



The Priory Primary School

An Outstanding Academy School

“Excellence, enjoyment and enrichment in education”

Introduction

The Priory is a unique school. It is beautifully situated in rural North Hampshire and our children are a pleasure to teach. There are many aspects of the school which, combined together, make the school what it is today. Firstly, of course, there are the children. The children join the school with a variety of previous experiences; however, we have no expectation about prior attainment and we are not selective. We simply work with the children at their individual stages of development.

There are many systems that support the formation of good attitudes to learning and encourage high standards of behaviour. However, perhaps the most important aspect to a child's development is the happy atmosphere that pervades the entire school. Children actively want to come to school; they enjoy being with their friends and teachers and they love to learn. When they finally leave the school, the children take away many happy memories and many keep in contact with the school and frequently return. We are always pleased to hear their success stories!

It is hard to identify one specific feature of The Priory that makes the overall experience so special. It is a privilege to teach and to learn here. Every day is different and filled with enjoyable and unforgettable educational experiences

In this document, we set out our values and our vision for learning and we hope to convey what makes The Priory such a special place!

Relationships

We are a small village school, serving a number of local villages and we are at the heart of the community.

From the first time contact is made with school, we aim to be professional, polite and welcoming. We greet all visitors to the school with a smile and deal with enquiries, whether face to face or by email or telephone, as efficiently as possible. We believe that the school thrives on mutual respect between staff, pupils and parents.

Parents are very well known to staff and many give freely of their time to help the school whether it is helping to clear the playground of snow, tidying up the school grounds or taking part in Parent Teacher Association activities. We are on first name terms with many parents and the atmosphere is friendly and light hearted.

The Head Teacher is rarely out of school and is either on the playground or in her office at the start and end of days, talking to parents. More formal appointments are rarely necessary but, if needed, are quickly arranged. We believe talking is very important; certainly, it is our intention that parents' evening reports never contain any nasty surprises!

Although people have many different roles within the school and there is a management structure, we believe in collaborative leadership and teamwork, rather than hierarchies. If there is a job that needs to be done, we do it whether it is moving furniture, basic DIY or teaching!

We have clear guidelines for children's behaviour and these are fairly and consistently applied. We will always speak courteously to children and we reserve raised voices for emergencies only. We listen to what children have to say and take their opinions seriously. There is an emphasis on politeness and good manners; children's eagerness to hold doors open for their peers as well as for adults was noted by Ofsted!

A usual feature of the school day is the relaxed banter between staff and children. Children are clear where the boundaries are and know not to overstep them and as a result, the atmosphere that pervades the school, whilst purposeful, is also relaxed.

We work hard to maintain our reputation as an outstanding local primary school and we believe that excellent relationships form the foundation of a successful school.

How We Make our Relationships Work

- **Prospective Parents** - Prospective parents are shown around the school by the Head Teacher. All visits are conducted on an individual basis, allowing parents ample opportunity to see the school in action, ask questions and form their judgement about the school. Visits usually last about an hour.
- **New Reception Parents** - An introductory parents' meeting run by staff and a coffee morning run by the Parents' Association help to make the parents of our new starters feel welcome. A pack of information is provided and individual appointments with the Reception class team in the first week of September are offered. There are lots of opportunities for new Year R parents to see how their children are getting on, (short assemblies, singing performances, stay and play sessions etc) and the Reception staff are always available for a quick chat at the beginning or end of the day.
- **Keeping Everyone in the Loop** - We communicate in a variety of ways. Text messages give useful reminders; notes to individual parents may be sent via the reading diary; letters are sent home in book bags or posted on the website. At the beginning of every day, the Head or Deputy greet all parents and children as they arrive at school, whilst a second member of staff assists with playground duty at the front of the school; all the teaching staff make themselves available to parents as they dismiss the children at the end of the day. A "Welcome Evening" for each class is held every September to introduce new initiatives for the year ahead; parents' evenings are held twice a year and there is an annual written report for each child at the end of the Summer term.
- **Listening and Responding** - We enjoy receiving feedback regarding our work in school. We share and celebrate positive comments and we consider seriously any suggestions for improvement. From time to time, we seek parents' views through more formal consultations and towards the end of the academic year, an annual questionnaire is sent to parents and, once the results have been collated, the school attempts to respond to any issues raised. Responses on the questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive.
- **The Staff Team** – We have nearly 40 adults on The Priory's payroll. Opinions are sought on a regular basis and there are several occasions when the whole staff meets for meeting, trainings or social events. Staff are mutually supportive, sharing skills, expertise and advice.

