

EYFS Information Letter Autumn 2023



Our curriculum themes this term are
Let's Be Friends
Come Rhyme With Me
Tell Me A Story



Welcome to the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) at Downlands School. 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 Chestnut) and Mrs Le May (Sweet Chestnut) who are supported by Keyworker Sammi and Teaching Assistant Mrs Culliford. We are very much looking forward to building relationships with the children and yourselves so that we can develop a two way partnership between home and school to support your child's journey through the EYFS. 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 year (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 learning skills to allow them to become secure and confident learners. We will be recording the wonderful things your children do using Seesaw and through the use of a class 'floor book' which is a bit like a giant scrapbook!

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

<https://foundationyears.org.uk/files/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:

- Can We Be Friends? – making friends, emotions, social skills, teamwork, class rules (charter), family, home, interests/hobbies, similarities and differences between people, likes/dislikes.
- Come Rhyme With Me – traditional nursery rhymes (with a particular focus on - Little Miss Muffet, I'm a Little Teapot), rhyming stories (A Squash and a Squeeze, Room on the Broom).
- Tell Me A Story – Guy Fawkes, The Three Little Pigs, Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Christmas Story.

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 for speaking and listening such as circle time, group time, stories and rhymes, snack time, carpet time and through play.

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 daily so that the children have opportunities to practise climbing and 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.

Phonics, Reading and Writing (Literacy)

We use the Sounds Write phonics scheme throughout all of the EYFS and into Key Stage 1. 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 next 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 begin to learn the sound-spelling correspondence for letters as well as some words to read by sight. We learn to build words in both reading and writing right from the beginning to give the children the best start in their phonics journey.

In the EYFS, we know that early reading skills are critical for supporting children's language and communication skills. It is important to expose children to a range of pictures and print through books, stories, magazines/catalogues, leaflets etc. both at home and at school. 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. In FS2, we begin our reading journey with our 'Sounds Write' scheme. The scheme will teach the three essential skills of segmenting, blending and phoneme manipulation necessary for reading and spelling. More information on this will be shared with you in the coming weeks. Children in the EYFS will also have the opportunity to visit our library where they can choose a book of their choice to bring home and share with you (FS1 can purchase bookbags for this if they wish, FS2 must have bookbags at all times). However, it is important to acknowledge that your child is reading all of the time! We are a print rich environment and encourage reading at every opportunity.

Writing

We continue 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, we will be working on our pencil grips, writing our names, making meaningful marks (giving meaning to the marks we make) and forming letters correctly to use in words.

Maths

This area of learning 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. In FS2, we will focus on counting skills, matching quantity to numerals, subitising (recognising amounts without the need to count), number bonds to 5 and naming 2D shapes.

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.

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 play dough and recycled 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.

Forest School

Children in EYFS will have one Forest School session a week. Forest School is an opportunity for children to explore the natural world whilst building up skills of resilience, confidence, risk-taking and adventure. Children will be expected to wear the correct Forest School clothes for sessions and more details will be sent to you shortly about this. Our Forest School area is on the school site.

We will be sharing our wonderful curriculum with you through Seesaw so please ensure you are logged on to your account and have notifications switched on.

Other events to watch out for this term:

- Garrison Bonfire Night
- EYFS Christmas Nativity

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).

Please ask any member of the team if you have any queries. We look forward to getting to know our families this year.

EYFS Team

