



Welcome to the Early Years

Information for parents



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INTRODUCTION

At Gagle Brook we are a caring, supportive community. Working in partnership with parents, we provide a welcoming and stimulating environment which values, motivates and challenges all children, promoting their independence and celebrating their personal achievements.

This booklet contains lots of information about our Early Years Unit. If you have any questions or queries regarding anything you read about in here, or would like to come and visit, please contact us at school.

Children are at the centre of everything we do. We celebrate children as individuals who have natural curiosity and thirst for new knowledge through exploration.

Children learn best through practical experiences and structured play, and this is at the heart of our Early Years curriculum for children from three years through to five years. Our highly experienced team plan to deliver activities based around rich texts, exciting themes, alongside engaging in children's interest points and next steps. Our unit is friendly, dynamic, creative and stimulating and focuses whole heartedly on the high-quality provision within the learning landscape both inside and out and the interactions made with children.



At Gagle Brook we embrace the love of reading. This starts very much in Early Years encouraging children to use their imaginations to create their very own stories using familiar characters, objects and fabrics. Our children have great fun learning phonics using our phonics scheme.



In Nursery we enjoy sound hunting, making instruments and playing sound games before moving on to recognising sounds and starting to blend with them in Reception. The process of reading is a delight to be a part of and the most wonderful moment is when a child picks up a book and starts to tell a story, look closely at the pictures and finally read their first words.

Exploring and investigating number is also an important part of the daily curriculum at Gagle Brook. The children have continuous opportunities to engage with practical equipment to enable them to practise a skill then secure and question the new concept. This may be followed by teacher led enhancements to enable deeper thinking.

In the Early Years it is important to celebrate your child's achievements both at home and in school and use these to decide upon their next steps, therefore we are excited to introduce you to our home school learning journal called Tapestry. This is an online tool used to record your child's learning and progress.

At Gagle Brook we can offer you...

- ✓ A caring, experienced Early Years team with consistently high expectations, modelling and building positive relationships
- ✓ A support system, that will always look at the bigger picture as to 'why' something has happened, and will support children to understand the right choices
- ✓ A values-based approach which promotes positivity, respect, honesty, determination but most importantly happiness.
- ✓ A rich, engaging curriculum focused on rich texts, exciting themes, interest points and next steps which also promotes curiosity, wonder, questioning and much more.
- ✓ Early years education for three-year-olds through to five-year-olds
- ✓ Excellent transition through to Key Stage 1
- ✓ Story, rhyme and song times galore
- ✓ Assemblies which model and celebrate values within our unit and wider school
- ✓ Family Learning sessions for parents and children
- ✓ Opportunities to work alongside your child in Maths and Phonics

This booklet has been written to give you an insight into the wonderful world of Early Years at Gagle Brook and we very much look forward to welcoming you and your child to our school.

MORE ABOUT THE EARLY YEARS...

In our secure and caring environment, the children work towards a set of Early Learning Goals, which set high but achievable expectations for the children to reach by the end of the Reception year.

Through a broad and balanced curriculum, your child will be offered a variety of activities and experiences. Activities are organised for small groups as well as opportunities for individual work. The children are encouraged to participate in planning and reviewing their work, managing their own time and equipment.

In nursery we run a 'Key Person System'. Each key person works with a smaller group of children, getting to know them and their families individually. Focusing on a small group of children means that we are better able to plan for their learning needs and build a special relationship with them. Children are allocated to a class teacher in reception, but will also have a Teaching Partner, so your child will build that special relationship with both members of staff.



THE PRINCIPLES OF EARLY YEARS

The Early Years Curriculum is based upon four principles:

- ❖ A Unique Child- Developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals
- ❖ Positive Relationships- Supporting the children and becoming strong and independent
- ❖ Enabling Environments- Where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents and the child.
- ❖ Learning and Developing- An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Planning for the learning landscape (inside and outside), interest points and next steps will reflect on the different ways that children learn. At Gagle Brook, we support children in using the three characteristics of effective learning. These are:

- ❖ Playing and Exploring- Children investigate and experience things and have a go.
- ❖ Active Learning- Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements.
- ❖ Creating and thinking critically- Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PRIME AREA) (Self- Regulation, Managing Self, Building Relationships)

This **prime** area focuses on children learning how to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group beyond the family. It covers important aspects of personal, social, moral and spiritual development, including the development of personal values, self-regulation and an understanding of self and others. In the early years' children will begin to show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly. They will start to work and play cooperatively and take turns with others. During their time with us, children will become more confident to try new activities and they will begin to show independence, resilience, and perseverance when faced with different challenges. When ready, children will start to manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs and will begin to understand the importance of healthy food choices.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills)

This **prime** area focuses on children developing physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. They include negotiating space and obstacles carefully, demonstrating strength and balance, developing coordination when playing and also when using various sized tools, leading to the competent use of scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery. Children start to make marks using different materials on small and large scales and work towards establishing their tripod grip.



COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE (Listening, Attention and Understanding, Speaking)



This **prime** area of the curriculum covers important aspects of language development and provides the foundation for Literacy. The learning intentions focus on children's developing competence in speaking and listening. At Gagle Brook, we use our learning environment to engage and interact with the children, modelling and inspiring the use of vocabulary through play. 'Wellcomm' small group sessions also support children in nursery and reception and enable their confidence to grow, their sentence structure to develop and their use of language to flourish. Other areas of learning also make a vital contribution to the successful development of language, such as creativity, exploration, investigation, small world and role-play.

In small groups, children listen attentively and talk about their experiences. They use a growing vocabulary with increasing fluency to express thought and convey meaning to the listener. They listen and respond to stories, songs, nursery rhymes and poems. They make up their own stories, songs and rhymes through 'Build a Story' sessions, role play and small world.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD (Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities, The Natural World)

This **specific** area focuses on children's developing knowledge and understanding of their own environment and the environment of others. It provides a foundation for historical, scientific and technological learning and exploration. Children are encouraged to talk about the lives of people around them and their roles in society. They will start to explore the past and compare them to now and will have rich opportunities to explore the natural world around them, asking questions and making observations.

MATHEMATICS (Number and Numerical Patterns)

This **specific** area covers important aspects of mathematical understanding and provides the foundation for number. It focuses on having a deeper understanding of number through subitising (recognising quantities without counting), representing with maths equipment, loose parts and mark making and being able to investigate through problem solving.

Children recognise, build and recreate patterns and models. They are familiar with numbers, songs, rhymes, stories and counting games. They compare, sort, recognise and use numbers to ten and are familiar with larger numbers from their everyday lives. Through practical activities children understand and record numbers, beginning to show awareness of number operations, such as addition and subtraction and beginning to use the language involved.



LITERACY

(Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing)

At Gagle Brook we love to mark make inside and outside on a small and large scale with lots of different materials- big sheets of card, notelets, writing paper, rolls of wallpaper, chalks... the list is endless! In their writing they use pictures, symbols, familiar words and letters to communicate meaning, showing an awareness of the different purposes of writing. In nursery children begin to write their names with appropriate use of upper and lower-case letters, with guidance from a 'name model' if necessary. The reception children at Gagle Brook School take part in a daily phonics session. The Nursery children enjoy daily story times, 'Build a Story' sessions, rhyme times, music sessions and Sound Games to support them in hearing sounds in their environment and move onto learning some letter sounds in the summer term.

Reading in the Early Years:



'Share-at-Home Books' – Each week both **nursery and reception** children will take home a high-quality text which we ask you to share and enjoy with your child over the weekend. We also take time in class to discuss which books the children have particularly enjoyed and why, so children can make recommendations to their friends. We ask that these books are then returned a week later so they can be safely stored away from contact ready to go home with a different child the next time to change share at home books. Children may also visit the school Library where they can explore more exciting texts.

Reception- You will receive a reading diary for your child. Please comment in the diary each time you hear your child read. We ask children to read at home 5 times a week. Please can we ask for all reading books and diaries to be in school every day. We will also comment in these books. Reception children will also have 'key word' and sound cards to bring home, and we ask for your support in helping the children to learn these. Once your child knows all of their sounds and can blend 3 and 4 sound words, your child will start to bring home a reading book, which will be worked on at home and in school. More information will follow once your child starts school and is ready for a reading book.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN (Creating with Materials, Being Imaginative and Expressive)

This **specific** area focuses on the development of children's imagination, storytelling and their ability to communicate and to express ideas and feelings in creative ways through their play. Children explore sound, colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three dimensions. They respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel. Through art, music, dance, imaginative play and stories, they show an increasing ability to use their imagination, to listen and observe. They use a widening range of materials, suitable tools, instruments and resources to invent, express ideas and to communicate their thoughts



WORKING WITH PARENTS

Parents are their children's first and most enduring educators. This is why we believe that building a strong school-parent relationship is essential in securing the best education for each child. A happy start to school life is encouraged by meeting with us before your child starts school.

Your child's experiences and achievements are continually recorded through observations and assessment, so that we can ensure each child's needs are met and that each child is supported and valued as an individual. The evidence collected in their Tapestry journal over the period your child spends in the early years then forms the basis of an Early Years Learning journey.

We value your skills and helping hands and so encourage and welcome you to spend time in our Early Years classes.

We aim to keep you fully informed of your child's progress. Parents' Evenings take place twice a year and curriculum overviews or 'topic webs' will be sent out termly. We also run workshops for parents linked to phonics, maths and also language and communication so information and dates about these workshops will be sent home during the term they are running.