- The Governing Body – The Governors are committed to supporting the school. Some of them work at the school, whilst others volunteer their services on school trips or helping out in the classroom.
- Parent Teacher Association – The PTA plays a key role in the life of the school. It has a social function for adults whilst at the same time raising much valued funds for the children.
- Community Involvement – We are part of the Tadley cluster of schools and we enjoy taking part in a number of inter schools’ sporting events through the year. Representatives from the local churches lead assemblies and representatives from the school attend parish council meetings. The school choir sings at local nursing homes and at a local branch of Tesco when we support their Christmas charity collection.
- Teacher Training and Work Experience – We have had a long established tradition of working in partnership with the University of Winchester. Occasionally, teaching students come from further afield and we have, in the past, benefitted from a visiting German student. We also work with local secondary schools, offering work experience to children and young people.
- Transition from Nursery Schools and Transition to Secondary Schools – We liaise with pre-schools, talking to providers and often observing the children in the nursery setting. Many children at the top end of the school attend taster days at potential secondary school destinations and once places have been allocated, they spend more time at the school and often receive a visit from their new Year Seven Head.

Experiencing the School at Work and Play

We believe that parents and grandparents should be involved at every step of their child’s education. Although the school buildings do not allow us to invite large numbers of visitors at the same time, we are creative in offering a wide range of opportunities for parents to join us for both every day and special occasions.

- Sharing Skills in the Classroom - hearing readers, helping with craft activities, speaking about a life experience or career
- Year R Stay and Play sessions (3 times a year)
- The Morning Fruit Rota – helping to wash, prepare and distribute fruit or vegetables for the infant classes

- Farmers' Market Produce and Cake Sales – providing produce and buying items at a market once a term, to boost school funds
- Bring a Guest Lunch – once a term a child from every class is chosen, for their good manners and behaviour, by the lunch time staff to invite a relative to join us for a roast lunch
- School Trips – parent helpers are often invited to join us on outings
- Children's Assemblies – parents are invited to join us for class assemblies
- Street Parties - we never miss an excuse to have a celebration!
- Nativities, Musical Productions, Plays and Talent Shows – we invite grandparents and younger siblings to dress rehearsals and parents to the actual performance
- Sports' Events - there are numerous matches at home and away and parents' support is always welcome. At the annual sports' day, there is a big family picnic as well as organised athletics
- Whole Class Tea Parties – our way of saying “thank you” to parents for their support throughout the year is to invite them to a short demonstration of children's work and activities and to serve light refreshments

Ethos

We are proud of all our children and encourage them to achieve their best academically in a safe and caring environment and we are proud that when we were inspected by Ofsted in 2010, we were judged outstanding in the category of safeguarding.

All children learn to have respect for themselves, other people and the world around them. We foster a positive attitude to life and work and we value politeness and good manners. Our aim is that all children will leave the school as happy, confident, articulate and numerate individuals who are well equipped for life in the 21st century.

An important feature of the school is that although we respect the three different Key Stages – Foundation Stage (Reception class), Key Stage One (Years 1 and 2) and Key Stage Two (Years 3 to 6), we also believe it is important for the school to be together as a whole. We always have many assemblies together, the vast majority of children eat together, they play together at lunchtime and we include as many classes as possible in enrichment activities.

