

Thongsley Fields

Primary & Nursery School



A parent's guide to

Starting School

Reception



Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School

We are delighted that your child will be joining our school's Reception team in September, and we are looking forward to getting, or in many cases, continuing to get to know them!

Starting school should be a happy and exciting time for both your child and for you. We know that you will have lots of questions to ask us and the purpose of this booklet is to begin to answer at least some of those questions.

We hope that you are looking forward to September and taking part in all that we can offer your family. We will do our very best to make you and your child feel comfortable, secure and valued. Our aim is to provide your child with the very best education possible and we hope that you will work with us, in partnership, to achieve this aim.

Please do not hesitate to talk to us if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

David Jones
Headteacher



Miss Willoughby
Reception & KS1 Lead



Mrs Evans
Class Teacher

Which classroom is my child in?

Our Reception children are based in two classrooms called *Ash* and *Aspen* which enable children to gain maximum focus from our adults in quieter, less crowded spaces. At Thongsley Fields, we are very fortunate to also have a Nursery and together, these classes make up our Early Years and Foundation Stage. We are a team-teaching school, which means that all the pupils will work with a number of teachers and teaching assistants both indoors as well as in the outdoor classroom. This allows teachers to share their curriculum expertise and also encourages pupils to develop confidence and resilience as they learn to work with a range of different children and adults.

Ash & Aspen Classrooms	

Our classrooms are named after common trees found both locally and within the British Isles. Children spend some time during the course of the year learning about the class trees, how to recognise their leaves as well as their importance within our environment.

The Ash tree – tall, graceful and sometimes referred to as the ‘Tree of Life’. They often grow together in groups and create the perfect habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.



The Aspen tree – an ancient symbol of transformation and physical and spiritual nourishment. It is associated with endurance and language and communication. It is also known as the ‘Tree of Heroes’.





What happens before my child starts school?

A visit to Thongsley Fields for every child.

We would like to invite your child to visit our Reception team and spend some time in their classroom area both indoors and outside. The children are divided into small groups, outlined below.

Please bring your child to school on **Wednesday 2nd July** between the following times:

Group A: 10am – 11am

Group B: 1.45pm – 2.45pm

A member of the Reception team will meet you and your child in the Key Stage 1 playground. Whilst your child is enjoying their time in school, we would like to invite you to join us for a cup of tea or coffee in our Community Room. Children can then be collected from the Key Stage 1 playground again at the end of their session – staff will be on hand to direct you!

Group A	Group B

Timeline of key dates:

From 12th June 2025

- Welcome and transition information available on the school's website.
- Uniform orders can be made via the school office.

From 16th June 2025

- Home visits for new children and their parents/carers.

Wednesday 2nd July 2025

- Visit day for all children.

From 8th September

- Staggered start for children in school.

From 15th September

- Children in school full time.

What is a Home Visit?

Members of our Reception team, including your child's teacher(s) will visit each new family's home in order to meet new children in their own surroundings. This gives the school an opportunity to establish positive partnerships with parents, making time to answer any questions and hear any concerns. In addition, your child has the chance to share toys, thoughts and feelings about starting school with their new teacher. Each visit will usually last approximately twenty minutes.

During the Home Visit, staff will ask questions that will help them to get to know your child and family better. For example, information we might ask about would normally include:

- Your child's names and the pronunciation of them and other family members' names;
- The different languages that are spoken and understood by your child and close family members;
- Your child's main interests and special toys as well as anything they do not like doing;
- What your child likes to do and play, both inside and outside;
- How your child usually reacts to new situations and with new people;
- What you and your child are looking forward to in school;
- Anything that we need to know to make the settling in process as easy as possible;
- Any concerns you might have about your child's development;
- Whether your child may need any support in using the toilet, eating independently or putting on and taking off clothes;
- Allergies or medical conditions that we need to be aware of.

Finally, we will also confirm emergency contact details with you to make sure nothing has changed since you completed our data collection forms.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to ask staff any questions too!

