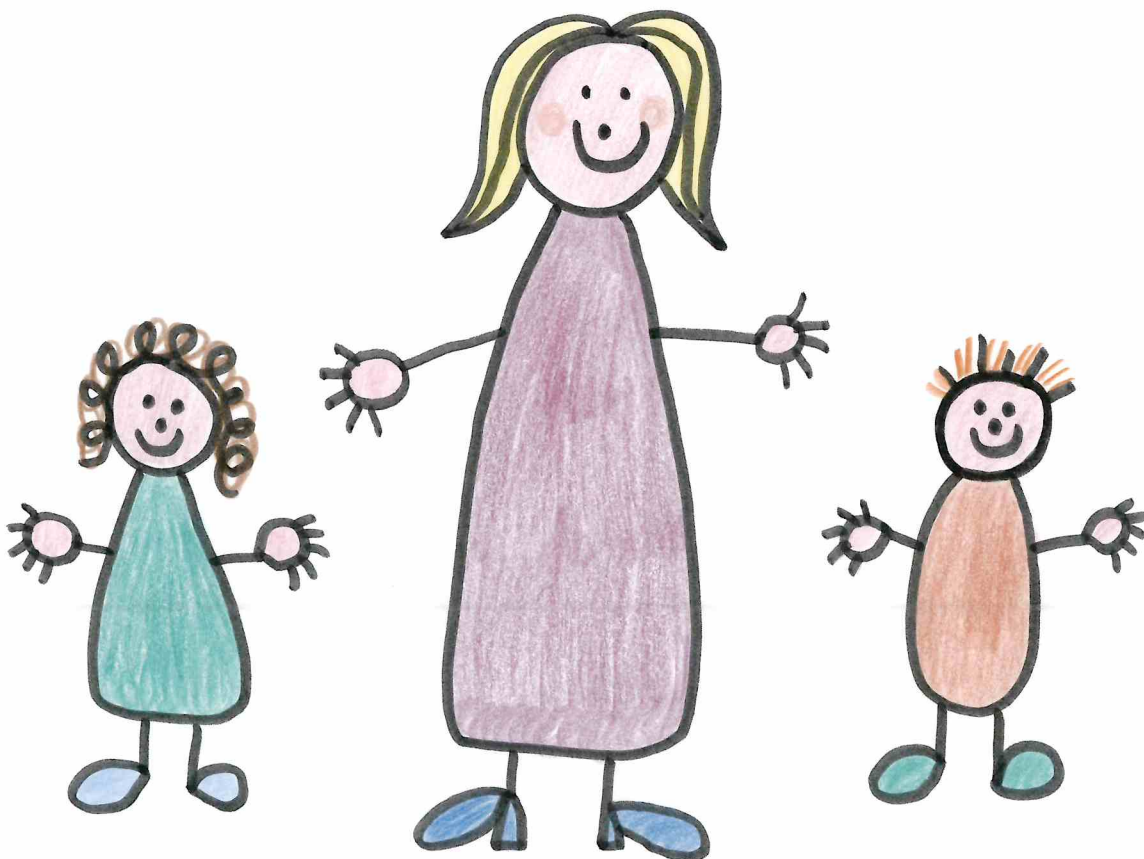




Believe. Achieve. Succeed.

A Guide for Parents

The Foundation Stage



Welcome to Hallbrook Primary School

Starting school is a huge leap of independence and is a big change for the whole family. We aim to do everything we can to make your child feel happy and secure in their new environment, and hope our induction process will leave you feeling reassured and well informed about this important experience.

By the time your child starts school they may already be familiar with many aspects of school life. A great deal of learning will already have taken place, with you at home, at pre-schools and playgroups that they have attended as well as in the community in which you live. We see our role as very much a partnership with parents. From experience we have found that when parents feel positive and relaxed towards this big step in their child's life, then their child also looks forward to the experience.

At Hallbrook School we aim to consolidate and develop children's previous knowledge by providing a curriculum that enables them to extend their skills and understanding through active learning strategies - learning through structured play. It is our aim to give children a secure structure and discipline, upon which a positive attitude to learning and success is based. Children are valued and respected as individuals, and the curriculum is appropriately structured to allow for the different styles of learning and the individual needs of our children.