'Marvellous Me'

We love to celebrate alongside the children when they have achieved something new or just been simply fabulous. This might be the singing of a song, making their own musical band, the writing of their name for the first time, a swimming award, recognising a number on a walk or even making their bed on their own for the first time! It is important to us that these special moments are fed into your child's profile so please remember to upload your child's 'Marvellous Me' moments to Tapestry. We will always share them with the whole class in school as we are proud of these moments for all children.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Hygiene

Children will frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry them thoroughly. Children will clean their hands on arrival at the setting, throughout the learning day, after eating, and after sneezing or coughing. Children will be encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose and use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it'). We will ensure that help is available for children who have trouble cleaning their hands independently and will encourage the children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition.

Illness

Children suffering from sickness and / or diarrhoea should be kept at home for at least 48 hours after the symptoms have cleared. Absence from school should be reported to the school office.

Accidents

If your child has a minor injury at school, the staff will attend to the injury and record it in the Accident Book. Parents are informed of any head bump (any injury above the shoulder) via a text from the school office or an accident slip with details of any other injuries will be handed to you when you pick your child up at the end of the day.

Fire drills

There are regular fire drills and lock down practices at school. All visitors and volunteers are requested to sign in on the school iPad on arrival and read the information provided by the office team.

Taking photos of your child in school

In Early Years we like to value your child's achievements, therefore we regularly take photos and videos which feed into your child's Tapestry Journal and are often displayed around the classroom. There are also times when we may use your child's photo for the school website, Twitter and Facebook pages.

Photo permission and Tapestry letters are sent before your child starts school with a signed permission slip that will need to be returned to the school office in order to set up a Tapestry account

Clothing

Please make sure that your child has outdoor shoes/wellies and a waterproof coat available in school at all times. We will be using the gardens all year round and, in all weathers, so please ensure that your child has suitable clothing. We have often found that waterproof suits are particularly useful. Please make sure all clothing is named. School uniform is available to purchase from the school office during each morning. You may also wish to purchase a book bag or school rucksack. Please also provide your child with a change of clothing, in a named carrier bag, in case of accidents. If your child is not toilet-trained, then please talk to your child's key person to make arrangements. There is a self-care policy available through the office which offers more information on intimate care.

In Reception we also request all children to have a painting apron in school for them to use when completing messy activities so please send these in and we can then keep them in school or year for your child to use. Please ensure your child knows what their apron looks like and make sure it's clearly named.

£1 Donations

In both Reception and Nursery, we ask for a £1 voluntary donation a week per family. We use these donations to buy resources that are needed to enhance the children's learning. This might be for a special

snack, food tasting items, cooking ingredients and other resources we need during a certain week in provision. Each Monday we ask for the children to come into school with their £1 coin and they can then pop it into the classroom money box. Thank you in advance for these donations.

Toys

We know how much the children adore their own toys and like to share them with us, but we are asking for **all** toys to remain at home. If your child would like to tell us about their favourite toy you could always upload a 'show and tell' video to Tapestry for us to watch. We will always comment and ask questions on the post to make sure the children know they have our full attention!

Welfare

It is important to Gagle Brook Primary School that all children in the school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries and school rules and help them to understand why they exist and how they support us to make good choices. Children should be encouraged to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children (Please see Safeguarding Policy on the school website).

Starting School – Advice for Parents and Carers

The beginning of school can feel scary for you and your child. It can be a difficult time, and we know that you may have worries about your child. You might also be worrying that your child won't be ready for school and be wondering if there is anything you can do to help get ready for transition

Listed here are some really simple things you can do with your child to help them prepare

- Sing nursery songs and rhymes together (if you can't really remember any, this BBC webpage is a really good place to get some ideas <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/nursery-rhymes-a-to-z-index/z4ddgwx>)
- Read to your child and enjoy looking at books together, talking about what you can see in the pictures etc (it only takes a few minutes) and if you don't have many books at home, take a trip to the library, it's free!
- Set regular mealtimes and sleep times and stick to them as best you can. Giving your child a consistent routine will really help.
- Eat together as a family as often as possible, without the TV or electronic distractions, making this a sociable time, taking the time to talk.
- Play simple games that involve turn taking.

Our early years' team are experts in helping you and your child have a great start to life in school. We plan to ensure your child's needs and individual personalities are at the heart of activities and provision.