When is my Home Visit?

If you haven't already had a home visit from a member of our team, we will visit you and your child at home during the last half of the Summer term, prior to your child starting Reception in September. This is a really important time for us to get to know each other and build the foundations for our partnership.

Staff will allocate a day and time for your visit but if this time is not suitable, please do request an alternative as soon as possible. However, please make every effort to keep to your allocated day and time as it will be difficult to rearrange visits at the last minute.

The dates and times we have allocated are **from Monday 16th June to Friday 11th July 2025**.



When does my child start school?

All our Reception pupils will start on Monday 8th September either for the morning or afternoon sessions only for the first four days. On Friday 12th September, your child will spend the morning plus lunchtime in school, before **starting full time school on Monday 15th September**. This will help ensure a settled and positive start to your child's school life and we thank you for your co-operation.

The following timetable outlines the arrangements for the beginning of the Autumn Term 2025.

Session Times	Monday 8/9/25	Tuesday 9/9/25	Wednesday 10/9/25	Thursday 11/9/25	Friday 12/9/25
8.40am – 11.40pm	Group A	Group A	Group B	Group B	Groups A & B All children to stay for lunch and will finish at 1.30pm.
12.30pm – 3pm	Group B	Group B	Group A	Group A	

Will I have a say in my child becoming full time?

Parents are offered full time education for their child from the week beginning Monday 15th September, providing that both the school and parents feel the child is ready for full time attendance. For a small number of children, it may be beneficial to extend the period of part time attendance. Such a decision is always made in partnership between home and school.

Legally, children must begin school the term after their fifth birthday. We will work closely with parents to ensure that, when full time school begins, everyone is happy.

What do I do on the first day?

On the first day, please arrive at school calmly and happily, ready for school to begin at the time specified for your child's allocated group (see previous page). Bring your child into the Key Stage 1 playground via the back gate, and to the Reception entrance where a member of the team will welcome them at the door. Please say goodbye and leave quickly and calmly!



Parents and carers are warmly invited to stay for a short while for a cup of tea or coffee in our Community Room. If you are worried when you get home, please phone the school office and we will be able to put your mind at rest. Relax and enjoy your time - your child will be enjoying theirs!

What happens at playtimes?

Playtime can be a worrying time for some children. We take great care to give the children confidence in the playground by building up their experiences gradually, initially just using the EYFS outdoor areas. Playtime is a valuable part of children's learning and we monitor it very carefully. Many of our older children also act as play leaders and 'buddies' for our youngest children – they are fantastic at helping to ensure everyone has good experiences and feels at ease.

Will my child be able to have a snack and drink?

In Reception, just like in Nursery, a fruit snack is available when your child needs it, throughout the day. Therefore, your child will not need to bring in any snacks from home. A water bottle containing fresh plain water should be provided and brought into school every day. Children are encouraged to drink plenty throughout the day.





What happens at lunchtime?

Our school is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles for our pupils and our school kitchen supports this by providing freshly cooked, healthy hot meals. Pupils are encouraged to try new foods and are seated in groups to help promote good social habits. The class teacher(s) and teaching assistants eat with the children, alongside some of our older children, to support your child as they settle into the lunchtime routine. A copy of the menu is available each term and is always available on our website.



Meals are booked via ParentPay, our online payment facility. It is a good idea to sit with your child to discuss the menu options so they know what to expect but please do encourage them to try different foods! Rest assured, they won't go hungry!

Some pupils choose to bring a healthy packed lunch instead; **sweets and fizzy drinks are not allowed** and you are reminded that **we aim to be as nut free as humanly possible**.

Will my child be allowed to go to the toilet?

We will offer your child the opportunity to go to the toilet regularly and allow them to go when they feel it necessary. We encourage children to be independent by wiping themselves properly and washing their own hands, etc. but we will support them if needed.

Will my child be safe?

