**Parent Handbook**

Revised September 2022



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# Message from the Headmistress

Set out below is a narrative form of our school and nursery policies that we feel will be of value to our families and help to support the smooth running of the school. Should you require a particular policy please visit our website www.orchardschool.org.uk or request a copy from the school office.

Thirty years ago, I opened Orchard Nursery in the rural location of Barton le Clay in Bedfordshire providing early years education for children aged between two to five-years. The difference being that the nursery had an extended day, primarily for working mothers, i.e., open from 8 am until 17.45, though for the core of the day implementing a curriculum developed by the National Children’s Bureau. At that time, Orchard produced early learning goals formulated for our age group and took best practice from Highscope, Steiner, some Montessori and Te Whariki to provide a holistic approach and test our theory that an excellent nursery education lays the foundation for academic success and a lifelong love of learning.

The aim of the school is to engender a passion for learning and ‘to be the best that I can be’. Orchard provides the best in education, priding itself in teaching children how to learn, how to think for themselves and to have enquiring minds. Our task as educators is to find and nurture individual potential and confidence in each child. We seek to ignite a passion for learning in every child that, with careful and expert nurturing, can never be extinguished.

Our pupils develop into well motivated, balanced individuals who are considerate, well mannered, who know the value of hard work and who go on to excel at their next school.

The school has historically been effective in building partnerships with parents on an individual basis. Together we encourage mutual respect and are mindful of our shared responsibilities. Orchard has a very strong and supportive parent base and there is a well-established Friends of Orchard group who organise social gatherings as well as fund raising events which enhance the ‘family feel’ of which we are so proud.

# **Schools aims and objectives**.

* To develop passion for learning: ‘to be the best that I can be’.
* To use praise and encouragement as a motivating factor in our school life
* To establish a vibrant and stimulating environment that is safe and engaging.
* To encourage the moral, social and personal development of all pupils that build confidence and self-esteem.
* Working in partnership with parents to create a community in which there is pride and a strong sense of belonging.

# How the School is run

In owning the school, it is our responsibility, to ensure compliance with the regulations for independent schools and as part of this process we write individual school policies and processes to fulfil this duty. The main policies are published on the school website and are also available in the school reception area. We do not have charitable status and rely on fees to generate income. We are members of several independent schools’ associations who offer professional support, advice, interschool activities and professional development for our staff.

Over the years we have developed a group of professional advisors, who we can call upon when seeking particular expertise and advice i.e., accountants, lawyers, educational consultants. We also have access to technical advice in such areas as Health and Safety and Fire Safety.

# School staff

Orchard School is proud of its amazing staff. They are passionate and committed professionals who enjoy rising to the challenges of an ever-developing school.

Our team is diverse and varied. It ranges from early years teachers and practitioners, primary teachers, a range of assistants plus lunch-time assistants and specialist teachers, to our wonderful catering staff and our friendly, efficient domestic team. They are all experienced with a range of qualifications from Master and bachelor’s degrees to EYTS, NNEB and NVQ III. All our staff working with food are trained in Food Hygiene whether they are cooks, catering assistants or staff working mainly with children.

All our team have to undergo rigorous identity checks such as Barred List/List99 check (the national list of people barred from working with children) and through an enhanced DBS (the national Disclosure and Barring Service) check, which is online and re-checked regularly. We take up at least two references on every member of staff following our extensive recruitment procedure.

Orchard School prides itself on its high ratio of staff working directly with children. The level exceeds levels set by Ofsted, so our children get lots of individual attention.

We also invest heavily in our staff team both in terms of Continuing Professional Development and sponsoring staff through longer-term qualifications. This ensures that Orchard School is a great place to work and that our skills and knowledge are updated constantly.

The organisational list shown on the website records the structure within the teaching and support employees.

We currently have 11 support employees and 23 teaching employees.

# School routine

## School day

The school day starts from 8.40 a.m. for Preps 3 & 4 and 8.50 a.m. for Prep’s 1 & 2 and 9a.m for Prep R, Russets and Nursery.

Breakfast Club is available from 8 a.m. until 8.50 a.m.

Afterschool club runs from 3.30 p.m. for nursery and Prep R, 1 & 2 and 3.40 p.m. for Prep 3 & 4.

Homework Club for Prep 3 (Monday and Wednesday) & Prep 4 (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) is between 3.40 p.m. and 4.30 p.m.

After School Club is from 3.30 p.m. with collection by 5.45p.m and 3.30 p.m. on Friday, (3.40 p.m. for Prep’s 3 &4).

A number of extracurricular clubs are offered both before school, lunchtime and after school. See Pupil Asset App for details.

