

ST MARGARET'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF EYFS CHILDREN

OUR ETHOS

Every child should be happy, secure, valued and confident. At St Margaret's Preparatory School, our philosophy is to value every child as a unique individual, who enjoys learning and thinking for him or herself. We provide a supportive and secure environment in which every child can flourish and learn at their own pace and in their own individual way. Our role is to stimulate and encourage their development and enjoyment of learning through a variety of different activities in secure indoor and outdoor situations, through play and through structured and creative activities. We encourage the growth of social skills and empathy amongst the children. The relationships which the children develop with each other and with our staff are central to their happiness and lay the best possible foundation for their future.

THE SCHOOL

St Margaret's Preparatory School is a school that caters for children from 3-11. All of the children who enter our Kindergarten and Reception classes are part of our School community. Mrs Cordon, the Headmistress will extend a warm welcome when you visit and Miss Jones, the Deputy Head, will show you our facilities. They will be pleased to answer any of your questions, either about the EYFS, or about the rest of the school. We send parents and prospective parents copies of the school's prospectus on request, or parents themselves can request a copy via our website. That document gives details of the school's address, location and contact details, together with a list of staff and Governors, as well as a great deal of information about the aims and ethos of the whole school. The curriculum and activities for our older children is explained in some detail. A great deal of further information about the school is available on our website, including a list of the whole school's policies, including those that apply specifically to the EYFS. Copies can be sent to you on request. All parents are given a copy of the Parent Handbook.

As an integral part of the school, the EYFS children make full use of the St Margaret's facilities, such as the swimming pool, gymnasium and medical centre, although they have separate classrooms and outdoor play areas of their own. We expect them to remain pupils in the school until they reach the age of 11.

St Margaret's Preparatory School is registered with the DfE as an early years provider. We participate in the Government's Nursery voucher scheme for 3 and 4 year old children.

ADMISSIONS

Children join us in the Kindergarten in the September following their third birthday. We recommend a minimum of five sessions (half days) per week, which may be taken in the mornings, afternoons or as a combination of both - subject to availability. Additionally, some children will attend full-time, 8.30 to 3.30. Our morning places are especially popular and we advise parents to contact our Marketing and Admissions Manager, Mrs S Hughes, as soon as possible to reserve a place. We cannot provide places on an ad-hoc basis and parents are asked to confirm their intentions every term. Our Application for Vacancy form can be located in the back of the prospectus.

We allocate places for up to 24 children in the Kindergarten but it is not usual that they will all be on the premises at the same time. In each of the Reception classes we have a maximum of 16 children, supported by a class teacher and a fully qualified classroom assistant.

The whole school's admissions policy applies to the EYFS as much as to the rest of the school. It appears on our website and copies can be sent to parents on request.

Equal Opportunities Policy

We welcome children from a diverse range of backgrounds and pride ourselves on being an inclusive community where there is complete equality of opportunity and everyone is valued for being him or herself. Copies of the school's Equal Opportunities Policy are on our web site and can be sent to parents on request. We also welcome children with disabilities and special education needs, and adhere to the Government's SEN Code of Practice.

PUPIL NUMBERS AND OUR DAILY ROUTINE

In Reception classes, the legal staffing ratio is 1:30 (as in maintained schools) provided that a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children. At St Margaret's, both Reception classes have a qualified teacher; furthermore, each teacher is supported by a Classroom Assistant with a full and relevant Level 3 qualification. Optimum numbers in each of the Reception classes are sixteen children, facilitating a staffing ratio of 1:8. In the Kindergarten, the legal requirement for a person with Qualified Teacher Status (or other suitable person as defined above) means that the ratio is 1:13 and at least one other member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification. At St Margaret's, we employ a qualified teacher within the Kindergarten and three Classroom Assistants, all with full and relevant Level 3 qualifications. We have an optimum of twenty four children in the Kindergarten and therefore maintain a ratio of 1:6. All ratios are upheld in 'Maggots' After School Club. There are two members of staff, one in Reception and one in Kindergarten, who also hold Early Years Professional Status.

In the Kindergarten the hours of the sessions are:

- [Mornings: 8.30am – 12.30pm]
- [Afternoons: 12.30pm – 3.30pm]

Children attending the morning session stay for a hot lunch in the dining hall and will have eaten this by the time they are collected at 12.30. If they stay for the whole day, they will enjoy a period of outdoor play and some indoor relaxation before starting the afternoon session. Children attending the afternoon session will begin their day at 12.30 and should have had their lunch before coming to school. Our term dates are on our school website and are sent to parents one year in advance.

