

EYFS Information Letter Spring 2023



Our curriculum themes this term are
Pole to Pole
Land of the Giants
Easter/Spring



Welcome back. We hope you had a restful and healthy Christmas. A warm welcome to any new families - we hope you find Downlands to be friendly and fun. The EYFS unit consists of **FS1 Dandelions (Pre-School)** and **FS2 Chestnuts (Reception)**. If your child is in Dandelions, they will be/have been allocated a Key Worker from the FS1 team. The teachers in Chestnuts are Mrs Loveless (Horse Chestnuts) and Mrs Le May (Sweet Chestnuts) who are supported by three full time adults. We continue to believe that building relationships with you as parents and carers is pivotal to caring for and educating your child and we look forward to communicating with you this term. We would like to use this information letter as an opportunity to share with you the wonderful opportunities and experiences we have planned for your children this term (our curriculum) to ensure that they grow, develop and flourish in our care. General information about our rules and routines and any parent messages will be shared with you via our online platform – Seesaw. Please get in touch if you do not have access to this yet or are having difficulties.

Learning in the EYFS

In the EYFS, children learn through a play based curriculum. Through play children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity and social and intellectual skills. We plan activities and experiences for the children both indoors and outdoors to encourage them to develop skills in all areas of learning. Some of these activities they will be able to access independently and some will be adult-led. A more structured approach is used in FS2 Chestnuts (Reception) which incorporates phonics, maths, topic themed activities, PE, Music, RE and PSHE sessions, as well as attending some assemblies. This approach is built on throughout the year alongside our play-based curriculum.

The EYFS Framework explains how and what your child will be learning to support their development. Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through **7 areas of learning and development**.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas** first. These are:

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

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning. As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **four specific areas**. These are:

- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the world**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

These seven areas are used to plan your child's learning and activities. The professionals teaching and supporting your child will make sure that the activities are suited to your child's unique needs. The curriculum is designed to be really flexible so that staff can follow the children's interests. Children in the EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outdoors. We try to incorporate as many of the children's ideas and interests as possible by 'planning in the moment'. We believe that the child's voice is important to capture their interests and allow them to take ownership of their learning. We plan activities which allow children to revisit, practise and consolidate previously learned skills to allow them to become secure and confident learners. We will share as much of our curriculum as possible through our online platform 'Seesaw'. Children in FS2 Chestnuts also have workbooks that they use throughout the year to record their learning. These are available at any time should you wish to look through but will always be available to look at at parent consultation evenings.

Please visit this link which explains the EYFS Framework in more detail:

<https://dev-foundation-years.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf>

Curriculum themes this term

This term we have planned the following themes:

- Pole to Pole – Winter, comparing countries – The North and South Pole, China (including the festival of Chinese New Year), Jungles and Rainforests, Blandford Camp (our local area). In this theme, we will be looking at climate, weather, travel, globes/maps, culture, clothing, food, languages, famous landmarks and celebrations.
- Land of the Giants - giants, fairies and elves, trolls, mythical creatures.
- Easter/Springtime – Patterns, Easter Egg Hunt, The Story Of Easter (Bible), Spring time (animals, weather, trees and plants, minibests, life cycles).

Communication and Language

This area focuses on the child's ability to speak, pay attention, listen and understand. In FS1 and FS2, we provide a language rich environment which will help them to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves. We give them a range of situations to speak and listen: such as circle time, group time, stories and rhymes, snack time, carpet time and through play. We promote a love of language and are always introducing new words to include in our vocabulary. We model good spoken English and encourage the children to speak in clear extended sentences.

Physical Development

This gives the children the opportunity to develop their skills of coordination, control, manipulation and movement. It encourages the development of both gross and fine motor skills. Both FS1 and FS2 have allocated time slots for PE in the school hall. Here, we practise the skills of movement, dance, gymnastics, ball skills and games. We continue to work with the children on their fine motor skills during our Finger Gym activities which include pencils, pens, threading, tweezers, small tools such as scissors, pegboards and lots more. The children are encouraged to think about keeping healthy and active. We are very lucky to have access to trikes, balance bikes, scooters and other wheeled toys and the space to ride them freely. We access the outside climbing frames frequently so that the children have opportunities to practise climbing and can develop their coordination, strength and balance.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

PSED is recognised as one of the building blocks of success in life. It supports children's development by helping them to interact effectively and develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others. We help them to develop their self-confidence and self-awareness, manage their feelings and behaviour and give them the skills they need to form healthy relationships. We promote PSED in everything we do in EYFS but we teach it explicitly through a scheme called Jigsaw which is followed by the rest of the school. In FS2 we teach vocabulary needed to solve problems. The vocabulary is progressive as they move through the school and will help them to solve problems with conflict, relationships and emotions as well as teach them self-regulation skills.

