



**Deeping St Nicholas Primary School**  
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Head Teacher: Mr T W Emery

Thursday 16th July 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

We are delighted that parents had chosen and accepted a place at Deeping St Nicholas Primary School; on behalf of the staff, governors, children and parents it gives us great pleasure to welcome you to our school.

Everyone will do their very best to make parents and children feel safe and secure and with the help of the parents, we aim to provide your children with the best possible education.

Starting school should be a happy and exciting time and we hope everyone is looking forward to September – even at this crazy time!

It's not the start any of us would have wanted, but we'll deal with what we are presented with. The school has not closed over the whole of the lockdown period. During this time, we have acquired new skills and organisation; including planning for the children to enter the school safely, to be in and around school safely and to leave for home safely.

September will bring us similar challenges and even though the science tells us that the risk is minimal in schools, we'll still be observing COVID safe guidance.

In previous years, children have experienced a programme of induction. Obviously, this has not been possible this year. Because of this, the first two days - **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September** and **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September**, will be short days. (The late starting is in case some of the other children already in school are a little anxious about coming to school).

**Please note that these times are different to the previous letter as we will be unable to hold the parents meetings that we planned for these days, due to Government guidelines.**

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020**

Children in Year Reception (Squirrels Class)

**Start time 9.30am - Home Time 1.30pm**

Unless you have ordered through The Farm Kitchen, children will have to be supplied with a packed lunch. Please include an additional drink.

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Children in Year Reception (Squirrels Class)

**Start time 9.30am - Home Time 1.30pm**

Unless you have ordered through The Farm Kitchen, children will have to be supplied with a packed lunch. Please include an additional drink.

**From Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**Children in Year Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 (Squirrels Class)**

**Start time 8.50am - Home Time 3.05pm**

Part of the government guidance details the need to group children into 'bubbles'. Each class will now form its own 'bubble' and where possible, the adults and children will remain static within their bubbles. Activities throughout the day (including breaks and lunchtime) will be such that children will not cross into each other's 'bubble'.

We are also directed to *stagger* our children's arrival and departure. After several conversations and multiple versions, we have created a timetable which aims to reduce the contact between our children; other groups of children will be arriving before and after your child's group. There will be little annoyances for some people, but we have given thought to aspects such as, sibling groups, working parents and children in taxis etc.

In addition to the 'staggered' times, the physical drop off and collection need to be organised in a type of 'one-way' system (see map attached) with children being collected from the playground. During the first few weeks in September, we will be trialling the new process and modifying where necessary; please adhere to the timings, it is important that adults and children do not arrive too early or late, as this will create problems with the groups.

Please can I ask that initially, only one parent brings your child/children so that we can avoid gatherings on the school premises and can I also ask that people leave promptly. The main school office will be open, but only to be used for emergencies; please phone or email to arrange any meetings, again to reduce possible spread of infection.

Unfortunately, Breakfast and After School Clubs will not be able to operate, when we very first return after summer; this is because of cross infection and spread of infection, as children from all classes or 'bubbles' attend. Over the holiday, we will be considering how we can offer the clubs safely, as we know some parents are fairly reliant on them.

As grown-ups, we need to remember that although starting school is very exciting it can also seem very scary to our little ones. Even if they are used to going to nursery/pre-school or childcare, school is a whole new unknown experience especially for those children that haven't any familiarity – add to this the whole scenario of COVID, and we need to do all we can to try to support them with the beginning school.

As adults, we are used to going to new places and knowing at the end of the day we will return home but a child's view is quite different; parents take them to this strange new place and leave them there! Even though you say you are coming back, they have no guarantee that will happen. Experience reassures them, but we have to get there first. So it is very important to acknowledge that this is a very anxious time for children.

The most important thing that we all want, when your child starts school, is that they are happy. By the time you have read this, you may have already met up with Mrs. Manders-Jones.

Mrs Manders-Jones will give great guidance and assurance, but here are a few tips to take-away:

## New to Reception Top Ten Tips:

### *preparing your child for Big School:*

#### 1. Toileting

It might surprise you to know that quite a number of children start school not being able to use the toilet independently; it is a very important job for parents to train independent toileting. Of course accidents will happen and we will help your child clean up and get changed when they do but you can support this by regularly practicing these steps:

- Helping them recognise when they need to go
- Deal with clothing (zips, belts, skirts pants)
- Sit on/stand and use the loo and for boys to aim well!
- Wipe own bottom and dispose of paper in the loo
- Flush the loo
- Wash and dry own hands

Time spent at home helping your child with this can stop so much anxiety.

#### 2. Labelling

Make sure that **everything** your child has in school is labelled (jumpers, shirts, dresses, skirts, vests, coats, scarves, hats, gloves, PE kit, plimsolls, trainers, shoes, wellies, bags, snack boxes, drink bottles, basically; anything that could possibly leave their possession)- use a permanent marker pen or sew/iron in labels check them regularly as they can fade or come off in the laundry. Please appreciate that in PE sessions with 27 children changing at the same time in similar looking clothes, things do get mixed up so labelled clothes can be returned to the right owner quicker if they are labelled.