The Foundation Stage is based over four areas which are appropriately resourced for the age range. The children have access to a classroom area with a carpet space for whole class work as well as tables to work at in groups, reading and writing areas and a role play area. A great deal of learning also takes place in the wet room area where sand and water play takes place, as well as creative activities, cooking and a great deal of exploration and investigation. A self contained outside playground area is also available for the children to use throughout the day to extend and continue their learning (it is essential that children come equipped for all weather conditions, hot, cold and wet, as the weather rarely stops play) and a quiet room for small group work and discussions is also regularly used.

What will my child be doing at school?

If your child has attended a preschool they will already have started a Foundation Stage Curriculum, which next year will cover seven areas of learning:

- Personal Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Your child's level of development will be monitored using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and most children will achieve the expected learning outcomes of the Early Learning Goals by the end of their first year at school, after which they will follow the Primary Framework for KS1.

We have two formal parents' evenings and a drop in evening during the year, but in the Foundation Stage it is essential to keep each other informed through informal chats too. There are so many changes for the children to adapt to, and we would rather talk about difficulties, however minor they appear to be, as soon as they occur- please don't wait until parents evening! Of course when the teacher asks to see you please don't assume that something worrying has happened- we also like to share those milestones of development with you- celebrating what a super star your child is! We also have a home-school link book for regular dialogue between home and school.

You will also be kept informed of your child's progress through targets set for them by the class teacher, and you will receive a written report at the end of the year.

Parents will also have regular opportunities to work with their children in school through parent drop in sessions which take place termly as well as creative whole school activity days.

The teaching and learning styles used in the Foundation Stage are very interactive. Young children need to be physically engaged for effective learning to take place. Children will call this active learning "playing", so if your child tells you that they have played all day, then brilliant! That means that they have enjoyed the learning.

Communication and Language and Literacy



How will my child learn to read?

Many parents are often concerned about their child learning to read. At Hallbrook we develop reading skills in a systematic way, building up strategies towards independent and confident reading.

The children are encouraged to read for pleasure and have stories and poems read to them, some with repeating text, enabling them to join in with the reading. The classroom has a reading corner with many books and there are taped stories and puppets for them to enjoy the experience of story telling language.

Reading strategies are taught to the children through whole class shared reading of big books, small group guided reading and individual reading with an adult. The strategies are built up in a systematic way:

- Books without words are used to encourage the children to look at the pictures. Pictures give excellent cues on the content of the text. Talking about the pictures helps to prepare children for the vocabulary which may appear in the text.
- It is important that the children begin to follow the text from left to right, pointing to each word in turn as you read together. This is important as it develops their understanding of what a word is and that as you say each word you move to a different cluster of letters.
- The children are encouraged to look at the letter sound at the beginning of a word to enable them to identify the word.
- The children are encouraged to try to sound out an unknown word, blending sounds together to make words. Obviously this does not work for every word but it is one strategy.
- The children are taught a wide range of common key words, 'tricky' words that cannot be sounded out and have to be recognised on sight. This is known as sight vocabulary.
- The children are taught to recognise simple spelling patterns so that they can apply their knowledge to new unknown words e.g. they recognise some common word endings like 'ing', 'ed' or 'y' which makes an 'ee' sound at the end of words such as in funny.

It is through applying all of these strategies that children are able to read independently. Some children become fluent very quickly, but most children need a lot of support to develop these skills. Your role in this process is vital to your child's success as you the quality one to one contact that is not always easy to achieve in a busy classroom!

Children need to have a variety of reading experiences and your child will bring home a range of supporting materials, some of which they can attempt to read themselves and some for sharing. They can choose a reading book from the box in the classroom and may change their book as regularly as they wish. Children will sometimes choose a book that they have already read - repetition is a very important step in building confidence in themselves as a reader.

Using the Home School Link Book and Reading Diary

Communication with parents is a top priority for our school and we have a Home School Link Book to assist with regular dialogue between parents and teachers. Each day your child's book will be checked for any comments or questions from parents and where ever possible these will be replied to on the same day. Information from teachers will also be included in the home school link books about work that will be going on in school that week, possible activities to try with your children at home that will support the work that is taking place in school as well as reminding parents about important dates, etc.

