

Starting School Booklet



**Reception
2026 / 2027**

THE START OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

We are so pleased that you have chosen our school for the start of your child's full-time education. It is a very special time, and we are delighted to be part of this important journey with you.

We understand that starting school is a big step for both children and their families. Our aim is to make this transition from home or nursery as smooth, happy, and reassuring as possible. Creating a calm, caring, and secure environment is at the heart of what we do, where every child feels valued and supported as they grow and learn.

Your child's first few terms with us are incredibly important in shaping their confidence, attitudes, and relationships. We believe that strong partnerships between home and school make a real difference, and we look forward to building a positive and supportive relationship with you. By working together, we can give your child the very best start to their learning journey at Welford on Avon Primary School.

This booklet provides helpful information to guide you as your child prepares to start school. During the first half term, we will also invite you to a parent meeting, where we will share ideas on how you can support your child's learning and development through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Best wishes
Mr J Boxall
Reception Class Teacher

TIME-TABLE

Reception – Mr Boxall	
8.45 – 9.00	Welcome, Registration, Focused Activity
9.00 – 9.20	Structured teaching session / circle time
9.20-11.15	Adult Led and Child Initiated learning activities (indoor / outdoor classrooms)
	Snack 10.15-10.30 followed by a structured teaching session
11.15-11.45	Phonics
11.45 – 12.45	Lunch
12.45 -1.10	Structured teaching session / circle time
1.10-2.30	Adult Led and Child Initiated learning activities- (indoor / outdoor classrooms)
2.30-2.40	Tidy up Time
2.40 - 3.10	Circle Time / Story Time
3.10 - 3.25	Home time

WELCOME / REGISTRATION / COLLECTION

Our Reception doors open at 8:45am, and we look forward to welcoming you each morning. Please bring your child to the bottom of the steps, where a friendly member of our team will be there to greet you.

As you arrive, you'll see the daily lunch menu displayed. Taking a moment to chat with your child about their choice helps them feel confident as they come in and select their meal for the day.

If there are any changes to your child's collection arrangements, please make sure to let us know—ideally in writing. For safeguarding reasons, we can only release children to the named adult unless we have been informed otherwise.

Once any messages have been shared, it's time for a quick hug and a cheerful goodbye. We know that separation can feel a little emotional at first—for both children and parents—but children usually settle quickly and begin enjoying their day.

We keep in touch regularly through weekly school and class newsletters, as well as updates on our website:
www.welfordonavonschool.co.uk.

At the end of the day, please wait on the playground. Children will be safely dismissed to you from the Reception gate by a member of staff.

PLAYTIMES

As part of our continuous approach to learning, Reception children will have access to the outdoor area. As a result, it is not until later in the year that the children go out onto the playground. Instead the children have their snack – milk and fruit – in their classroom in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere with their friends.

LUNCHTIMES

All children eat their lunch in the classroom, with lunch starting at 11.45 and finishing at 12.45. We are lucky at Welford that the children are provided with continuity at lunchtimes, with our teaching assistants supporting Reception both in the classroom and on the playground. Children will have the opportunity to order a hot dinner, or they can bring their own packed lunch. We encourage all pupils to eat their meals in a positive way. This includes children with packed lunches who are encouraged to eat their sandwiches first. Please remember we are a healthy school.

If your child has any allergies or dietary requirements please make sure to inform the school office.

We are a NUT FREE school.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING?

The first steps to ensuring your child feels confident and settled in Reception is ensuring they have everything they need and are ready for the day ahead. Initially your child will need:

- A named coat
- A named book bag (school will provide a reading record book and reading book which should then be in school every day)
- A named water bottle containing water only please.
- Named craft apron with a loop to allow it to be hung on their peg (an old shirt with the sleeves cut down / elasticated is fine).

THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

In Reception, just like in Nursery, we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS), developing children's skills across 7 defined areas of learning. These areas of learning are divided into 2 groups.

PRIME AREAS OF LEARNING

Communication and Language

(Listening, Attention and Understanding; Speaking)

Physical Development

(Gross Motor Skills; Fine Motor Skills)

Personal, Social and Emotion Development

(Self-Regulation; Managing Self; Building Relationships)

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF LEARNING

Literacy

(Comprehension; Word Reading; Writing)

Maths

(Number; Numerical Patterns)

Understanding of the World

(Past and Present; People, Culture and Communities; The Natural World)

Expressive Arts and Design

(Creating with Materials; Being Imaginative and Expressive)

During the children's first term in Reception we focus on developing the prime areas of learning, to ensure that each child builds a strong foundation for learning.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Playing and Exploring

(investigate and experience things, and 'have a go')

Active Learning

(concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy activities)

Creating and Critical Thinking

(having and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things).

