

St Mary's C E Primary School
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Welcome to Fledglings Class!



Important information about starting at St Mary's C of E Primary School

Learning, Transforming, Growing.

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to Early Years at St. Mary's C of E School. St. Mary's puts its children at the centre of their education.

Starting school can be nerve-wracking for even the most confident three year old. As parents, you may have lots of questions, along with fears of your own. This booklet is here to answer as many questions as possible and keep as a reference guide throughout your child's time as a Fledgling - but please do let us know if there is anything we haven't answered or would like more information on.

You can email me directly at k.bullard@banburystmarysschool.co.uk with any questions about Early Years specifically, or our friendly office team can help with anything else—email them at office@banburystmarysschool.co.uk or pop into the office when you visit.

We look forward to meeting you all and working with your children as they begin their school journey!

The Early Years Team

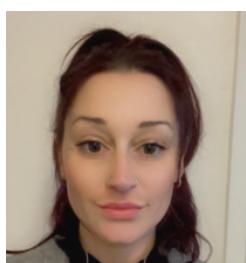


Miss Kelly Bullard, Fledglings Class Teacher



Miss Rachel Perkins, Fledglings Class Teacher

Mrs Paula Garcia, Teaching Assistant & Forest School Leader



Miss Lauren Clough, Teaching Assistant



Mrs Jenna Thompson, Teaching Assistant

Before you start

When you have been offered a place at St. Mary's, our office team will organise two settling visits for your child. These last 1 hour each and parents do not stay for them.

Your child does not need to wear uniform for these visits if you haven't got it yet. Our children move between an indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the day, so please make sure you send your child wearing clothing suitable for the weather. They should bring a **named** water bottle to both visits.

Separation Anxiety

Visiting a new school with new adults, new children and no familiar faces can be daunting. Children will often be upset leaving you on their first settling visit. The more positive and firm you are about saying goodbye and walking away, the quicker your child will settle and begin to explore. It can be very difficult for a parent to walk away from their child when they are crying—please trust our team to look after your little one and help them find their feet, and try not to worry for the whole hour! If your child has not settled after 30 minutes, we would phone you to come back—but in reality, as soon as they get into our classroom, they are immediately distracted by everything they can explore and all initial worries disappear.

Drop Off

After the two settling visits, parents do not come through the school gates in the morning, and your child will walk round to the classroom independently. We can ask an older child or existing Fledgling to walk your child round when they first start. If you have a message for the class teacher, you can tell any member of staff on the gate. If your child has anything to hand in (e.g. a letter slip, spare clothes to return to school etc.), please make sure you take it out of your child's bag and hand it to them before they come through the gates. We are not able to check individual bags for letters/notes/school items.

Collection

Nursery children who stay for 15 hours a week are collected at 11.45am from the green electronic gate. Please wait for a member of staff to dismiss your child, rather than calling for them to come as soon as you see them.

If your child stays all day (Reception children or 30h Nursery children), dismissal is at 3.15pm. Please come through the main school gates and follow the path around the school building to the right. Fledglings are dismissed from the classroom and a member of staff will call your child when they see you arrive.

Please bear with us as we become familiar with you—we may ask you who you are collecting for a number of weeks before we recognise all the faces. If someone other than people you named when you applied is collecting your child, please let the EYFS team know the day before, or the office team know if there is a change on the day. We cannot take the word of other parents or family members that they have authorisation to collect your child, we need to hear it from you.

If you would like to speak to the class teacher at collection, please wait until all the children have been dismissed or taken to After School Club. If you think you will need more than a few minutes, please email the class teacher to arrange an appointment.

Fledglings Class

Fledglings is a mixed Early Years Unit. This means we have nursery-aged children of 3 and 4, and Reception children who are 4 and 5. This blended cohort has many benefits over having separate nursery and reception classes. The younger children look up to their older peers and it inspires independence, endurance and an innate desire to learn with their friends. The older children become “more knowledgeable others” in the space and take responsibility for the younger Fledglings, guiding them and becoming mini teachers in themselves. Nursery children benefit from knowing our behavioural expectations and environments so that when they move into Reception, they are secure, confident and ready to learn.