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure; when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. At Thongsley Fields, we take all necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in our care. We promote good health, manage behaviour effectively, ensure the suitability of staff, provide a safe and stimulating environment and maintain a rigorous system of records, policies and procedures to ensure the safety of all pupils. Our Early Years teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to work with very young children and the areas we use are regularly monitored for safety and security.

Please do take the time to read the relevant policies and information leaflets that are available on our website or from the school office.

What will my child do all day?

We believe that pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (which includes Reception) learn best through play-based activities and first-hand experiences that are both enjoyable and challenging. We aim for them to become self-motivated, independent learners through a balance of child initiated (where children decide what they want to do) and adult led experiences.

We provide and are continually developing a high-quality curriculum in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. The curriculum is wide and varied, and builds on your child's existing knowledge, skills and experiences.

Learning through focused play!

If at the end of a day your child tells you that they have “*just played*”, rest assured that your child's day will have been well planned and purposeful!



Our curriculum is based on seven different areas of learning:

1. **Personal, social and emotional development** – this concentrates on children developing a positive respect for themselves and others; building self-confidence, making new friends, interacting with adults and gaining a positive disposition to learn.
2. **Communication and language** – this covers important aspects of language development; communicating, speaking and listening.
3. **Gross and Fine Motor** - this concentrates on developing physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments; including fine motor skills: use of pencil, scissors and other tools. It also includes establishing positive attitudes towards a healthy and active way of life.
4. **Literacy** - this is the foundations for reading and writing. Activities include learning alphabet sounds, developing handwriting skills and a love of books, both fiction and non-fiction.
5. **Mathematics** – this covers important aspects of mathematical understanding; recognising numerals and using them in practical situations and provides the foundations for calculating and shape, space and measures.



6. **Understanding of the world** – this concentrates on developing knowledge and understanding of the environment; other people and cultures; and features of the natural world. It provides the foundation for historical, geographical, scientific and technological learning.
7. **Expressive art and design** – this develops the children’s imagination and their ability to communicate and to express ideas and feelings in creative ways including through music, drama, art and role play.

Will my child take part in Forest School sessions?

We venture down to ‘the forest’ in all seasons and all weather conditions. In our Forest School sessions, we have hands on experiences in the natural environment. We climb trees, use tools, build shelters, hunt for mini beasts and take part in imaginative play amongst the trees. We sometimes have a campfire with our trained Forest School leaders and enjoy rope swings and hammocks.

Please make sure that your child has the appropriate clothes and footwear for all weathers!

How will I know how my child is doing?

Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) takes place through observations of what the pupils can do and what they say. During the first few weeks of school, we will be assessing the knowledge, skills and understanding of your child using a wide range of tasks covering the EYFS curriculum. This provides the teaching staff with a valuable insight into the pre-school experiences of each child and helps to mould the educational programme or provision for each individual. The results of these informal assessments will be shared during Parent Consultations, which will be held at the end of the first half of the Autumn Term and then again in the Spring Term.



At Thongsley Fields, we use Tapestry (an online software package) to help record and track your child’s progress. Parents are encouraged to sign up to enable them to view and contribute in order to build as complete and rounded a picture as possible.

What should my child wear to school?

The children of Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School wear a simple uniform of grey school trousers, shorts, or skirts and white polo shirts with navy sweatshirts. School polo shirts and sweatshirts with our embroidered school logo can be purchased via the school office. During warmer weather, girls may wear blue checked dresses. It is important that the children are dressed for school; we would therefore ask that no jeans, tracksuit bottoms or leggings are worn.

Footwear should consist of a sturdy black shoe with a closed toe and no heels.

Jewellery is NOT APPROPRIATE for school and any long hair MUST be tied back.

PE Uniform

Your child will need to arrive in school wearing their PE kit on their class' allocated PE days. Staff will ensure you know which days this applies to.

Having the correct PE kit is as important as wearing the correct school uniform on all other days. We ask for dark blue shorts and a dark blue round necked T-shirt. Indoor PE is performed in bare feet and trainers are ideal for outdoors. For cooler weather, a dark blue tracksuit is ideal.