Facilitated by an engaging environment and nurturing adults, we encourage these characteristics, enabling children to develop into confident, independent and resilient learners.

WELFORD EYFS INTENT

In our Nursery and Reception classes, we aim to give every child the best possible start in life. We provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment that promotes communication, independence, resilience, collaboration, and a lifelong love of learning.

Our approach supports children in achieving key developmental milestones through positive learning attitudes and the development of their Characteristics of Effective Learning. Every child is valued and encouraged to reach their full potential, laying strong foundations for future success.

We are committed to inclusive practice, ensuring that all children—regardless of background, ability, or need—are welcomed, supported, and enabled to thrive.

EARLY LANGUAGE

Being a successful learner in school depends greatly on feeling comfortable with language. Children need to be able to understand easily the spoken language used by their parents, teachers and peers. This helps them to decode the language used in text and storybooks and to be able to use language with confidence. You can help your child to progress at school by frequently having relaxed conversations with them about whatever is interesting them at the time.

Listening is also recognised as a vital communication skill. Always listen to what your child has to say and encourage them to listen carefully all of the time. The more your child talks and listens, the more thoughtful they become. Never ignore or brush aside questions. Answer them as simply, clearly, carefully and truthfully as you can and don't be afraid to introduce new words.

It is helpful if your child can:

- communicate their need
- respond to simple instructions

Play games at home which encourage your child to listen and follow instructions, such as 'Simon Says', taking part in a 'listening walk' or describing what they experience by touching objects in a feely bag. Don't underestimate the power of nursery rhymes either; children find them great fun to recite, making them an invaluable way of developing listening and learning skills.

If you are aware that your child may have an identified communication difficulty, please let us know and we will be able to support them accordingly. www.talkingpoint.org.uk is a useful website which includes a progress checker, allowing parents and carers to review their child's progress in talking, listening and understanding, alongside a database of resources.

EARLY READING

Children see words all around them. They start reading by remembering / recognising words and numbers inside and outside their home, on shop signs, carrier bags, the front of buses, traffic signs, packets, magazines and books, etc.

Recognising words and sharing stories are enjoyable experiences for both you and your child. By sharing books together, children learn how to love books as well as handle them. It is important to have books at home. Aim to connect what is being read to other stories and experiences they may have had, so that every time they revisit the story it will mean something slightly different.

You might find the following guidelines helpful:

- Try to share a book at least 5 times a week, but stop as soon as you think your child is getting restless or tired,
- Encourage your child to choose their own book to share and don't worry if the same book is often chosen,
- Take time to talk about the pictures.

Help your child to know how books work by pointing out that:

- a book starts at the front
- books are read page by page to the back
- words are read from left to right across a page
- it is easier to follow words running your finger under the words as you read them aloud

Let your child see you reading. This can be books, magazines, leaflets, recipes or instruction manuals. Encourage them to spot words around them, for instance: on street names; road signs; football shirts; buses; billboards; clothing labels, etc.

Reading together about school is a great way of explaining what school is all about. Many libraries or book stores will have a section which includes children's stories about starting school. Here are some titles you may find useful:

- Starting School – A Ahlberg
- Billy and the Big New School – C & L Anholt
- Going to School – A Civardi
- Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School – I Whybrow
- I am Too Absolutely Small for School – Lauren Child
- The Berenstain Bears go to School – Stan Berenstain & Jan Berenstain
- Lucy & Tom go to School – Shirley Hughes
- Don't Eat the Teacher – Nick Ward
- Do I have to go to School? – Pat Thomas & Lesley Harker

If English is not your child's first language it is important to read to your child in his or her first language. Having a strong grasp of the first language will make it easier for your child to learn English.

Remember all experiences with books should be enjoyable

A Library Card for Every Child in Warwickshire

Warwickshire Libraries often run holiday reading challenges. Do encourage your child to join the library if he or she has not already done so. This can be done in the library or online at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/jointhelibrary .

PHONICS / KEYWORDS

Phonics is the way in which we teach children to recognise and understand letter sounds i.e. phonetically. In Reception we use a systematic programme for teaching phonics, initially focussing mainly on phases 2 and 3. This includes building up recognition of letter names and sounds, alongside blending and segmenting to help us read simple words.

PHASE 1

We begin by briefly revisiting Phase 1 – which is often taught in nursery or pre-school settings. This phase focuses on developing children's listening skills, so that they are able to identify and recognise the sounds taught in phase 2.

PHASE 2 AND 3

Phase 2 phonics begins within the first few weeks of the term. You can help your child prepare for this by spotting letters whilst out and about, such as on signs or number plates. Perhaps make an 'Alphabet Book' with your child from magazine and newspaper cuttings. Ask them to find pictures and words beginning with each letter – they can then have fun cutting these out and sticking them in the appropriate pages. You may notice when your child has learnt a specific phoneme (sound) at school, as suddenly they will be spotting it everywhere!