Our child-led curriculum curates a sense of wonder and joy within our children and we see them flourish as they progress throughout Fledglings. The Early Years Framework outlines 3 prime areas of learning, which are foundation skills essential to underpinning the learning your child will go on to do throughout their life:

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

Alongside this, there are 4 specific areas of learning:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

Our skilled team will work with your child to help them develop across all areas so that they are ready to access the National Curriculum when they begin Year One.



The School Day

	8.40-9.05	9.05-9.35	9.35 - 11.30	11.00-11.30	11.30-11.45	12.00-1.00	1.00-1.30	1.30-2.30	2.45-3.15
Monday	Registration, Breakfast, Morning Activities	Phonics	Busy Time / Snack	Mastering Number & Maths groups	Story Half day nursery home	Lunch	Project/English	Busy Time	Worship
Tuesday	Registration, Breakfast, Morning Activities	Phonics	Busy Time / Snack Reception PE	Mastering Number & Maths groups	Story Half day nursery home	Lunch	Project/English	Busy Time	Worship
Wednesday	Registration, Breakfast, Morning Activities	Phonics	Busy Time / Snack	Mastering Number & Maths groups	Story Half day nursery home	Lunch	Project/English	Busy Time	Worship
Thursday	Registration, Breakfast, Morning Activities	Phonics	Busy Time / Snack	Mastering Number & Maths groups	Story Half day nursery home	Lunch	Project/English	Busy Time Forest School	Worship
Friday	Registration, Breakfast, Morning Activities	Phonics	Busy Time / Snack	Mastering Number & Maths groups	Story Half day nursery home	Lunch	Project/English	Busy Time Cojo's/PE	Worship

Breakfast – We offer all children breakfast every day. They have a choice of a range of cereals or bagels.

Self-Registration – Children find a photo card with their picture and place it in a basket to self-register. Depending on their level of development, they will start to write their name on this card at some point throughout their time in Fledglings.

Busy Time – During ‘Busy Time’, the children are free to explore the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Learning at this time is through play, with adults guiding and supporting the children during their self-selected tasks.

Story Time – We have lots of opportunities for shared stories and discussion.

Phonics – Phonics is where we learn to read and write. For Nursery, our Phonics programme is around the oral aspects of words and hearing how sounds fit together to make words. Reception learn a new sound every day until they know the sound for each letter of the alphabet and some digraphs (2 letters that make one sound). Our Phonics teaching happens in small groups across Reception, Year One and Year Two, so each child is taught at the right level for them.

Snack – All children are able to have a piece of fruit or a vegetable every day. We have a range of options for the children, typically carrots, tomatoes, bananas, apples, pears and satsumas, and we offer milk or water at this time. The children sit at the snack table to promote good table manners and conversation.

Mastering Number & Maths Groups – We have dedicated maths time every day. Children in reception will take part in the mastering number programme alongside their maths sessions and children in nursery will be given the opportunity to join in with a small group maths session and/or maths activities in provision.

Lunch – Every day during lunch, we are able to explore the OPAL resources across the field and playground. OPAL stands for Outdoor Play and Learning and there are a wide range of open resources for the children to explore, including a mud kitchen, bikes, scooters, a giant sandpit and a variety of ‘loose parts’.

Project/English – During this time we link our learning to our project for the term. Reception children will also have dedicated English time which includes; listening to stories, re-telling stories, speaking and listening activities and writing opportunities.

Forest School – We are very lucky to have Mrs Garcia, who is fully Forest School trained. Some afternoons, she takes children out to our on-site forest school and the groups have the opportunity to take part in a variety of exciting activities, such as den-building, fire-making, bug-hunting and tree climbing!