Phonics, Reading and Writing (Literacy)

We use the Sounds-Write phonics scheme. In FS1, the focus is on speaking and listening and the children play lots of games to support this such as exploring the sounds of instruments, animals, the environment and body percussion. They listen to stories, sing rhymes, use puppets and props for role play and lots more to widen their vocabulary and help them to develop their skills in communication. For those moving into Reception in September, a focus will be put on children hearing initial sounds in words, particularly their name, as well as recognising their written first name. In FS2 this term, we continue to learn sound-spelling correspondences and begin to introduce sounds that can be represented by 2 letters. We also move on to building and writing longer words containing more than 3 sounds. We continue to teach the high frequency words which children read and write without sounding out. Each day we will be reading or writing sentences as a whole class to help develop the children's understanding of sounds and words in context. **Please continue to practise building, reading and writing words with the sounds we send home fortnightly, along with the high frequency words. We also expect you to listen to your child read some of their phonics book 4 times a week (as the books get longer and more complex, this can be broken down into a few pages a day).**

In FS1, we encourage the handling of a range of books which are freely available in many areas of the base, including our outdoor area. We share our favourite stories regularly and plan activities around them. We continue to offer the children opportunities to choose books that they would like to read in our weekly library slots. We celebrate our class favourite books through 'books of the week' and 'our favourite books' displays. The children in EYFS also have regular story sessions with various adults in the school including Mr Rielly!

Writing

In FS1 we encourage children to practise pre-writing skills such as gross motor movements (making circles in the air, using brushes to sweep) and fine motor movements (manipulating playdough, lego, mark making with sticks, brushes, chalks etc). For those who are ready, we will begin introducing more formal methods of mark making where children can explore making marks using a range of writing implements such as pencils, crayons, felt tips, pastels, chalk. The children are taught the 'pick and flick' method to help with a secure and correct pencil grip. In FS2, as well as modelling accurate letter formation in phonics sessions, we also teach handwriting as a discrete whole class session.

Maths

In maths we follow the whole school approach of 'teaching for mastery' to give pupils the best chances of mastering maths. Mastering maths means pupils of all ages acquire a deep, long-term, secure and adaptable understanding of the subject.

In EYFS this includes counting, matching, sorting and finding patterns through working with numbers, shape, space and measures. In FS1 we will match and sort objects, sing number rhymes, read number stories, count objects, actions, pictures and sounds and recognise basic shapes. FS1 also take part in weekly cooking activities involving the language of maths. In FS2 this term we will continue to develop a deeper understanding of numbers to 10. We will focus on the composition of numbers, comparing quantities, 1 more and 1 less, number bonds to 10, ordering numbers, 3D shapes, money, time, weight, height and capacity.

Understanding the World

This area involves providing experiences for children to make sense of their world. Children will learn about similarities and differences between people, cultures and beliefs and communities. This is mostly taught through our PSHE curriculum (Jigsaw) and in FS2 only – Discovery RE. We will be exploring our world in the past and at present, as well as looking at the natural world around us. Our themes for this term will provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the world by exploring, comparing and contrasting different countries, investigating the signs and changes in Winter and Spring and finding out all about minibeasts and life cycles. Weekly Forest School sessions continue for all of EYFS this term.

Expressive Arts and Design

This area includes singing, making music and performing as well as telling stories and being imaginative. It also includes creating with materials such as building using construction, painting and drawing and modelling with dough, junk and other materials. The children will have plenty of opportunities to perform in music and movement sessions as well as our weekly slot in the Music Room. We are always promoting creativity in the EYFS both indoors and outdoors and will provide opportunities for child-led creative sessions as well as more structured sessions where they will be taught the skills needed for cutting, joining and assembling materials.

Events to watch out for this term:

- Chinese New Year - dress in red day (EYFS only)
- Easter Egg Hunt (whole school)
- FS2 Class Assemblies (9/2/23 Horse Chestnut/16/3/23 Sweet Chestnut)

Other Information

Please remember that any messages such as absences, holidays, illness etc. are phoned in via the school office (01258453348)/Dandelions direct line (01258489914) rather than sent via messages on Seesaw.

Please ask any member of the team if you have any queries.

EYFS Team



FS2 Chestnuts



FS1 Dandelions