Additionally, your child will also have a reading diary. Here comments will be made by adults that have read with your child in school and we would ask for you to also share with us the reading that you and your child are doing at home. It is helpful for us if you can date the times that you have read and please feel free to comment about your child's reading too. We find that little and often is the best way to practise reading skills - just a few minutes a day will have an impact on your child's progress and confidence. Please continue to read a range of story and information books to your child and not just the ones that we send home. One of the most important things is for your child to feel successful so praise your child for the skills they are applying and try not to be critical - sometimes children take along time practising and developing their skills before they make significant progress.

Suggestions for useful comments about reading in your child's reading diary

- I read to her / him
- We read each page together
- We talked about the pictures / story
- He / she retold the story in his / her own words
- He / she followed the text from left to right
- He / she picked out words they knew
- He / she pointed to each word accurately as we read
- He / she named the characters and talked about them
- He / she is using the pictures to guess what the words say
- He / she is using the letter sounds at the beginning of words to try to work it out
- He / she recognised a few words on sight.
- He / she sounded out the letters to read the words
- He / she is reading a bit faster now
- He / she knew when a word they had guessed was wrong because it did not make sense
- He / she enjoyed the story

The Teaching of Phonics



The children are taught the sounds that the letters make in a multi-sensory way, which suits the learning styles of young children. We use the Jolly Phonics Scheme, which combines the sound of the letter with an action, a rhyme, a story and the correct formation. Quite quickly the children build up a bank of sounds and some children begin to blend the sounds together to make words e.g. s-a-t sat. Please be patient because some children need a lot of consolidation before they can achieve this.

We also use the Letters and Sounds Scheme. This resource provides ideas for games with sounds, reinforcing and practising new skills in identifying sounds, reading, writing and spelling.

Speaking and Listening Skills

The basis to all literacy development is the ability to listen, mimic and use language. All staff use a lot of modelling strategies, helping children to predict, form opinions and express themselves effectively. Children are encouraged to pronounce sounds correctly and form proper sentences - teaching by example. Young children vary greatly in their ability to use language and it is not uncommon for some to have specific speech and language delay. We have resources and strategies for helping children's language development and good links with speech and language services.

How will my child learn to write?

Writing requires a sophisticated level of manual dexterity. Before fine motor control can develop children need good coordination and gross motor control. Activities that support the early stages of writing will encourage these skills.



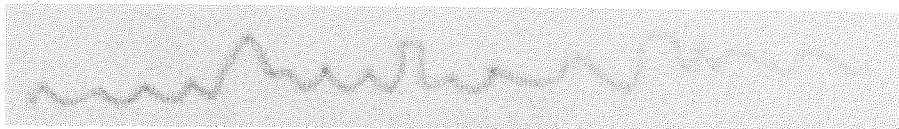
- Building with bricks
- Threading beads
- Play-dough modelling
- Cutting out
- Colouring
- Drawing
- Painting
- Playing with a ball

The teacher will begin to introduce the idea that writing is permanent and when it is read again and again it always says the same e.g. the children will tell an adult in the classroom what their painting is about and will watch the adult write a caption for their work which will later be shared with the class. The children will recognise their name and begin to write their name on pieces of work. Writing will be for a purpose (usually linked to a shared book or in the role play area) and when skills have progressed further the teacher will demonstrate the process that a writer goes through i.e. thinking what to write about, linking sounds and letters to make words, leaving spaces and reading back to check it makes sense etc. The children will be encouraged to make their own attempts at writing and this is called emergent writing.

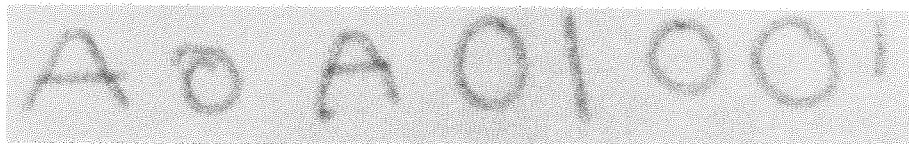
Children develop at different rates and all their work is valued as they progress through the different stages and different levels of support are given at the appropriate times.