READING BOOKS

Following our Phonics phase book system at Welford, which focuses mainly on phonically decodable books, children will have the opportunity to read with an adult each week. Reading at school should be supported by daily reading at home. It is not expected that you read a whole book with your child each day, but read together little and often at a time of day which suits you both. We will change children's books once a week at school. Please ensure that you write in the child's reading record each time that they have read so that we know which books they have completed and how confidently they were coping with these.

EARLY WRITING

A young child will communicate by making marks. This may be using a pen and paper, using a stick in the sand or soil or painting with a brush and water on an outside wall. Children benefit from having different mark making materials available to them – crayons, chalks, felts and brushes.

It is important your child sees members of their family writing as this helps them to understand the need to write. Try to write shopping lists, a letter or birthday card in front of them, and then let them have a go for themselves. Let your child experiment with writing.

It is important that any mark, marking or writing is greatly encouraged and praised as this will boost your child's love for writing. Try not to worry if your child has not spelt words correctly as remember, in the EYFS we teach them to write *phonetically*.

When your child is ready, help them to write lower case letters – the first letter of their name should of course be a capital letter. If your child is keen to start mark making, please encourage the correct formation, starting with the letters in their name. Letter formation guidance will be sent out at the beginning of the Year and is always available on the website.

MATHS

Maths is everywhere. Routines, activities and the environment all offer rich sources of mathematical experiences for young children. To help your child develop their maths skills in preparation for school here are some useful ideas:

Read number books together
Use correct language – more, less, short, long, heavy
Read numbers on houses, cars
Point out colours and talk about them
Sing and say number rhymes
Set the table together
Sort the washing / match socks
Play dominoes / snap
Order objects
Measure ingredients when making a cake
Count how many plates are needed for tea
Count / sort the letters delivered by the postman
Predict – do you think it will rain today?
Will that bag be too heavy to carry?
Will all of the shopping go in the cupboard?
Understand space and position through tidying up and by filling boxes with toys
Make patterns by threading beads / alternating coloured bricks / looking at tiles, wallpaper, bricks

It is important that when your child is ready they learn to write numbers correctly. To help children remember the formations, we use a simple rhyme for each number. You may wish to use this same rhyme at home (a sheet will be sent home in September showing these rhymes and it will also be available on the website).

PHYSICAL SKILLS

Children need lots of practice to develop both gross motor (big movements) and fine motor (small movements).

You can help your child in the following ways:

Ensure children hold a pencil / crayon correctly which is between the thumb and forefinger supported by the middle finger. The following website has lots of resources and guidance

<https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/>

Encourage colouring within the lines

Do lots of cutting, along straight lines, curved lines and shapes

Catch, throw and kick balls

Use construction kits such as Lego, duplo, stickle bricks, meccano, hama beads / loom bands

Stepping stones

Scooters / balance bikes

Make things out of boxes, kitchen rolls, cartons, bottle tops etc.

Complete lots of jigsaws together

Practice of these physical skills will help children develop balance, co-ordination, and strength.

INDEPENDENCE

Being 'school ready' isn't just about being able to hold a pencil correctly. It starts by enabling your child to be as independent as possible. It would be really helpful if your child could start school being able to:

Put on and take off shoes

Use the toilet independently including flushing the toilet and washing hands afterwards

Use a knife and fork

Dress and undress ready for PE

Fold and stack their clothes

Tidy toys away

Play with other children and share possessions

Blow their nose

Carry their own school bag

Zip up their coat

But, do not worry if they can't!

THE BIG DAY

Prepare your child by talking about happy events you remember when you were at school.

Talk about school routines:

The start of the day
Register
Playtime
Lunchtime
End of the day

Talk about the different types of lessons:

Writing
Reading
Phonics
Speaking and Listening
Number Work
P.E.
Forest School
Painting, cutting, sticking
Making models

Talk about the staff in Reception.

Most of all emphasise that school is a happy place where your child will make new friends and learn lots of new skills.

Playing 'schools' is a good way of teaching children about different features of school life which may be new to them. Remember, too, that your child may already be familiar with many of the activities and routines from pre-school.

Starting school can be very exhausting – emotionally, physically, socially and mentally. Do not be surprised if for the first few weeks your son / daughter comes home tired, may be a little miserable and not wanting to talk about their day, other than to say they have 'played' or 'done nothing'. Give them a cuddle, a drink and something to eat. They will tell you exactly what they have been doing when they are ready to.

Remember, children are

all DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES

From different surroundings

Interested in different things

and

They all learn differently.