For children in the Reception classes the school day is between 8.25am and 3.30pm.

Procedures when a Child is not Collected on Time

Please refer to our separate policy: Collection, Non-Collection and Lost Children, copies of which will be sent to parents on request.

OUR STAFF

Mrs Anna Karacan is the Early Years Curriculum Leader with day to day responsibility for all of its activities. She is also one of our Reception teachers, alongside Mrs Linda Norcross. Overall responsibility for the Department lies with the Headmistress, Mrs Karen Cordon. The Kindergarten is run by Mrs Juliette Heal, who is also a qualified teacher. There are a total of six Classroom Assistants, each qualified to Level 3, assigned between the three classes. The children are supervised by qualified staff at all times when they are under our care, including break, lunch, play times and when attending 'Maggots' after school club.

OUR FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

At St Margaret's Preparatory School we offer a broad and balanced Foundation Stage curriculum for our youngest pupils, which is based upon the Early Learning Goals and the six areas of learning. All children are given equal access and opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

All children learn through play with a mixture of child initiated and teacher led learning opportunities. Learning takes place both indoors and outdoors.

Our EYFS programme is planned on a two-year basis in our Kindergarten and Reception classes. We introduce different themes which the children explore through a variety of mediums, including books, art, clay, drama, music, ICT, crafts and model making. We gradually introduce phonics and the basics of literacy are taught daily through a structured reading scheme and rhyme. Numeracy is introduced through different activities, such as counting games, weighing activities and measuring, and is also taught daily. All children are encouraged to participate in sport, dance, music and swimming. All children are gradually introduced to the principles of writing, and to the use of computers. By the end of two years, the children in Reception are enthusiastic and confident learners, who are ready for the more structured, less play-based, environment of Year 1.

Parent/Teacher Liaison Meetings

All parents of children in the EYFS Department are invited to a termly liaison meeting at the start of each term, when the aims of the term's curriculum, the themes that will be studied and the methods of delivering the curriculum through play, structured activities and outdoor activities will be briefly explained.

Communication Book

Every child is given a Communication Book from the time that he or she joins the Reception or Kindergarten class. This is the main method for communications between parents and the school. We record information that we would like you to read and ask you to write down anything relevant that you would like us to know about. Additional communication is verbal.

Assemblies

Assembly is held every day for the Reception classes, whilst the Kindergarten children attend as appropriate. Assemblies are formal occasions which foster a collective spirit. They are essentially Christian in nature but are designed to be respectful of other faiths. Assemblies provide an excellent public setting in which to commend children for their achievements, acts of kindness or helpfulness, and to reward them with certificates etc.

Outdoor Learning

All of the children are encouraged to play in their dedicated, secure outdoor space, or in the school playground, except in the worst weather. We also use the outdoor classroom for free flow activities – continuing classroom learning outside. The school has secure grounds and children are regularly taken in supervised groups inside the school grounds to learn about the seasons of the year, by collecting autumn leaves, observing animals etc.

Visits

We organise regular outings to the local Church, library, farm etc. These are designed to help the children to acquire a basic understanding of our traditions, of the natural world and of the importance of other cultures.

Your child's school calendar lists the major visits that are due to take place over the coming term, although some very local visits, which involve no more than an hour out of school, are arranged at shorter notice. We require signed permission slips each time, for even the shortest visits.

We will send you a letter well in advance, telling you about every visit and, if appropriate, its cost and whether it involves an extension to the normal length of the school day. Copies of our policy on visits for all of our children will be sent to parents on request.

Behaviour

Even the youngest children are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration. They have to learn to look after their own possessions and to respect other's possessions. We expect them to be honest, helpful and polite, and to work hard and to listen to others. They should respect everyone and learn to value differences and diversity. Mrs Karacan, the Early Years Curriculum Leader, is in day to day charge of the management of behaviour in the EYFS, a responsibility that has been delegated to her by the Headmistress.

We explain to children why some forms of behaviour are unacceptable and hurtful to others. We rarely need to impose sanctions; but sometimes we may remove a treat for hurtful behaviour. Occasionally, a child may be sent to see Mrs Cordon, the Headmistress, who will explain the inappropriateness of a particular action; but such instances are rare. Parents are always informed, either verbally, or via a note in the Communication Book when any sanction or reproof is needed, and in cases of repeated instances of hurtful or inappropriate behaviour, they will be invited into the school to discuss the situation with their child's Teacher and the Early Years Curriculum Leader in order to agree a joint way of handling the difficulty.