Worship – We have a daily act of worship each day at St Mary’s with different themes each term. For Fledglings, sometimes Worship takes the form of a Story Time with a PSED focus e.g. what we can do if we have a worry, or how to be kind to our friends



Most of our Early Years Curriculum is child-led. Children learn best when they are engaged, and engagement is highest when they are pursuing their own interests, so as much of our day as possible is spent learning through play. The children explore the indoor and outdoor classrooms freely, accessing a wide range of resources, and our Early Years Team work with the children in their play to find the “teachable moment” to further the child’s learning.



What does my child need to bring to school?

Your child should bring the following items to stay in school:

- A spare set of clothes, including socks/tights and pants (if you do not have a spare set of uniform, please send a plain t-shirt, jumper and pair of trousers/leggings/joggers) - all items must be clearly named
- A pair of wellies (please name both boots)
- A waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers OR an all-in-one waterproof suit

Each day, your child should bring in (and bring home!):

- A named water bottle (containing only water please—no squash or other soft drinks)
- A named book bag or backpack to bring home letters, creations, drawings etc.
- A packed lunch in a named lunchbox—unless your child is having a school dinner (see ‘Lunches’)
- A named coat in cold/cool weather

Other items you may want to send in throughout the year—please make sure **every** item is clearly named:

- Sunhat/baseball cap in sunny weather (no sunglasses please)
- Woolly hat/gloves/mittens/scarf in cold weather
- Thick socks if they get cold feet in wellies

Children in reception will also need a school **PE Kit** which includes; a house colour t-shirt, plain navy blue/dark shorts and tracksuit bottoms, a plain navy blue/dark jumper and a pair of trainers.

You do **not** need to send in a snack for your child—we provide breakfast as well as a fresh fruit and vegetable snack each day. If there is any reason why your child might need an alternative snack throughout the day, please speak to a member of the EYFS team.

Outdoor Learning/Forest School



We spend a **lot** of time outdoors, being creative and exploring different messy resources such as sand, water and mud. Please be prepared for your child’s clothing to come home showing evidence of this—it’s all part of their learning and young children should not miss out on experiences at school for fear of getting dirty/muddy/wet.

If we use any of your spare clothes to change your child, dirty clothes will be sent home in a bag that day. Please make sure you replenish your spare clothes set at school the next day.

If your child does not have spare clothes on their peg and needs changing, we will send them home in school spares. Please make sure these are washed and returned to school as soon as possible—ideally hand these to a member of the EYFS team at collection so we know they are ours and not yours!



Other Useful Information

Toilets

As a school-based nursery, we only take children in the term after they have turned 3 and therefore we expect children to be toilet trained when they join us. If, at the time of application, you have not yet started toilet training, please start this process as soon as possible so that they are ready when they start school. Parents applying for a 30h nursery place will have to start on 15h if their child is not yet toilet trained.

We do appreciate that accidents can happen, and if any child makes us aware that they have had an accident, asks for help going to the toilet or we spot anything needing attention, we will of course help to change your child to make sure they are clean and dry again. However, if for any reason your child is still wearing pull-ups when they start school, please be aware that we do not check children throughout the day to see if they are in need of changing. If you need any help around toilet training, please let us know and we will do what we can to help. We have child-sized toilets attached to our classroom, along with stepping stools and child-height sinks.

Hair

All hair that is long enough to be tied up should be tied up, regardless of your child's gender. This helps prevent the spread of head lice and reduces the risk of hair getting trapped, caught, dipped in mud etc.

Special Days

We celebrate lots of fantastic events at St. Mary's. There are frequent days throughout the year where your child will be invited to wear non-uniform, sometimes around a theme. Please keep an eye out for letters and emails saying when these days are so you don't miss out!

We also often invite parents in to share some special events. All significant dates are sent by both a letter home in book bags and also emailed out. If you think you might be missing emails from us, please check we have the right contact details for you at the office.