Stages of Writing Development

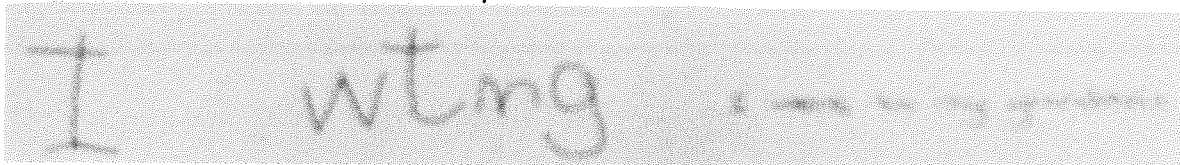
- Initially children do not really demonstrate an understanding of the difference between writing and pictures.
- Children begin to make marks that resemble the flow of writing. They can tell you that it is writing but often not what it says.



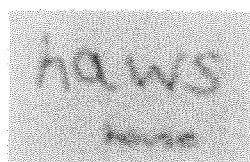
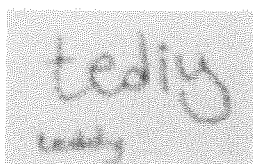
- Children begin to make letter shapes but may not attribute meaning to the marks.



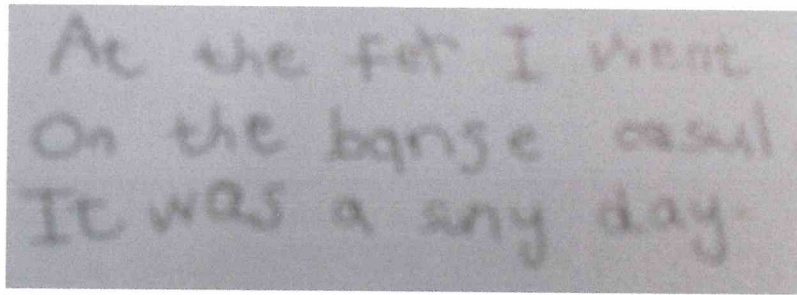
- Children make letter shapes and are quite clear about what their 'writing' says. When the 'read' it back it still has the same meaning as when they wrote it (although they may not use exactly the same words) - they understand the permanence of the caption.
- Children select some correct letters to represent sounds and are clear about what they want to write.
- Children use initial sounds to represent words.



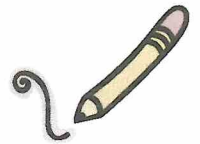
- Children begin to include other sounds that they can hear in the words and make phonetically plausible attempts to spell words.



- Children are encouraged to spell simple key words correctly, to leave spaces between words and to begin to use capital letters and full stops.
- Children are encouraged to organise their ideas and to extend their work by writing more than one sentence.



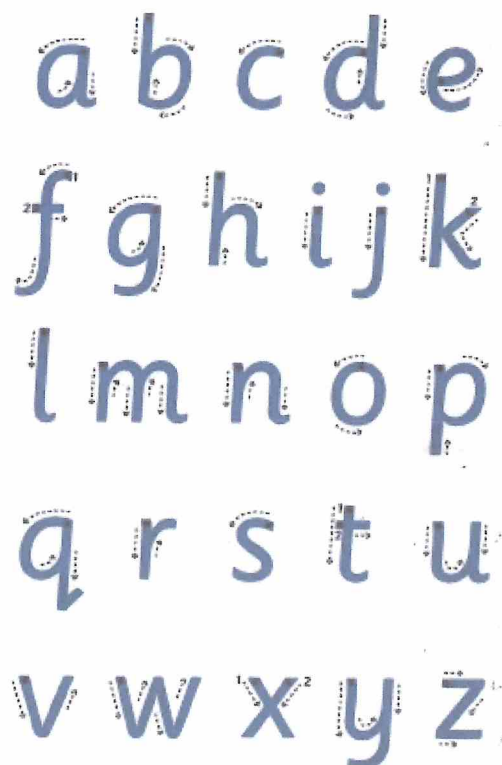
Handwriting Practice



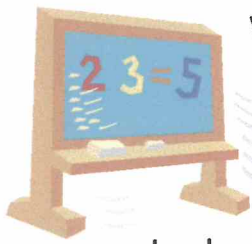
Forming letters correctly is an important part of the writing process but it is taught separately so that it does not interfere with the creative process. Children need to have well developed gross motor skills before they can form letter so to begin with the letter shapes are practised in the air, with paint, in the sand, etc. Children are encouraged to trace pictures, draw and colour and use tools with increasing control before refining their movements to a smaller size!