## Drive and Parking Guidelines for School Site

### It is a requirement to:

* Drive slowly at all times, especially when entering the school grounds, a walking pace is the only acceptable speed.
* Keep left and follow the one-way traffic system.
* Prep 3 & 4, Russets & Nursery Park diagonally on left side of the roadway. Please drive ‘in’ and do not reverse ‘in’. When leaving reverse out and continue in front of school buildings and follow roadway as it joins two- way system to exit the school.
* Prep R, 1 & 2 Follow roadway, passing in front of the school and park in area to the left, facing perimeter fence.
* Do not park in central island area. Reserved for staff parking.
* Please follow protocol for escorting handheld children to designated drop off points.
* Give way to cars reversing out of parking bays.
* Drop off and leave without delay to avoid congestion before and after school.
* Not allow children to play within the school grounds, before or after school, when in the care their parents or guardians.
* Adhere to the rules of the drive. Cars entering the grounds have right of way. Parents exiting the grounds must pull into the lay-bys provided and give way to oncoming cars.
* Leave enough space between exiting cars (no tailgating) to move into lay-bys if necessary.
* Consider the environment and maybe think of car-pooling or biking to school. This will also help with congestion at key times.

**Please keep off the grass bordering the drive.**

For the safety of all users your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines is greatly appreciated.

If you are attending a pre-arranged meeting with a member of staff, please do not access the school building. These measures are designed to ensure that the School remains a safe and secure environment for your child, and we are grateful for your support.

# Registration

Pupils must report to their teacher at 8.40 am Prep 3 & 4 and 8.50 am nursery, Prep R, 1 and 2, each day. Please see current drop off and departure protocols. Pupils arriving late for registration (after 9 a.m.) must call school office as soon as they arrive at school.

# Absence and Exeats

If your child is going to be absent from school on account of illness, click on the "Absences"

option in the Pupil Asset app, choose your child and type in the reason for absence in the box and click "submit absence" or phone 01582882054 by 8am every day they will be away.

If your child needs to leave Orchard during the school day to attend, for example, a medical appointment, please send a request to their Class Teacher, via Pupil Asset, at least 24 hours before the scheduled appointment.

Written permission to remove your child from lessons must be received by their Class Teacher before your child will receive authorisation to leave the site.

On returning from their appointment, you must call the School Office as soon as they arrive on site.

Your child will be signed out and signed in again when they are leaving or entering the school premises outside of normal arrival and departure times. This means that, in the event of an emergency evacuation, there is an accurate record of pupils on site available to the Emergency Services.

Requests for absence from school for less than a day should be addressed in writing, giving reason for absence, to your Class Teacher via Pupil Asset App. A request for absence of one day or more should be made in writing to the Headmistress and likewise giving reason. N.B. Permission will not normally be granted for early departure or late return in order to go on holiday. (See Attendance Policy).

# Food

Mealtimes are great social occasions. Our approach to nutrition is to simply provide the very best quality fresh ingredients prepared to an exceptional standard. Menus are designed to be tasty, nutritious, and varied. In order to encourage the development of a savoury taste, children are encouraged to eat their first course before the second course is offered. At Orchard, we relish the opportunity to sit together and talk with friends over food. Teachers head each table of mixed aged children where mealtime etiquette, i.e., table manners, are learnt and observed in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere. Guests to the school thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to lunch with and be entertained by the pupils.

The full Whole School Food Policy is available on the school website.

Food throughout the day

All foodstuffs’ children consume during the day are provided by the school to ensure that ingredients do not compromise the safety of those children with food allergy or medical identified special diets. (Medical confirmation is required for all items which need to be removed to produce a special diet menu.) See Medically Identified Special Diet Application Form.

Seasonal menus following healthy eating recommendations for snacks, lunch and tea are prepared each week. They are displayed online.

# Clothing and appearance

A high standard of dress and personal appearance is expected. Pupils must be correctly dressed, in accordance with the Orchard School clothing regulations, which includes footwear, both travelling to and from school.

In wearing the uniform pupils should look smart and be aware that they represent their school. Orchard School requires pupils to wear school uniform in accordance with the uniform list, which is issued to parents when their child joins the school and is available to view on the website. Second-hand uniform must be of an acceptable quality that maintains the high standard of appearance expected by the school. If a child repeatedly attends school without the correct uniform or ill-fitting, shabby, or unclean clothes, we will inform parents via a uniform slip requesting that they make sure their child leaves home appropriately attired. Please note that nail varnish and jewellery of any kind is not allowed. The full Uniform Policy is available on the school website.

It is the responsibility of the Headmistress to ensure that the school uniform policy is implemented.

# Personal property

Pupils may not bring any technological devices into school. This includes iPods, games consoles and cameras.

Please ensure that all property is clearly marked with the owner’s name. A lost property store is the repository for items found around the school. Please make lost property enquiries through the School Office. Frequent “sweeps” are carried out to remove property, not on a peg or left lying-in school overnight.

Emergency numbers

In the event of your child feeling unwell or having an accident, we may need to contact you as a matter of urgency. Please ensure that we have accurate telephone numbers, both at home and at work, of at least two responsible adults we can contact in an emergency. We also ask that you provide a current email address at which you can be contacted.

# Medical Matters

The school will only administer prescribed medicines that cannot be given outside the school day. The school will not administer any Paracetamol or Ibuprofen products such as Calpol. If your child needs such medicines administered during the school day, then they are probably not well enough to attend school. We do understand however that there may be exceptional circumstances where a child may need antipyretic or pain relief in school time. In these exceptional circumstances, agreement to administer Paracetamol or Ibuprofen products is sought, in advance, from the Headmistress.

