or collect your child. Please make sure your contact details are correct and up to date. You will receive a notification on the day of the accident or illness via our Medical Tracker system so please do check your emails.



## Absences

If your child is unwell you must inform the school office on the day of absence, either in person or by telephone. If you do not inform us the absence is marked as unauthorised on your child's attendance record. If you require any information regarding guidance on infections in school please contact the school office.

Once your child has started school we cannot authorise term-time holidays. If you need to take your child out of school for any reason, permission needs to be sought from the Headteacher a minimum of two weeks prior to the absence date. Absence request forms may be obtained from the school office. Our attendance registers are inspected regularly by the Education Welfare Officer. Periods of absence that cause concern may be followed up by their department.

## Contact Names and Addresses

It is very important that you provide the school with an up to date contact name, telephone number and address. Please inform us of any changes to this or any home circumstances that might affect your child in school.

## Weather

In Reception we get out and about as much as possible regardless of the weather. It is important that your child is dressed appropriately according to the time of year. Named wellington boots are required in school and can be left with us for the duration of their time in Reception. To ensure sun safety we allow children to bring a named bottle of sun cream into school to be stored by the class teacher. Your child will be asked to apply their own sun cream under staff supervision. Sun hats are recommended and available as part of our uniform.

## Fruit and milk

During their morning the children enjoy a snack time together. The school is registered as part of the Government Fruit and Vegetable Scheme which provides the children with a piece of fruit or vegetable each day. Your child can also have a small carton of semi-skimmed milk which is supplied free of charge until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Drinks

All children have access to a cool water fountain. In addition they must bring in a named water bottle to ensure they drink plenty of water during the school day. These are kept in a box in the classroom and need to be taken home to be refreshed each day.

## Medication

Prescribed medication can only be administered in school with parents' permission. You will be asked to complete a form detailing the medication and how it is to be administered. Medication will be kept in the school office unless it is urgently required. All medication **MUST** be clearly named. It is important to inform us of all allergies or intolerances. This may be recorded on your child's personal details form.

- Children taking antibiotics should be kept off school until the last two days of the course.
- Children with asthma should ensure that they have an up to date inhaler in school.
- Children with an Epi-Pen will need to bring two up to date Epi-Pens to school.

## Care Plans

Children with complex medical needs should meet with the school to draw up a care plan to ensure all staff know and understand the child's needs and how best to support them. This may also need to be with the support of the School Nursing Team or other supporting health services.

## School Nursing Team

The School Nursing Team will visit your child in school during their Reception Year to carry out a health screening. You will be informed of this prior to their visit and will be provided with a report from the team afterwards. Parents are advised to arrange regular eye tests at an optician for their children which are free of charge for under 16s. It is also important to ensure your child has a hearing check particularly if they suffer from frequent ear, nose and throat illness or show any signs of poor hearing or speech. You can arrange this with your GP practice.

## Head Lice

This is a recurring problem in schools and particularly amongst the little ones. The most current information is available from your pharmacist or Health Visitor. An advice leaflet can be obtained from the school office for your information. Please inform us as soon as possible if you discover your child has head lice so that we can advise all families to check their child's hair.

**and finally .....**

If you need any further information about any aspect of your child's start in Reception please do not hesitate to come in and talk to us - our door is always open. This is the start of a partnership and we look forward to working with you and your child to make it a successful and happy time for all.