Lunches

Children are entitled to a free school lunch when they join Reception. You do not need to do anything to claim this. Nursery children can also have a school lunch for £2.40 per day—please speak to the office about how to pay. We have three or four menu options every day to choose from. You are welcome to mix and match your child's food and send them in with packed lunches some days, or order a school meal for other days. If your child comes in **without** a packed lunch, we will assume you want them to have a school dinner. If you have not sent in the menu options sheet saying what they would like on that day, we will make a choice on your behalf (we will take into account if you have registered your child as Halal or any other dietary requirements or allergies we have been made aware of).

If your child brings in a packed lunch, we will **not** order them a school dinner unless you have specifically told us that you want one ordered. Packed lunches should be healthy and balanced. A typical lunch might be a cheese sandwich, a fruit yoghurt, a piece of fruit and some sticks of cucumber. If you are sending in grapes, please make sure you have cut these in half or they can be a choking hazard.

We encourage children to eat a reasonable amount of their lunch but do not force them. Children are supervised throughout lunchtime and must show their lunchbox/plate to an adult before leaving the hall.

Fledglings spend the rest of their lunchtime playing with the rest of the school.

What can I do to help my child thrive at school?

The two most important things you can do to help your child succeed at school—and in life—are simple:

- Talk with them
- Read with them

The more you are able to do these two things, the better your child will be set up for learning and life.

Sharing books and discussing stories is a great way to support your child. Banbury Library has a wide range of children's books available to borrow for free. Children do not need to be able to read to get enjoyment out of books. The earlier this love is fostered, the more eager your child will be to learn to read and this motivation will help set them up for success. When you share a book with a child, the discussion you have around the pictures, thinking about what might happen, your own experiences etc. is just as important as the words that are written.

Fledglings have access to books in all areas of the classroom. In addition to lots of fiction (story) books, we have themed boxes of non-fiction (information) books about a huge range of topics—such as dinosaurs, under the sea, LEGO, craft ideas, cookery books, sewing, science, space etc. The children love to look through these books and they prompt fantastic questions and discussions.

School reading books

When children in Reception start learning sounds in their Phonics lesson, they will be given a reading folder. This folder will contain sound cards, a reading record for you to note down when you have read with your child at home, and a reading book that will only contain words your child should be able to identify. This means they should be able to read this book to you independently, by sounding out each word and then blending it together. Please take a look at our website for more information on our Phonics programme, Read Write Inc, and how to support your child with their early reading.



Independence

One of the core skills that we try to instil in the young people at St. Mary's is independence. Fledglings are encouraged to try to accomplish things independently before asking a friend or adult for help. You can help support this at home by encouraging your child to have a go at:

- Doing up their own buttons/zip
- Taking off their shoes and putting them away
- Putting on their own shoes
- Tidying up after themselves
- Pouring their own drink
- Using a knife and fork to cut food
- Thinking through each morning whether they have their book bag and water bottle before leaving for school
- Dressing and undressing

We appreciate it takes a lot longer for a little person to do these things than it would for an adult to help, but these are really important skills to learn and children will only be able to achieve these if they have a chance.





Our Approach to Play at St Mary's



At St Mary's, we believe that **play is powerful**—and it's a huge part of your child's school life! In fact, play makes up around **20% of the school week**, so we make sure it's carefully thought about, well-supported, and full of opportunity.

In today's busy world—with less time outdoors, more traffic, and fewer spaces to play—many children miss out on the freedom to explore, imagine and take risks through play. That's why we're passionate about giving children **exciting, high-quality play experiences** every single day.



Why does it matter so much? Because **better play means happier children**—and when children are happy, amazing things happen:

- Behaviour improves
- Friendships grow
- Children are more confident, creative and ready to learn
- Staff spend less time solving playground issues and more time joining in the fun!

Our approach is inspired by **The Charter for Children's Play**, which reminds us:



- Children need time and space to play at school
- Adults should trust and support children's play
- Skilled adults help children make the most of their playtime
- Some children need extra help to enjoy their right to play

We're proud to be a school that takes play seriously—and joyfully! At St Mary's, play is never "just play"—it's a key part of growing, learning, and thriving.