Every Christmas, we either take the whole school to a theatre production or enjoy a performance “in house” and the entire school enjoys the annual visit from a string quartet. Such activities might not usually be considered appropriate for all year groups but we are always pleasantly surprised at how much pleasure and educational benefit even our youngest children derive from such experiences. Such experiences also develop their level of concentration and self-control as they require the children to remain focussed for considerable amounts of time.

We believe that all the children should take pride in their school. Although not compulsory, all children wear a traditional uniform with a tie and many items bear our school crest of the Priory church. We encourage the children to remain smart throughout the school day, giving gentle reminders that shirts should be tucked in and ties and top buttons fastened up. Our distinctive blazer and tie makes the children instantly recognisable both in the school grounds, when visiting other schools and when out with staff or parents in the local community. The blazer is worn by the majority of children and it acts as a constant symbolic reminder of the values of the school. The “Uniform Bear” (made from old school uniform) is awarded to the class that has been judged the tidiest, throughout the week!

Having fun is a big part of being at The Priory for staff as well as children. Parties, discos, sleepovers and dressing up days are regular features of school life and we encourage everyone to get involved, whatever their age!

Systems that Underpin Our School

- The House System - On entry to school, the children join one of three houses, Kestrel, Hawk or Falcon. Each house has its own captain and vice captain, annually elected by the children. Each week, the children earn house point tokens for good behaviour, manners, effort and attainment. The children are proud to be a member of Kestrel, Hawk or Falcon and there is friendly rivalry between the houses. Occasionally, the children work in house groups rather than year groups, providing useful opportunities to work not only with their peers but with those older or younger than them. Children from Year 6 are appointed to House and Vice House captainship after a short interview process!

- Sports Captains – Any child in Year 6 is invited to submit a letter to the Head to indicate why he/she would make a good Sports Captain. A selection procedure takes place and 2 captains per house are appointed for the year. They assist the PE coordinator with tasks relating to sport and they ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to access sporting activities at lunchtime.
- Prefects and Buddies -Year 6 children are proud to be prefects for a number of important duties around the school. They have the opportunity to experience prefecting in all areas during the course of the year. Year 5 children are buddies to the children in the Reception class. At the beginning of the new school year, a Year 5 child is paired with a Reception child - not only does this help the older children to be responsible, it also ensures that the younger ones settle quickly into school. Children in Year 1 retain their buddies from the previous year as reading partners.
- Class Monitors - Each class has its own system for carrying out simple everyday tasks such as returning the register to the office; collecting and distributing books etc, enabling all children to be helpful members of the school community.
- The School Council - Two members of each class from Year 2 upwards are elected members of the school council and their photographs are displayed on the Council's notice board. The meetings are chaired by a member of Year 6 and notes are taken by a secretary, also from Year Six. The minutes are posted on the board and are discussed by the staff at their staff meetings. Once a year, the school council meets with the Governing Body.
- Praise and Rewards - As well as individual class rewards and house points, children are presented with certificates in a weekly Stars of Wonder Assembly. Certificates are awarded in the six categories: Effort, Attainment, Progress, the Arts, Sport and Citizenship and names are written in the Gold Book.
- Awards Ceremony – The annual awards ceremony held in May recognises the achievement of children from the Reception Year to Year 6. The record of the weekly Stars of Wonder winners helps the teachers to select the overall winner for each year group in the categories: Effort, Attainment, Progress, the Arts, Sport and Citizenship. Parents are invited and certificates, a medal and a book token are presented by the Chair of Governors.

Curriculum and Standards

We love to teach and the children love to learn. We believe that all our children have individual skills and talents and as an academy, we exercise the freedom to develop a curriculum that is closely matched to their needs. We believe in mixing traditional tried and trusted methods of teaching with more innovative methods but at the heart the heart of the curriculum is an emphasis on basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Children in Reception and Year 1 read on most days on an individual basis with the class teacher or assistant. Children in Year 2 read on an individual basis at least twice or three times a week. Children in the junior classes continue to read to an adult, although this is on a less regular basis and depends on the ability of the child. Children also read in small guided reading groups, as a whole class, as part of tasks or silently, for enjoyment.