Copies of our Behaviour and Discipline Policy are available upon request.

FOOD AND DRINK

Children are offered a healthy snack which they may eat at any time during the morning and afternoon sessions. This is carefully monitored by the staff. Drinking water is available throughout the day, as we fully recognise the importance of proper hydration.

The Kindergarten and Reception children eat lunch with their teachers and Classroom Assistants in the St Mary's Dining Room at 12.00pm before the other children in the school. Their food is served to them according to a 'family seating' arrangement and they enjoy the company of an adult sitting at the head of each of the tables.

Weekly menus are displayed on our website. We offer a wide choice between hot and cold food, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and salads. We offer our pupils a widely varied, healthy and tasty diet. We also attempt to cater for all tastes and preferences, including vegetarian.

Parents are asked not to send food or drink to school with their child.

Special Diets

All food that might contain nuts or traces of nuts is clearly labelled. Parents of children who have allergies to any food product, or who have special dietary requirements, are asked to make this clear in the medical questionnaire they receive when prior to their child starting at the school. They should inform the school at once if their son or daughter subsequently develops an intolerance of any food. The Catering Manager is happy to see any parent who has concerns about their son or daughter's medical condition, and to devise a special menu, where practically possible.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We appreciate that sending your child to St Margaret's is a big step and that it is understandable that some parents may worry or feel anxious about their child's well-being and happiness. That is why we invite you and your child to spend some time in school before he/she joins us. Once s/he has joined us, you are always welcome to visit.

Your child's Class Teacher is responsible for your child's pastoral care and, with our small classes, speedily gets to know every individual child extremely well. You will see the Classroom Teacher twice a day when you drop off and collect your child, and many worries can be speedily resolved by an informal chat. Otherwise, you are welcome to make an appointment for a longer (or more private) conversation with him/her, or with the Early Years Curriculum Leader or Headmistress. Any concerns will always be treated in complete confidence.

We send home regular information for parents, which will keep you abreast of all that is going on at school. We also encourage children to take home their art work for you to admire and display at home! We send invitations to parents to a number of events during the year, and very much hope to see you at:

- Harvest Festival
- The Nativity Play
- The Maggots Easter Egg Hunt
- Open Day, Prize Giving and Sports Afternoon
- Kindergarten Sports Day

Parents' Evenings

We hold Parents' Evenings every term in both the Kindergarten and Reception classes. These provide opportunities for parents to talk to their child's teacher about his/her progress and to raise any concerns which they may have.

Reports

Children are assessed throughout their time through observations, questioning and guiding. Narrative reports are prepared on each child and sent to parents at the end of every term.

eProfile

During their time in EYFS children are assessed according to Development Matters in the Kindergarten and against the Early Learning Goals which should be reached at the conclusion of Reception. We complete the eProfile termly and by the time the Reception year is completed this helps us to build up a detailed profile on each child which summarises his or her learning and development against 13 assessment scales and 69 learning goals, which have been determined by the Government. You will of course, receive your own copy, which we will discuss with you at the time that it is completed. We are required to send your child's results to Wiltshire Local Education Authority.

Storage of Records

We store all of our records on pupils in locked cabinets. Parents may arrange to see the records of their children in accordance with the whole school's policy on Record Keeping, which can be sent to you on request. You have the right to make written comments on your child's records, which will then be treated as part of that record. The School is registered under the Data Protection Act and complies with its provisions for example, about the disclosure of information relating third parties.

COMPLAINTS

We hope that you will not feel the need to complain and that any difficulty can be sensitively and efficiently handled before it reaches that stage. However, the school's complaints procedure, which applies equally in EYFS, is on our website. We will send you copies on request. We undertake to investigate all complaints and to notify you of the outcome of investigation within 28 days. We maintain records of complaints for three years after your child has left our school.

Although the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is responsible for inspecting the EYFS, because it is part of an independent school, parents should though be aware that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they are entitled to make a complaint directly to Ofsted. They can download the Ofsted leaflet: 'Complaints to Ofsted about Schools: Guidance for Parents' reference 080113 from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

CHILD PROTECTION

The school's child protection policies, including its policy for the safer recruitment of staff, are enforced rigorously in the EYFS. Copies of the policies, which apply throughout the school, are on our website and can be sent to parents on request. The Child Protection Co-ordinator is the Deputy Head, Miss Cath Jones, who oversees the whole school, including the EYFS children.

MEDICAL MATTERS

Please keep your child at home if he or she is ill or infectious, and phone us on the first day that s/he is ill. An ill child will not be happy in school, and will only infect others. We will therefore telephone you and ask you to collect your child if he or she becomes ill during the day.

