

## **Information for children starting school in September**

As a follow up to our information session for new reception children I like to send out an informal letter with a reminder of things to remember when starting school. I hope you find this letter useful and eases any worries you may have before September. It will be a 'relaxed' letter very much like our initial meeting earlier on this year. I warn you all now it might be a long letter, but I want to cover everything and I also like a good chat!

### **September starting dates**

The school has a teacher training day on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, this means the school is closed to children. The office will be open, so if you need any information, picking up bits and pieces (uniform) or need a reassuring chat you will be able to talk to Mrs McErlean or myself. I will be in meetings during the day but when possible I can meet you in the office if you pop in.

School will start on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, the doors open at 8.45. I will be stood just outside the yellow gate to meet and greet. My advice is if your child is a worrier, then do not arrive too early as this can sometimes add to anxiety. Please take photos, or do them at home, we will also take a lot of photos at school. This is easier said than done but try to make saying goodbye a brief thing, prolonging it can also upset the children. Once the children are in I usually try to pop back out to tell you how they are. Please do not stand by the windows or where your child can see you. On that first day we finish in reception at 12pm. They will leave through the yellow gate, I will see them out. On Wednesday and Thursday the children will be able to attend until 1pm. Depending on the individual child they can stay all day Friday until 3.15pm, pick up will be at the yellow gate for all of these sessions, and throughout the term.

Staying all day is a conversation that we can have on an individual basis. All children are different, they react to situations in different ways. Even if your child has been in nursery full time everyday they may find full time school tricky to adapt to. The setting is very different, there are higher expectations on them to follow instructions, toilet themselves and just listening and focusing for longer amounts of time can be difficult for them to manage initially. Full time school does not mean everyday all day, we are a small setting that enables us to accommodate individual needs. Depending on the child we can do fulltime Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with the other two days part time, until 1pm. It is a discussion that I have with parents, we want to make starting school enjoyable, if they are overly tired they will not enjoy their time.

### **Activities for the first few days**

During the first few days Swirls and I will explore the school and the grounds. We will be noisy! We tend to invade all the classrooms, this is planned! We tend to say hello and find siblings, just have some fun. We familiarise ourselves with our classroom, the toilets and what happens if the fire alarm goes off, we walk this through and talk about it using stories to help our understanding. We also attend collective worship with the rest of the school.

When in our classroom we play games, to remember each other's names from transition sessions, and finding out where things are in the classroom. We do some playing and some structured work. We can do some name writing, listening to stories and counting, for example.

### **Things needed in school**

From day one the children will need a water bottle, with water in it, please do not juice or flavoured water. We will provide the children with a water bottle, but it can be a favourite water bottle from home that the children recognise, I would not use the plastic bottles, when dropped they break easily. I would recommend using the mynametags.com website for labelling all clothes and items. If your child can not recognise their name it is okay, the website gives you the option of putting a picture on the label as well as a name, if they like trains, use that! It helps them to identify their things.

The school will supply book bags, so please do not buy them. We will send the children home with them on the last transition day, please let me know if you cannot make that date, they will be named and organised for you, with lots of forms that need completing for the first day of term. The pictures on their book bags with their names match their cloakroom pegs, which we introduce during the first few days. We cannot determine what the weather is going to do, but I would encourage applying sun cream before school, and giving them a named sunhat from the beginning of term. They may need a named lightweight waterproof coat as well, these will go on their pegs in the cloakroom.

We will provide snacks for all early years and key stage one children. There will be a variety of fruit which the children can eat supervised in the classroom for the first few terms, by term five (May onwards) we encourage the children to eat outside at playtime and to have a drink. If your child would like milk you will need to complete a form from the office, online or see the information in your book bag as soon as possible.

### **Playtime**

From September the reception children will be allowed to play in two different areas. The first being the main playground with the older children in the rest of the school. I also open the yellow gate into the early years area, the children can make their choice where they want to play. If they feel uncomfortable in the larger playground, they can move into the early years area without asking. I also go out with them every playtime to support them and be a familiar adult.