#### 3. PE kit and bags

Ensure that you have everything your child needs for when they start school, you will find it listed in the welcome pack which you should have picked up a while back. They will need a school PE kit in school every week and if it can come in on the first day back that would really help. It does not need to be washed every time they do PE, indeed most stay in for the whole of the term, however if you wish to wash it weekly then

please tell us and then we can send it home with your child on the Friday ready for you to wash and return it the following Monday. PE days are usually Monday and Tuesday but this can change due to unexpected events or staff illness.

4. Practice dressing/undressing independently

If your child is unable to do this, they need to learn before they start. Teaching these skills at home rather than in school, where there are potentially 27 others in need of the same support, is so much less stressful for all. Being able to put on a zip up their own coat is a super skill when everyone is eager to get outdoors. Getting in and out of PE kit and uniform is equally as important to practice as we usually have a couple of PE sessions a week. Putting on wellies and waterproof overalls is important for our forest school sessions. So please take the time and skill them up. We know that some fastenings and items of clothing can be more challenging but don't always avoid them and just go for the easy option of Velcro because they will need to negotiate the other things at some point but equally don't give them too many unnecessary challenges, we want to spend time doing the fun activities not with such dull necessities.

5. Using a knife and fork

Free school meals are available for all Reception children (Please see accompanying letter regarding ordering or cancelling your universal free school meal).

Whilst we will initially be starting with packed lunches, we hope there will be the possibility of a hot option at some point. If you choose a hot meal for your child, they will need to be able to use a knife and fork. These skills develop with time and practice so if they begin school just using a fork to feed themselves that's a start...

If your child is going to bring a packed lunch, then it is also important that they are able to independently access their food so practice undoing the lunch bag/boxes, drink bottles, food packets and yoghurts at home so that your child can do this independently.

6. Rehearse the morning routine

This is especially important for children not used to getting up and having to leave the house in the morning. A week or so before school actually begins start practising the early morning routine:

- Waking and getting up at the time you think is necessary
- Getting breakfast
- Washing, teeth cleaning and dressing (with as much independence as possible)

All this will establish good routines, allowing you to see if you have enough time for as stress free start to the day as possible.

7. Walking to school

Linked to the previous point, have a couple of dry runs to see how much time is needed to arrive at school on time. Little legs can take a lot longer than we adults might think to cover the same amount of ground, particularly when everything is so unfamiliar and distracting along the way.

Arriving at school late can definitely raise stress and anxiety and can result in the missing important part of the classroom morning routines making settling in more difficult.

8. Get them used to sharing

Most probably your child has never had to share so much as they will when they start reception and it can be a little overwhelming if they are not properly prepared for it. At the age of four, hopefully they are just about getting used to the idea that the entire world does not just revolve around them and that the needs of others (in a fair way) are just as important. If you are lucky enough to have siblings in the same household this task is much easier, if not, emphasise it when they are playing with you.

9. Start to talk about starting big school

It is really important to talk about coming to school so that they don't feel as if they are being thrown in at the deep end on that first day. There are some good children's books that cover the subject of starting school many of them also featuring as videos on 'Youtube':

'Topsy and Tim Start School' by Jean Adamson

'Starting School' by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

'Harry and the Dinosaurs go to School' by Ian Whybrow

'Spot Goes to School' by Eric Hill

'I am absolutely too small for school' by Lauren Child

Sharing any of these will naturally bring up the topic and can help allay some of the anxieties that they may be having. Try not to over-do it and avoid negative questions/statements like,

'but mummy is going to have to leave you there isn't she?'

'but you don't know anyone there do you?'

'but are you worried about starting school?'

These kinds of statements can promote anxieties that were not there before. Children look to their adults for guidance on how they should be/ behave so if you are projecting anxieties it can easily transmit to them. Turn those negatives into positives,

'I am going to feel so excited to pick you up at the end of the school day and hear about what you have been doing'

'You will be making lots of new friends, you are so good at making friends, just like you did when we went to ...'

Tell them how exciting you think it is going to be but if they do express worries themselves don't brush it away with a comment like 'oh don't worry' it is really important that you listen to them and help them to rethink the problem positively.

10. Meet up with other parents

Support yourself and each other by meeting up/ getting to know the other parents (the best you can) of children that are starting school with your child in September. This way your children are given the chance to get to know each other better and you can share useful ideas particularly as some of you have already experienced your children starting the school and others haven't.

If you feel there are still some questions unanswered, please email or telephone (contact details above).

I truly hope everyone has the best summer possible. Please stay safe, make the most of any good weather and we look forward to seeing you all in a few weeks

Yours sincerely

Mr T W Emery

Head Teacher

