

Welcome back to school to all those in Y1 and a very warm welcome to our new starters in Reception.

Our apologies for such a long newsletter but we are trying to write as much detail as we can because we cannot welcome you into the classroom every morning to pass on any information.

Student Teacher

We welcome Mrs Dawson who will be our Schools Direct student this year. She will work in Class 1 three days a week until half term and will then complete a teaching practice after half term working alongside Mrs James. She will complete another teaching placement in a different school in our cluster before returning to complete a final placement in the Summer term. Esh is part of a cluster of schools who train students throughout the year, affiliated with Sunderland University, to complete their PGCE teaching qualification.

Settling in

Please don't worry if your child is tearful or begins to become tearful, these are big changes for them. It is a completely different environment from nursery and so many new faces (and bigger children). They also haven't had the transition they normally would have had and in a very different world, even though we have tried to keep things as normal as possible, things in school are different to previous years. Rest assured that within a couple of minutes of you leaving they are usually absolutely fine and we would let you know, via a phone call, if they weren't! Often they are fine for the first few days but once the reality of longer days and the tiredness creeps in they may become more upset when entering school, particularly after a weekend. This is completely normal and we will continue to create an environment where they feel valued and happy. Staff in Class 1 have seen and managed every type of scenario from those who are confident from day 1 and remain so, those who are confident to begin with then are less so after a weekend or a holiday like Christmas, those who are upset for days, weeks or months at the beginning then settle in well, those who take the full two years to settle in (these children are very, very rare) and everything in between.

The one situation we haven't had to try and settle children in is during the Covid 19 pandemic. It makes us all unhappy that we are unable to let you into the classroom, dropping them off at the school gate is as close as we can get and this is where you can leave us any messages etc. We will endeavour to build positive relationships in different ways.

Playtimes

Children have a 15 minute break in the morning from 10:30 - 10:45 and lunchtime is from 12:00 until 1:15. Break times are staggered with the older ones being outside from 10:15-10:30 in the morning and 11:30 until 12:40 at lunchtime. We share our break times with Class 2 but we are on separate playgrounds to try and stay within our 'bubbles'.

PE

PE will only be for Y1's this half term and will take place in our own school hall. Y1 will have PE on a Monday afternoon. PE will be taught by Mrs James for the first half term. Children are to come into school on a Monday dressed in their PE kit. This is a white t-shirt and royal blue shorts but as the children are to stay in it all day, joggers and a hoodie or tracksuit top will be advisable.

It is essential that all items of uniform and coats etc are named so we can reunite them with their owner at the end of the day.

Class 1 page on School Website

Class 1 page of the school website will have lots of helpful information on. It has our long term plans that show the topics and curriculum coverage for our two year cycles. As the children are with us for two years we try not to repeat any topics. We teach similar skills and themes but through a different focus. This year we will complete Cycle A.

Also on our website are brief half term plans (teacher's write more extensive plans) which show the objectives the children will cover for each subject. This is mainly a Y1 focus as children in Reception don't have subjects, learn through play and have less 'formal' lessons. This is not to say that Y1 children do not have access to play and practical activities. Indeed, after missing half of their Reception year, this is more important than ever in Y1, but as they follow the National Curriculum, this has objectives to meet for each subject.

You will notice that there are four from the previous school year (as the last two were during home schooling). We have not yet added this half term's but will do so once all the children have had their first full week. It also has information about the White Rose Maths scheme we use, particularly in Y1 and the yearly coverage and also what Y1 children will cover in English with a focus on spellings, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, writing and handwriting.

The page has links to useful websites and will be added to throughout the year.

TOPICS

Our main topic for this half term is Ourselves.

For Science we will be focussing on the senses.

In Computing we will focus on mouse skills for Reception and keyboard skills and passwords for Y1.

In Geography we will look at simple maps and plans and use the book Handa's surprise.

In History we will look at personal and family history.

For Design Technology we will make a moving picture.

In Art and Design we will draw self-portraits.

We follow an online scheme called Charanga in music which is a fun way of learning about rhythm, beat, tempo, pitch and other musical skills.

PE will develop ways of travelling both using basic gymnastic skills and dance.

For RE we will answer the question, Why is the word God so important to Christians?

In PHSCE we will focus on 'being yourself'.

As always we also want to follow the children's interests so new topics or activities are planned for as they arise and items or 'enhancements' added to the areas in the classroom to support their learning.

Homework

A separate letter regarding homework will be sent out in addition to this newsletter. We are moving to a new online platform called eSchools where we will add homework for our class. Login details have already been sent out for this and we will begin adding items as soon as possible.

This will also be used to set work on in the event of another lockdown or if particular children, families or 'bubbles' are self-isolating.

Floppy's Phonics

We have purchased a new Phonics/reading scheme called Floppy's Phonics. The books, songs and online activities are engaging and fun. The online library matches the Floppy's Phonics scheme with some other Oxford schemes perfectly and practises the sounds the children are learning at the time.

For Reception children we will start at Level 1+ and learn initial sounds.

For children in Y1, we have assessed the children's sound knowledge this week. Floppy's Phonics completes most of the sounds in the same order as Read Write Inc but some like ai and oa and introduced at different levels. We will always begin the children at the level of books we have assessed them at.