Children are taught to express themselves in a variety of written ways, using technology as appropriate. We encourage work to be presented well, with neat handwriting, good grammar and spelling. Children regularly enter competitions with a writing focus and we find this motivates children to produce particularly interesting work.

We encourage children to express themselves freely and clearly. Children are given many structured opportunities including “show and tell”; taking part in class assemblies; performing in school talent shows, musical productions and plays and delivering PowerPoint presentations. They are also very accustomed to speaking to visitors to the school, whether prospective parents or Ofsted inspectors. Children and staff converse openly together in the classroom, on the playing field and over lunch. Confidence in public speaking is a characteristic trait of Priory children.

Children acquire excellent skills in addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and mental calculation. Through practical and written tasks, children develop effective strategies to respond to a range of mathematical challenges.

Not all children progress at the same rate and we have detailed tracking systems to ensure that appropriate levels of progress are maintained. Children with special educational needs or those who are particularly able and talented have learning personalised to their particular needs. As children are used to going in and out of the classroom for different reasons, there is no stigma attached to this group work.

In the 2018 end of Key Stage 2 SATs tests, 88% of Year 6 children achieved the expected standard in Reading, 83% in Writing, 79% in the Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation test and 75% in Mathematics at the age of 11. 75% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined.

A Creative Curriculum

We believe that blocking some subjects together helps to bring teaching and learning alive. It helps the children to learn more about subjects such as Geography, Art and Music and it makes the learning more relevant and the teaching more manageable.

A creative curriculum encourages the children to improve their questioning skills; to plan an enquiry; to investigate; to explore materials and objects by using all the senses and to draw conclusions. It helps children to solve problems; to understand cause and effect; to consider a range of possible solutions; to use a cycle of trial, error and improvement and to review and evaluate. It encourages children to think; “outside the box”; to generate imaginative ideas in response to stimuli; to ask “how, why” and “what if” or unusual questions and to respond to ideas, tasks and problems in surprising ways.

A creative curriculum also encourages children to use their first hand experiences and simple information sources to answer questions; to know where to find information using strategies such as scanning, skimming and using an index to locate information and to record this information in a given or devised format. It helps children to develop reasoning skills; to predict and anticipate events; to use the language of sequence, similarity and difference, cause and effect and to recognise and challenge assumptions. It encourages children to express their own views, opinions and preferences; to justify them; to develop their own criteria and use them to make judgements and to evaluate the quality of an outcome.

We believe that by being creative, we are able to provide a more personalised and exciting curriculum that incorporates key skills that could transfer into lifelong learning skills .We believe that by using our indoor and outdoor resources creatively, we can enhance attitudes to learning that will lay firm foundations for future academic development.

Examples of How We Have Brought the Curriculum to Life

- Newspaper assignments that involved not only writing in different styles but carrying out interviews, surveys and taking photographs as well as creating the format for the newspaper
- Multi-media projects involving sound animation to create advertisements
- Speaking and Listening Competition – children are invited to compete for the Frank Mitchell Trophy by reciting a piece of poetry or prose, usually “off by heart”

- Learning about Grace Darling/making lighthouses, painting seascapes
- Making a CD of a whole class musical composition, following a class visit to the Newbury Rain Forest
- Special themed days e.g. pirate day, Greek temple day, Spy day
- Art Competitions
- Whole Junior Topic on The Titanic, involving mixed year groups and collaborative teaching, whole junior topic on letter writing (including entering the Royal Mail competition), whole infant topic on pirates (including a visit from a parrot and a “real pirate”!)
- Sushi tasting as part of a study on Japan
- Using a visit from a Hearing Dog for the Deaf as a stimulus for writing instructions
- Being invaded by a Viking as part of the Invaders and Settlers topic

Enrichment

We believe that having the opportunity to try new experiences is highly motivating and challenging, as well as hugely enjoyable. We are fortunate that we are able to provide such a wide range of diverse experiences as the costs are met by the PTA.