Handwriting will be practised by looking at the way the letter shapes are formed with flicks added to aid joined writing at a later stage. Apart from the letter at the start of their name children will come across lower case letters and will be encouraged not to write in capital letters.

This is how our letters will be formed in school in the foundation stage year.



Mathematics



We cover many different strands of mathematics in the first year at school - shape space and measures, including time, length and money, numbers as labels and calculating.

There is a lot of vocabulary involved in counting and much of this needs to be learnt from the start to enable children to compare and order numbers. This includes number names, comparative numbers, i.e. what comes before 5? What comes after 2? More than, less than, greater, smaller, higher, lower, the same as, in-between, add, take away, etc.

Young children recite numbers as a rhyme with little understanding of their meaning. They then begin to associate one number word with one object e.g. they count the stairs as they go up, saying each number in turn, but they may not be able to apply this knowledge accurately to a new situation such as counting 5 crisps out onto their plate. Children need a lot of practice in order to count objects reliably within a wide range of meaningful practical activities (are there enough plates, spoons and chairs for the three bears?)

The children will be taught the skills of counting in interactive whole class and small group activities, and will be encouraged to apply their skills through tasks, games and problem solving. They need to learn in a sensory way, touching and moving objects so little of their work will be presented in books initially. When the child is ready they will begin to be encouraged to write numbers and to record their findings with jottings and marks.

Understanding the World

Understanding of the World includes areas of learning which focus on:

People, Place, Technology and the Environment

The subjects are taught through topic work. The children are encouraged to use skills of observation and investigation to question and talk about why things happen and how things work. We try and use children's real life experiences as much as possible and use outdoor equipment as a resource, to motivate and enhance the quality of their learning experiences.

We have a computer and interactive white board in each classroom and regular use of the ICT suite where their individual skills are developed.



Personal, Social and Emotional and Development



Children need to feel secure and happy in the environment before effective teaching and learning takes place. Some children find it daunting and challenging coping with large numbers of children and need find strategies that help them to deal with social encounters. We aim to help children become more independent and less anxious by offering support and reassurance.

Most of the first term is spent gradually introducing aspects of school life. Much of this is done during circle time when we reflect upon the events of the day. The children are encouraged to participate and exchange views and ideas in discussion times. The children learn to be concerned about other children's feelings and become more aware of the way their own actions affect others.

The children learn about taking responsibility and have various jobs to do each day, including putting their name cards on the self-registration boards when entering the classroom, handing out milk and fruit at break time, taking the register to the office, and other jobs that benefit the class as a whole.

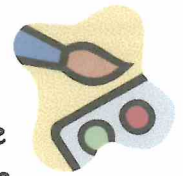
Physical Development



Children's physical development is encouraged and enhanced through many aspects of the curriculum. They will enjoy Dance and Movement, Gymnastics and Games in P.E. In the playground skills are developed and extended with circle games, playing with bats and balls, skipping ropes, footballs and using a range of bikes and scooters. Mathematics and language skills are often taught using physical activity e.g. count how many strides you can take across the playground and how many beanbags you can throw into a hoop.

As well as developing gross motor skills, fine motor skills also need to be developed across the curriculum areas. Handling small tools and materials in role play and other structured activities, cutting and sticking, play dough, painting etc. all help in the control necessary for children to begin to use tools and writing equipment easily.

Expressive Arts and Design



This includes art, design and modelling, music, role play and dance. Children are given the opportunities to express themselves in a variety of ways and using a range of mediums and techniques.

Creativity is an important outlet for the development of language and feelings, expressing views and opinions and is highly motivational for children. Creative activities are also important for the development of gross motor skills as well as fine motor skills through the manipulation of materials.

Children's work is highly valued and their pictures and models are often on display in the classroom and throughout the school.

What can you do as parents to help your child get ready for school?

Make sure you child can undress and dress themselves, go to the toilet and wash their hands independently.

- Play with them and encourage them to share and take turns with toys and games (with other children if possible).
- Read and share picture books with children and talk about the story and illustrations,
- Help your child to recognise their name and surname.
- Recite nursery and counting rhymes together.
- Count objects in practical everyday situations, i.e. the stairs to bed, the plates for dinner etc.
- Talk to your child about everyday events and encourage them to discuss what they can see and describe the world around them.
- Develop their coordination skills ready for writing by giving them opportunities for cutting out, tracing pictures, drawing and careful colouring.