PE shorts, T-shirts (with our embroidered school logo) and suitable bags can be purchased from the school office. Plain navy blue equivalents are also widely available from local retailers.



How can I help my child look after their belongings?

You will definitely hear this a lot: please, please, please clearly name all belongings - it is very hard to know which child owns which sweatshirt or which lost black shoe!

PLEASE ENSURE ALL UNIFORM IS CORRECTLY NAMED!

Will my child bring a reading book home?

To support your child's reading development, we provide a wide selection of home reading books that are changed regularly. These are colour coded according to level of difficulty.

We recommend that your child has their own book bag, which they must bring to school every day. These will be provided by the school if your child has not already received one. Book bags are useful not only for carrying reading books but also for any other paper-based information that we may need to send to you or vice versa.

Our home reading system is designed to support the very structured nature of learning to read through the teaching of phonics. Your child will bring home books and sound & word lists matched to their level as well as a home-school diary to support regular communication. These diaries make a positive contribution to our Home-School Partnership and are an important part of our school routine. Please encourage your child to bring their diary and books home each evening and return them each morning.

At Thongsley Fields, we firmly believe in teaching children the basic skills of reading and your child will be given a wide variety of experiences to promote these skills. Learning to read will involve both learning key words and learning the sounds that individual and groups of letters make (phonics), which are essential skills for word building. Through sharing stories and playing games we will encourage your child to develop a love of stories and books.



"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." -Dr Seuss



How can I best help my child?

As a parent you will want to provide the best for your child and support their learning in school.

*“Children are made **readers** on
the laps of their **parents**.”*

The greatest support that you can give to your child is to:

- **build their confidence** and independence;
- **listen to your child** and have **high expectations** that are reasonable and achievable;
- expect your child to **share things**;
- **be interested** in your child and their experiences;
- help your child to learn to **dress independently**, putting jumpers on and doing shoes up;
- make sure your child feels **confident to use the toilet** and wash their hands;
- **read to them...** often;
- **get involved** in the life of the school.

When concerned about your child, even over the smallest issues, talk calmly to one of the Reception team first. In partnership, we can provide experiences so that your child can gain maximum benefit and enjoyment from school. Every child is an individual whose learning is unique and personal. Parents and teachers need to work together to ensure that they provide the opportunity and motivation to promote learning and the acquisition of new skills.