We aim to encourage creative thinking through problem solving, teamwork and communication. Children develop leadership skills and learn how to cooperate as a group. Children experience feelings of awe and wonder and develop confidence through the acquisition of new skills and the consolidation of old ones. They have a positive attitude towards learning new skills; they enjoy coming to school and this helps with their classroom learning.

We encourage all children to “have a go” – the skills they learn and the experiences they have will provide a great basis for a lifelong love of learning.

How we enrich the curriculum

- Physical Activity –regular specialist sport coaching, workshops in cricket and zumba fitness, circus skills, inter schools’ tournaments
- Music and the Arts – instrumental recitals, workshops in Bollywood Dance and streetdance, whole school art projects such as the National Gallery “Take One Picture” initiative, the “Sitting with Jane” (Austen themed) book bench project and stained glass window and kite making activities, author book readings, drumming workshops, theatre visits, children’s musicals, plays and nativities
- Science and Animals – Science – the Best Bits Show, ZooLab (exotic creatures), Millers Ark (farm animals), Ye Olde Redtail Falconry (Birds of Prey)
- Construction – Lego town building, Architectural Workshops
- Looking After Ourselves – the Life Education Bus (whole school social, emotional and health issues), Fire Service (infants), Think Safe (Year Six Keeping Safe experience), Bikeability training (cycling proficiency for Year 5)
- Whole school trips – the Gordon Brown Centre, Four Kingdoms, the Hillier Gardens, the Sustainability Centre, RHS Wisley, the pantomime
- Individual class visits to Reading Museum, The Henley River and Rowing Museum, Butser Farm, Marwell Zoo, Portchester Castle, Winchester Hands On Science Museum, Beale Park, Facombe Farm Estate, the BBC, Whitchurch Silk Mill, Ufton Court, Osmington Bay PGL Activity Centre, Beckonscot Model Village, the Priory Church, Beaulieu Motor Museum, Newbury Rain Forest and local National Trust properties
- Extra-curricular activities – Spanish, Latin, tag rugby, football, rounders, netball, judo, cricket, multi-skills, colouring, computing, woodwind, guitar, recorders, piano, choir, craft club, dodgeball, Lego

Life Skills and Social Enterprise

We believe that in their time at The Priory, children should develop skills for life. Children should be highly articulate, literate and numerate and should be competent in their use of technology. As well as gaining purely academic skills, we encourage the practical application of these skills for the benefit of the individual or for the class.

Children should be able to work well as an individual or part of a group and they should be able to lead as well as follow. They should have an awareness of their strengths and shortcomings and be able to empathise with the needs of others. It is important that they understand not only the context of the school but also appreciate how they may contribute to society and to the world beyond school. We hope that the children will acquire include decision making; communicating; building self-esteem; developing relationships; dealing with conflict; problem solving; self awareness and assessment; pressure resistance and critical thinking.

We feel that it is important that children should have the “personal, social and emotional qualities essential to their health, well-being and life as a responsible citizen in the 21st Century" (Rose Review 2008).

Our overall aim is a to develop the children’s personal, social and citizenship skills; to empower them so they have control over what they choose to do; to increase their knowledge; to promote their self-esteem and self-confidence; to help them value themselves as worthy citizens contributing positively to their community; to raise awareness of their own feelings, attitudes and abilities and to prevent harm to themselves and others.

Examples of Life Skill Learning in Action

- Cookery - following instructions, weighing and measuring, menu planning, budgeting, producing a balanced two course meal
- Crafts –designing and making using tools from needles to saws and glue guns, sewing and knitting
- Survival - shelter building, making fires
- Teamwork – cooperating as a group on a shared project
- Basic Financial Management – balancing a household budget, saving, profit & loss
- Learning about Possible Careers
- Fund Raising for Charities and the School

- Sportsmanship – to enjoy participation; to feel proud of own achievements and those of others; to win with modesty and lose with good grace
- Public speaking – to speak with clarity; to present a persuasive proposal; to address significant numbers (e.g. in a school assembly) and to enhance a presentation with technology
- Osmington Bay Residential Trip