These books match much better than Bug Club which often did not match the phonics sound they were learning. Floppy's Phonics also follows the original letters and sounds scheme the government introduced and more reading schemes match the order the sounds are introduced in than Read Write Inc.

As they are transitioning to a new scheme there will inevitably be a few sounds the children are unfamiliar with. Most children in Y1 will begin on Level 4 and learn the alternative spellings as their main English focus. On an afternoon we will fill the gaps with the few sounds the children have missed and read some Level 3 books that focus on those sounds.

We are excited about this new scheme and whilst no scheme is perfect we like the way this is taught and the quality of the online reading materials.

Logins for Floppy's Phonics will be given out shortly.

Learning Journeys

We are setting up new Learning Journeys for Reception children and continuing them in Y1. Learning journeys give a picture of what your child has achieved at home and school throughout their Reception Year. We usually have 'Tea and Tapestry' evenings where parents can come together over a cuppa and look through their child's folder. Unfortunately, in this present climate, we are unable to offer this so we are looking at the option of sharing your child's Tapestry Learning Journey online with you. Please bear with us whilst we learn how to do this.

Boxes

Please could you send some boxes or tubes with your child each week for our creative table as the children love to build!

Water

Please provide your children with a named drinks bottle so they have access to fresh water each day.

Tuck shop

We run a Fairtrade tuck shop each Wednesday. This will start from Wednesday 16th September. Items cost 50p and there are a variety of cereal bars and apple or orange juice cartons. Children can spend a maximum of £1 for a cereal bar and carton, or 50p for a cereal bar or a carton. Children are unable to purchase two cereal bars at a time. There is no obligation to purchase anything. Please pay for each half-term in advance using Parent Pay, as we are trying to avoid having cash in school.

Fruit and Milk

Children in Reception, Y1 and Y2 are entitled to a free piece of fruit or vegetable each day. Depending on the season one choice is sent per day from the following:- apples, pears, tomatoes, easy peels, bananas, carrots, sugar snap peas, mini cucumbers, raisins and sometimes strawberries in the summer. You are welcome to bring in your own piece of fruit or raisins but please no nuts or other snacks. Children in Reception are entitled to a free carton of milk daily until the week of their 5th birthday. After that, if you wish, you can purchase milk from www.coolmilk.com

Key rings

If you haven't already done so it is helpful to put some sort of key ring or tag onto your child's book bag so that it is instantly recognisable to them at the end of the school day. As most look the same it saves time hunting for names on them.

Keeping in touch

If you have a concern and wish to speak to us, please phone school and we can arrange a telephone appointment. You can also catch us at the school gate on a morning or evening. We are yet to finalise our plans for holding parent's evenings this year in a safe way. We will let you know as soon as possible once we have decided on the best option. We usually hold one in the Autumn term and one in the Spring Term.

We also have a Twitter feed which we try to post on frequently - @eshceprimary.

Real items

As you know we love to use real, authentic items in the classroom. We know many people had a clear out during lockdown. If you have any pots, pans, china tea sets, utensils, ornaments, hats, shoes, handbags and any curious items in the back of your cupboards that you no longer need we would be grateful for them. Please ask Class 1 staff for any ideas - we have loads!

Cleaning

In order to protect children and staff in schools we are teaching the children how to wash their hands correctly and offer frequent times to wash hands and sanitise.

In addition to this, Class 1 staff clean the toilets and sinks in the classroom every break time and lunch time. Every lunchtime we also clean the surfaces that children touch most frequently and empty the bin. We wash all plastic toys every night and spray other equipment with a Dettol disinfectant aerosol spray. We have split lots of our toys, equipment and stationery which is more difficult to clean into smaller amounts and more trays. These are used for a day then left to quarantine in a cupboard for 72 hours whilst other equipment is brought out on a rota basis. At the moment we have taken cushions, dressing up clothes and other soft furnishing out of the classroom. We will reintroduce this when the guidance allows.

In case of children having toilet accidents, if they wet themselves we will encourage the children to take off the wet items and dress themselves in spare clothes. In the case of soiling, staff have some PPE to change a child but if we feel that we cannot properly clean them without posing a risk to our safety we may have to phone parents to come and change a child themselves.

One of the other ways we are trying to minimise risks is to keep the class well ventilated. Where possible we are keeping windows and the door open. At the moment with the weather still being quite warm this is not affecting the temperature of the classroom much. However as we

move towards the winter months the classroom will become colder so it may be worth sending a fleece or thicker jumper that they can pop on if they get cold. We will limit the amount of windows that we open as the weather becomes colder.

And the rest...

We provide all pencils etc in school so there is no need for your child to bring in their own pencil cases. Storage is an issue in school and we simply don't have the space for everyone to bring their own in. Please keep the size of bags as small as possible. We are trying out a mobile trolley this year to cut down on all the coats blocking our classroom entrance and becoming a trip hazard.

As always if you have any questions please catch us. We look forward to a wonderful term.

Many Thanks,

Mrs James, Mrs Wilson and Miss Hunter.