If you have any questions about these activities or any other issue about starting school, please contact the school office admin@gaglebrook.org.uk

To help your child develop independence, get them used to doing the following at home:

- Getting dressed independently every day – practise closing buttons, putting on socks and shoes on the right feet, putting coat on and zipping up
 - Going to the toilet and wiping their bottom on their own – simple clothing like elasticated waistbands are easier to get on and off
 - Using a song to help your child learn to wash their hands for 20 seconds- Baby Shark or Happy Birthday are great ones to use!
 - Cutting food using a ‘real’ knife and fork and pouring a drink from a plastic jug
- Tidying up their toys and doing simple household chores – giving them responsibilities will help them to become more independent, we use the term “Let’s put thing back where they belong” rather than “tidy up”
- Helping them to recognise their name in writing and to consistently respond to it verbally. You could create a coat and shoe peg at home with their name on it to help get them used to having something similar at school – it seems like a simple thing, but it will help when we ask your child to go and fetch their coat!

You can practise some of the skills your child will develop in early years in your home – this will help your child feel more ready when they start:

- Talk to your child taking turns to talk and listen as much as you can. Many children do not spend enough time talking to their parents, often because we all use screens much more. Having good communication skills is one of the key things that will children feel happy and learn more easily at school
- Talk to your child in your home language. Don’t worry about talking in English if this is not what you do normally- If your child can talk well in your home language, they will pick up English more quickly at school
- Do turn-taking activities such as playing with a toy – this helps them to get used to taking turns and to understand the concept of sharing
 - Get your child used to eating with others even if it is just a snack
 - Get your child to listen by sitting still and looking at you while you give some simple instructions or tell a story
 - Lots of the learning in Early Years happens through play. Get down onto the carpet so you’re at their level and enjoy some play with your child. Follow their lead with what they’re doing or how they’re playing. Then, try to get them to follow your lead and create games together. This will help them to get used to playing and engaging with other children
 - Do some drawing, painting or mark making together- have fun making marks with everything from mud to gravy!

Get children interested in stories, sounds and numbers

- Read to your child everyday- we get most of our new words from what we read. Research shows that reading stories is one of the best things’ parents can do to help children do well at school. A bedtime story helps bedtime routines and gives a great opportunity to snuggle together and feel connected. It’s great to get to know some stories well so don’t worry if your child asks for one book over and over again- this will help them later in school when they start to learn to write

- When reading turn the pages together and look at the pictures. Look on Tapestry for some read by our very own team. Snuggle together and have a listen-
- Recognise sounds and words in the environment around you to help your child hear the initial sound in words – e.g. look at that t-ree, first sound ‘t’
- Segment sounds in words orally while doing your usual daily routine – e.g. get your c-oa-t on, where is your b-a-g
- Play I spy but sound out the word and see if your child can blend it – e.g. I spy with my little eye a d-o-g
- Explore rhyming words and sing songs together- action songs are fun
- Count items out together and talk about numbers you see around you

Routine and consistency help children to adapt and this will help ease the transition into school. About 4 weeks before the start of term, try to set a morning routine with your child. You can start with small steps and gradually add to the routine:

- Get up at the same time every day and have breakfast
 - Get dressed up in the school uniform and put on ‘school’ shoes
 - Prepare a ‘school lunch box’ if your child is going to bring a packed lunch with them – you can choose one together if you don’t have one yet
- Enjoy mealtimes as a family so children are use to eating alongside others and that they can use a fork, knife and spoon independently when eating
- Try to get a bedtime routine- the first few months of school are really exhausting for children and good sleep habits will keep them healthy and benefit their learning in the long term. The NHS website offers good ideas helping your child with sleep <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/>
 - Try to limit screen time for some time each day- especially at night. Screen time can be very exciting and engaging for children but can be addictive and stop children being as curious and creative as they are when screens are not around. Children will do best in school when they are used to interacting with other people and are happy and excited by a range of activities

Help your child get to know the school and staff faces

- Many children like to be able to know what their school and teacher look like before they start. We will be sending out a meet the team hand out to all children to show them who their teachers will be before they start with us.
- We will offer you the opportunity to join Tapestry and ask you to complete an ‘All About Me’ form to help us get to know more about your child. You can then also start to upload your child’s learning through play at home. Our staff love to comment and share in the children’s achievements and it’s another great way to get to know each other. Once your child’s place has been confirmed you will be sent various permission slips so, please do look out for the Tapestry one as once that’s returned with an email address, we can set your child’s account up.
- Look up the route to Gagle Brook and if its walking distance try it out as your daily walk– point to the school and tell your child they’ll be going there soon.
- Show your child that you are excited about school and talk to them positively about starting at Gagle Brook. Children look to parents for reassurance, try not to worry out loud to your child about

starting school and please give us a ring to talk about any concerns you have- you will not be the first parent to have concerns and questions, and our team really like to help! Children will be sent home with a little booklet with photographs of what their new school looks like so this can be used to help children to see what to expect once they start school.

Thank you for taking time to read our booklet. If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to contact the school office and they will direct you to Mr Graham, Our Headteacher, Mrs Holloway, Our Deputy Head, Mrs Whiskerd, our Early Year's Lead or a member of EYFS team.

Please don't keep worries to yourself- we are here to help!

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