The EYFS, like the rest of the school, has access to our fully equipped Medical Centre which is led by the School Nurses. They have overall responsibility for any medical care or first aid that your child may require during the school day, or at other times when the school is open. However, this may be delegated to the School Secretary or one of the staff First Aiders. A first aid box is located in the Kindergarten, and is checked and, if necessary, replenished every week. The following members of the EYFS staff are qualified Paediatric First Aiders: Mrs Anna Karacan, Mrs Juliette Heal, Mrs Jayne Miller, Mrs Rebecca Pike & Mrs Terry Riley. There are three additional paediatric first aiders in the school.

We will *always* contact you at once if your child suffers anything more than a trivial injury, or if he or she becomes unwell during school day, or if we have any worries or concerns about his or her health. We will ask you to collect your child if he or she becomes ill during the school day. We will inform you verbally if he or she has a minor accident or graze at school and ask you sign our accident record to confirm that you have been advised of the incident.

Medical Care

Although your son and daughter will normally receive medical care from your family GP practice; we hold medical information on all our pupils in order to ensure that we can provide appropriately for their needs, or look after them if they are injured or have an accident. We would therefore be grateful if you would complete and return the medical questionnaire enclosed in your New Pupil Pack before he or she joins the school.

Children with Medical Needs or Special Education Needs who require special adjustments

If your child has medical needs, special education needs or requires any special adjustments, we will invite you to a meeting with the relevant staff, the school's Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and any outside Specialist who has been involved with the care of your child, to discuss thoroughly the regime that is most appropriate for his or her individual care, well before s/he joins the school.

Medical Examinations and Immunisations

Your consent will be sought from time to time to your child receiving the routine range of immunisations recommended by the Department of Health for all children of his or her age.

Medical Records

We record all accidents and injuries to your child and of all medicines that are given to him or her. We will always tell you in writing if your child has received any form of medical treatment – however minor.

Medicines and Treatments Brought to School for Pupils

Please advise the School Secretary of any medication that you bring into the school for your child. If your child has a medical condition which necessitates regular access to medication, please inform the Headmistress so that an appropriate regime can be devised. The relevant staff will be informed, in confidence, of any condition that is likely to affect him/her in any area of school life. We will work with you in making arrangements that work best for him/her.

Copies of our Medication Policy can be sent to you on request.

Please remember that we need your written consent for every medicine before we are allowed to give it to your child.

MAINTAINING A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT

The safety of the children is our highest priority, and because they are so young, we need to be particularly vigilant. We will therefore:

- Only allow your child to go home with you, unless we have received your advance permission (preferably in writing) that he or she may be collected by another adult.
- Never allow a child to leave the premises unsupervised. There is always at least one adult in charge of the outside play area
- Ask all visitors to identify themselves and to state their business before we give them access to the premises. Visitors sign in, wear security badges and are escorted throughout their visit. They sign out on leaving.
- Register all pupils at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- Check all pupils out as they are collected by their parents or carers

The entrance to our building leads to our entrance hall, which is equipped with a comfortable seating area for visitors. All visitors will be asked to wait there until they have signed in and their escort has arrived. The security locks make it impossible for visitors to enter the school unattended. Parents and carers are asked to wait in the playground for their children at the end of a session. However, Kindergarten parents should collect their children directly from the Kindergarten classroom. Each child is handed over by the Teacher to his or her parent or carer.

Missing Child Policy

Our Missing Child Policy and Procedures for when a child is not collected on time are available on request.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We update and review our risk assessments on the EYFS classrooms and other indoor areas, the outdoor play space and all the equipment and toys used by the children every year in order to ensure that everything with which your child may come into contact has been assessed and that potential hazards are kept to a minimum. Our risk assessments and health and safety guidelines are available on request. We welcome your comments and suggestions for improvement.

A Legal Requirement incorporated into the EYFS Statutory Framework, an ISI Reporting Standard for Independent Schools with Early Years provision,

References:

A: The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, 2008 (www.teachernet.gov.uk)

B: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Checklist and Monitoring Reference for Inspectors, September 2009 (www.isi.net)

C: A Guide to the Law for School Governors, April 2009 (www.dcsf.gov.uk)

D. General Inspection Queries, but with particular reference to EYFS, Independent School Association (ISA) guidance (www.isaschools.org.uk): an ISBA Briefing Document, February 2009

E. A Checklist of Policies for Schools – by Farrer and Co (www.farrer.co.uk), an ISBA Briefing Paper, 2004