### **BOB's**

BOB's are our older friends, these are from year five and six. We call them BOBs to 'Bring Out the Best' - they can see us at playtimes, eat lunches together, they can cut up food for us or open things in our packed lunches if we struggle with packets. We meet up during Book Week, our older BOB's read us stories. The children love it, they all seek each other out at playtime, they wave at each other coming into collective worship and just look out for each other. It slots in well with our community values where we respect each other and treat others how we would like to be treated. There are many more ...

### **Lunches**

All early years and key stage one children are entitled to a free school meal. These can be ordered by completing a simple online form that will be sent to parents via email from the school office. There is a choice of a meat or vegetarian option or a jacket potato, with a variety of fillings. You can also choose to provide a packed lunch, please do not include sweets, nuts or a fizzy drink in your child's packed lunch. We would suggest that all children have a packed lunch for the first week and then start school lunches from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September. Children can have a mixture of packed lunches and school meals during the school week to accommodate likes and dislikes! I suggest to help with home life you record this information so you know when to send in a packed lunch!

We encourage the children to use knives and forks, but if they have trickier foods to cut up such as jacket potato or a roasted meat, I will always help them. For the first few weeks I stay with them in the dinner hall when they are eating to support them, whether they are cooked dinners or opening packets in their lunch box.

### **Friday Collective Worship**

On a Friday assembly we celebrate children's learning and achievements. We invite parents to attend this assembly, on a Thursday afternoon your child will be given a 'Well done' postcard' saying that you are invited and why your child has received the postcard. If you receive one of these postcards on Thursday you then drop your child off on Friday morning, make your way into hall and find a chair to sit and enjoy being part of our collective worship. Be warned though anything could happen!

### **Swirls classroom and the people who live in there!**

In Swirls there are two main members of staff. There is Mrs McDevitt, she is a teaching assistant, she also co runs Breakfast Club and also is a staff member at lunchtime. Very important if you need to drop off earlier than the starting time for school as Mrs McDevitt will meet and greet for breakfast. Mrs McDevitt has been in the school for many years and is very experienced.

There is myself, Mrs Jaffray. I have been at MVW for a while. I have taught Mrs McDevitt's youngest daughter! I will be at the yellow gate for drop off and pick up, I am there for chats, for you to tell me worries – no matter what, for example if the family pet has passed away please tell me, all of this impacts on school life. If you have had one of 'those' mornings, let me know, if breakfast has not worked out, let me know. All of these things are important, your child could be worrying about what appears to be the smallest of things, but they are important to them, so please share everything with me.

### **Work at home**

The children will be bringing work home, such as tag sounds as we learn them and tag words. They will also eventually have reading books. Please support your child at home with their learning, write in the reading record to confirm that you have heard them learning their tag sounds and words, and then their reading books.

### **Illness or medication**

There will be times when your child is unwell. Please let the school office know as soon as possible. This allows us to observe the other children especially if it is a contagious illness.

If your child needs medication throughout the school day such as antibiotics there is a form to complete which is in the school office. All medications need to have a chemist sticker applied.

### **Holidays**

There is a form to complete in the school office to request time for holidays.

### **Expectations**

There is a lot to think about for a child who is starting school for the first time. In order to help your child be ready for September, I do find that children who are able to do the following are well equipped to make a good start:

- Being able to recognise their own name
- Being able to listen to a story (attention and concentration)
- Being able to share a game/toy with one other child.
- Being able to go to the toilet for a wee without support
- Being able to go to the toilet for a poo, attempt to wipe, but to be supported.

If you are able to practice these with your child over the summer, that would be very much appreciated.

If you have any worries, please talk to us, you can always email [admin@mvwacademy.co.uk](mailto:admin@mvwacademy.co.uk), this will be forwarded to me.

I hope this letter helps and reassures everyone for September.

Best wishes

Mrs Jaffray (Reception teacher)