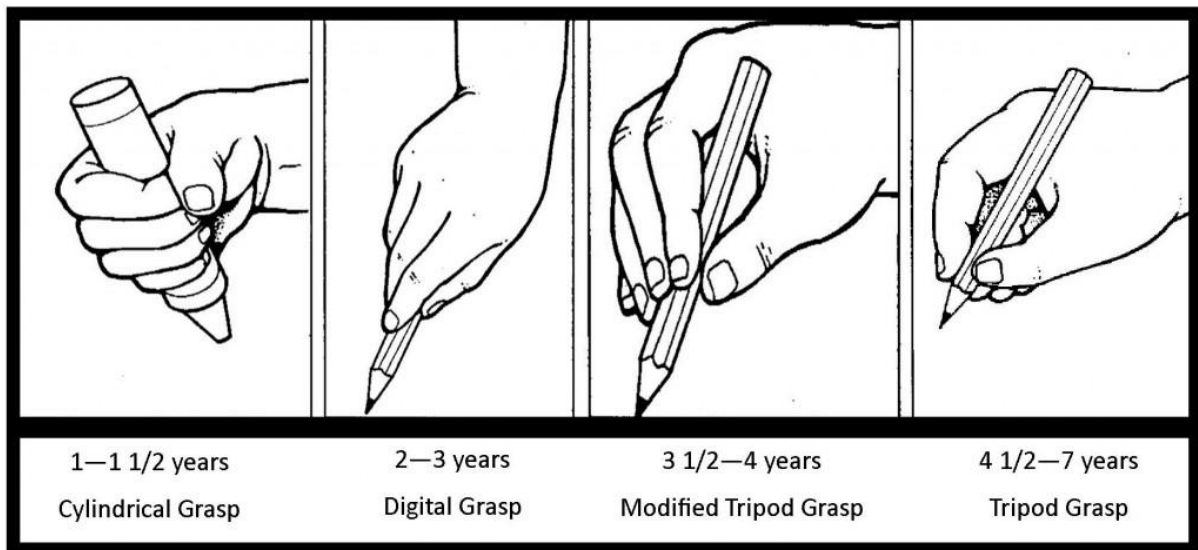
Learning to count

It is extremely helpful if children have had the opportunity to count and recognise numbers, including learning to ‘subitise’ or instantly recognise a small number of objects, before they start school. Simple games and exercises like counting steps as you go up the stairs or reciting countdowns for a rocket blasting off or instantly recognising the number of objects in a group or on a dice for example, are all incredibly valuable experiences.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Can I help my child write their own name?

There is only one way to form letters and that is the correct way! However, even more important than letter formation, learning to hold a pencil, brush or crayon correctly is vital if your child is to master the art of writing.



As your child enters our Reception class, they will be encouraged to develop their pencil grip. Above is an image to show how their pencil grip should change as they develop from *mark-makers* into *early writers*.

There is no requirement for your child to be able to write their name before joining our Reception class. They should however, be **able to recognise their name** when it is written *for* them. If your child does show an interest in writing their name then please feel free to encourage them using the script below – an enlarged copy is included with this booklet. Please teach your child to **use a capital letter at the beginning of their name and lower case for the remainder!** If in doubt, please ask.

a b c d e f g h i
j k l m n o p q r
s t u v w x y z

Can I help in school?

When your child has settled into their classroom, you may consider becoming a Learning Mentor in another classroom in our school. Learning Mentors are helping parents and carers who assist with learning through a range of different activities. We advertise in our regular newsletter, The Grapevine, for volunteers and Learning Mentors and if you are interested and can commit the time, we would be very happy to hear from you.

All adults regularly working or volunteering in school are required to complete a DBS check. Thongsley Fields is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The Friends of Thongsley Fields organise social functions and raise money for the school. Through supporting the events, parents and friends can help add to the life of the school. If you take part in the activities, the school will benefit and therefore your child will benefit!



Term Dates & School Holidays

2025-2026

Autumn Term 2025			
Staff Training	Monday	1 st September	School Closed
Staff Training	Tuesday	2 nd September	School Closed
Back to School	Wednesday	3 rd September	School Open
CAM Trust Conference	Friday	24 th October	School Closed
Half Term	Monday-Friday	27 th Oct – 31 st Oct	School Closed
Back to School	Monday	3 rd November	School Open
Term Ends	Friday	19 th December	Last Day of Term

Spring Term 2026			
Staff Training	Monday	5 th January	School Closed
Back to School	Tuesday	6 th January	School Open
Half Term	Monday-Friday	16 th – 20 th February	School Closed
Back to School	Monday	23 rd February	School Open
Term Ends	Friday	27 th March	Last Day of Term

Summer Term 2026			
Staff Training	Tuesday	13 th April	School Closed
Back to School	Wednesday	14 th April	School Open
May Bank Holiday	Monday	4 th May	School Closed
Back to School	Tuesday	5 th May	School Open
Half Term	Monday-Friday	25 th – 29 th May	School Closed
Back to School	Monday	2 nd June	School Open
Term Ends	Tuesday	17 th July	Last Day of Term

The government implemented new legislation that came into effect from September 2013 which means that schools may only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. A parent or carer does not have any right to leave of absence during term time and if your request is refused the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This could result in legal action being taken or a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

A Penalty Notice involves a fine of £80 per child, per parent/carers (with Parental Responsibility, even living at different addresses) if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 per child, per parent/carers if paid within 28 days.