

**Welcome to Rising Stars**



Dear Parents

As your child will soon be attending some of our ‘Rising Stars’ sessions we would like to give you a bit more information about how they differ from other sessions and how learning will be extended over the course of the year, to gradually help prepare the children for their next move, onto Infant school. Over the next year our Rising Stars sessions are on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons.

As with all other sessions, the majority of the Rising Stars sessions will still be ‘free play’, but we do include short group time activities throughout the session, to allow us to spend more time engaging the children in activities such as phonics and number work, ready for school.

**Activities at Rising Stars**

The following is information about the kind of activities that we cover at Rising Stars.

**Children staying all day**

If your child is staying for a full day, the time between 12.00 and 12.30 is similar to ‘playtime’ at school. Whenever possible we take the children outside where they can play on ride on toys and bikes/ climb/ spend time chatting with friends etc. Just before the end of this time we ask the children to line up before taking them to sit on the mat indoors.

**Good afternoon time**

Once the children arriving for the afternoon have joined us we have a short circle time where we do some of the following - talking about our day, the weather, days of the week and counting the children together. We sing our Good Afternoon song and say our lunch time prayer. We call the register, encouraging the children to respond with to their name. This is to prepare them for expectations at school.

**Lunch**

At a Rising Stars session the children bring a packed lunch with them. After washing their hands, the children find their name at the table and sit with their key person (or buddy) and a small group of other children. Children are encouraged to eat their savouries first. We ask that packed lunches promote healthy eating and do not include sweets. No items containing nuts must be sent in, due to possible allergies. Please also include a drink (not fizzy). Although staff will be on hand to help, it would be a good idea to let them practice opening and closing their lunch box at home, to help them feel more independent. We know that some schools do not allow the ‘tube’ type yogurts; instead children take a tub yogurt and a spoon. Packaging should be as easy as possible; children struggle with sandwiches wrapped in cling film for instance, but find foil or a box easier to manage. Please ensure that lunch boxes are named clearly on the outside of the box as we often have several Peppa Pig or other popular character boxes!

**Our lunch time prayer is:**

Thank you for the world so sweet.

Thank you for the food we eat.

Thank you for the birds that sing.

Thank you, God, for everything.

 Amen

**Literacy**

Our aim is for the children to develop a life-long love of reading. Phonological Awareness is the ability to listen and recognise different sounds and patterns in language.

There is evidence to suggest that a child’s skill in phonological awareness when starting school determines how well he or she will learn to read.

At Rising Stars we use lots of phonics activities and books. Later in the year we look in more depth at letter sounds and ask the children to bring an item starting with a particular letter. We focus on the letters S,A,T,I,P,N as advised by school. We use the Jolly Phonics books <https://www.jollylearning.co.uk/>

We focus on rhyme and alliteration making up lots of fun nonsense words as well as encouraging children to guess the rhyming words in a story or poem.

**Fine motor skills and handwriting:**

Before children are ready to manage pencil control they need to build up the muscles in their hand and wrist and develop their fine motor skills. This is why; at Pre School you will often find items like tweezers and water spray bottles included with other resources, as they help children practice using the pincer movement.

When your child is ready to start holding a pencil it can be useful to start with a short pencil and rubber supports can be purchased from most stationers if extra support is required to help them hold it correctly. When your child reaches the stage that they are ready to start forming letter shapes it is important to encourage them to always start at the top of each letter and to use lower case letters.

Children are shown how to hold their pencil with their 'ok' fingers. Alternatively, the pinch action of the index finger and thumb, with the middle, ring and little fingers tucked into the palm mimics the action of a bird's pecking beak.

**Story time:**

We encourage audience participation at story time in Rising Stars! Children are invited to take turns to stand at the front and act out the story using props, or to hold puppets or join in with repetitive refrains and using different voices for different characters. This is a fun way of building their self confidence in speaking in front of a group, but children are not made to do anything they feel uncomfortable with.

**Library**

After Christmas your child will be given a library bag (which must be returned to Pre-School when they leave). You will be told which day is your child’s ‘library day’ and asked to send the bag in on that day. We set up our own lending library and your child can choose a book to bring home for the week and read with you. The book is returned the following week in the bag, so the child can choose a new book. Each book is numbered, so we know which book the child has borrowed and we encourage the children to look at the numbers when they select their book and tell us if they know what they are. The child is also asked to ‘write’ their name in our library book and use a stamper to mark the date. It does not matter if the child cannot write their name, they will be supported appropriately by their key person at whatever level is suitable for them.

**Number work:**

The EYFS states that by the end of reception year, ‘children should be able to count confidently and develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers’. Obviously, this is covered in many ways during their time at Pre-School and some children will be able to count beyond ten and recognise numbers in double digits, but this is not a necessity at this stage. When counting it is advisable to ask your child to point to each item in turn as they count, to ensure they are counting the objects and not just reciting the numbers! We use many mathematical games at Pre-School to make learning fun. One of the children’s favourites is bingo, where we use numbers or letters to encourage matching and recognition.

**Other activities that happen during the year**

**News time:**

We encourage children to participate in ‘news time’ at the start of each new term. Children will sit with their key person or buddy, in a small group and take it in turns to share some news with the rest of the group. Children can bring items to show, to support their news, but we encourage parents to only send in items their child can talk about. The children are encouraged to take turns and listen carefully to others.

**P.E.**

P.E. sessions are gradually introduced over the year. To start with they do not get changed for PE but later in the year you will be asked to send in a P.E. kit in a bag on certain days. P.E. not only encourages physical development and social skills, but is also used to help the children learn to dress and undress independently, as they will be expected to do at school. Often more time is spent on getting ready than the activity itself!

In the summer we have an annual Rising Stars Sports Day which is held on the church green, parents, families and carers are encouraged to come along and watch.

**Visits and Visitors**

Rising Stars have a Harvest Festival at the church and a leavers service at the church in July. They enjoy short walks in the area to look at seasonal changes in Spring and Autumn. We visit the book exchange at the Community Centre and are invited to watch Christmas plays at Ditton Infant School.

During the year the lollipop lady, the Rector, the Community Warden and others come to meet with the Rising Stars. In the Summer Term we invite the relevant reception teachers so that the children can meet them in a familiar setting.

**Preparing for Infant School**

We work closely with Ditton Infant School in particular, as they are our main feeder school, but do meet with other schools as well, to agree the best way to prepare children for school.

Most schools tell us that social skills are the most important thing for us to work on. If a child can sit still, take turns to speak and listen, follow instructions, have the confidence to give their opinion and speak in front of a group; then they are likely to settle more quickly and flourish in a classroom environment.

Ideally children need to be day time toilet trained before they go to school and able to manage their own hygiene, as well as being able to dress and undress independently or with minimal help.

Some schools have higher expectations than others and these are questions you may want to ask when you are selecting the right school for your child. At Ditton Church Pre-School we work hard to prepare all children for school, but it is important to remember that all children develop at different rates and that at Pre- School we can only cover the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and not beyond. Please also bear in mind the difference in age of children when they start school. Infant schools only have one intake now, so there can be almost a year’s difference in age within a class. This is something the Reception class teachers will be aware of, so don’t worry!

You will be given your child’s Learning Journey Folder when they leave. We will ask your permission to share your child’s final progress report with their new school.

**Applying for your child’s school place**

Please be aware that this is totally the responsibility of the parents, not the Pre School! We would advise that you visit your local schools and ask questions and make your own judgments before completing the application form. Application forms are usually completed online, between the months of November and January. You can find more information here <https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-places/primary-school-places> You will be asked to list three or four schools, in order of preference and will be notified sometime in the spring which school your child has been offered. Places are allocated by the local education authority, not by the schools. We will remind you when it is time to apply and ask that you let your child’s key person know at which school your child has been accepted.

All Reception teachers are invited to visit the children in Pre School before they leave us. This gives the children the opportunity to meet their new teacher, whilst they are in a familiar environment, with their key person there for support. It also gives the key person the opportunity to share any relevant information with the teacher, which will make the transition as smooth as possible for the child.

As most of our children tend to go to Ditton Infant school; they do invite us to take the children for a visit during the summer term. You will be invited to take your child for other visits, but it is important to remember that these arrangements are made between the school and the parents and Pre-School staff are unable to take or collect from these visits. If your child is going to a school other than Ditton Infants, the school should contact you directly to arrange a visit.

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We very much hope that your children will enjoy the coming year at Pre-School and we will support each individual child in preparing for the next year ahead. Please remember that if you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to come in and speak with us at any time or email on info@dittonchurchpreschool.org

We will keep you informed of upcoming events over the year and each term we will email a diary of particular activities that will take place during Rising Stars. Please make sure, as the year progresses that your child always comes with anything they need, such as named PE kits, library bag and book and items for news time. I hope the above information has been useful to you, but do not hesitate to ask if you have any further questions.

Wendy Caldicott

Pre-School Supervisor