See Sick Child Policy on School Website

# The School Year

Term dates are published at least a year in advance and are liable to change or adjustment. Please check regularly. If you wish your child to be absent during term time for a day or longer, approval must be sought in writing from the Headmistress as far in advance as possible. Permission will not normally be granted for late return from, or early departure for, holidays. One reason for this is that if pupils are missing from a class, especially at the end of term, academic momentum is lost. At the beginning of each term, you will be directed to the website giving details of the term's events. Regularly the Headmistress provides news reviewing the achievements of pupils and staff, on regular updates via email. In addition, you will receive, via email, a variety of communications from the school and we ask that you do please give these your attention.

# Safeguarding and Child Protection

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and requires all staff to share this commitment. It is our collective desire to create an open environment where staff and pupils feel able to raise concerns, and where concerns will be listened to with a readiness to involve support services and other agencies as necessary.

The school recognises its moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection, and justice. All staff are aware of their responsibility to act, in accordance with the School’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and KCSIE, on any suspicion, concern or disclosure that may suggest a child is in need of support services or is at risk of significant harm.

In line with current Safeguarding recommendations and in order to protect our children, staff and volunteers it is the policy of Orchard School that staff who are currently employed are not able to baby sit for children away from the setting as a safeguarding precaution.

## Key Personnel

If you have any safeguarding concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil at the school, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or her deputy.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**

Miss L. A. Burton (Deputy Head) 07795441584

safeguarding@orchardschool.org.uk

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL**):

Miss Sophie Pearce (Head EYFS, Prep R Teacher) 07795441584

safeguarding@orchardschool.org.uk

**The Nominated External Advisor for Safeguarding and Prevent Duties**:

Mr Martin Ayres m.ayres7677@btinternet.com

**The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO**):

(Office hours): 0300 300 5026

Outside of office hours by telephone (5.00pm to 9.00pm and weekends) telephone the Emergency Duty Team on 0300 330 8123

lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

*The full Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is available on the School website.*

# Promoting positive behaviour at Orchard School

Children’s behaviour must be managed effectively and, in a manner, appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs. This statement underpins the whole school approach to behaviour management at Orchard School, Nursery, Out of School Care, and Holiday Club.

Young children are egocentric. They find it difficult to see the world from another’s point of view. This is not the same, as being selfish; being selfish means that you can see other points of view yet choose your own. We aim to encourage good interpersonal skills and help children acquire a social empathy. Children need to have set boundaries of behaviour for their own safety and the safety of others. We aim to set boundaries in a way that helps the child develop a sense of the significance of their own behaviour, both within their environment and upon those around them.

Children are not always nice to each other, but people are not always nice to each other. The world is not like that. One of the things in danger of being lost is children spending time with other children out of sight of adults; growing a sense of consequence for their actions without someone leaping in before asking, “Can you sort it out yourself?" To some extent the word bullying is over-used, and Parents and children are labelling as bullying what are actually, minor fallings-out.

Research shows that intervention to reduce aggression and promote positive behaviour is most likely to be effective when children are young. The most productive time to intervene with inappropriate, aggressive and anti-social behaviour is with children between 3 and 8 years of age.

You have a critical role to help young children learn how to deal with difficult or frustrating situations. Help children identify and manage their feelings and show them more appropriate ways to behave. For example, Orchard staff use the phrase 'I'd like you to use your words when you are upset'.

*The full Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy is available on the school website.*

Although it is not credible that our pupils will engage in Cyberbullying it has been included in the School’s Anti Bullying Policy as per DfE Advice for headteachers and school staff ‘All employers, including employers of school staff in all settings, have statutory and common law duties to look after the physical and mental health of their employees. This includes seeking to protect staff from cyberbullying and supporting them if it happens.’

It is important that all members of the school community understand that the use of technology (including social networking, mobile phones, games consoles, other websites, instant messaging apps) to deliberately threaten, upset, harass, intimidate, or embarrass someone else could be considered to be cyberbullying or harassment.

We take all instances of cyberbullying or harassment involving any members of our community very seriously as we want members of the community to feel safe and happy both on and offline. Posting threatening, obscene, or offensive comments online can also potentially be considered as a criminal offence and can therefore have serious consequences.

# A varied curriculum

Orchard School provides a highly academic education with an emphasis on all round development. We have a sound broad based and balanced curriculum delivered by experienced and enthusiastic teachers enhanced further by specialist subject teachers. Our small class sizes create an inclusive learning environment where high levels of self-discipline enable every child to realise their potential.

The school’s curriculum is a composite of all the planned activities that we organise in order to promote learning and personal growth, and development. We follow the national curriculum guidelines, but we are not restricted by them. We seek the highest standards of attainment for all our children. We also value the breadth and balance of the curriculum we provide as well as the ‘hidden curriculum’ – what children learn from the way they are treated and expected to behave. We aim to foster creativity in our children, and to help them become independent thinkers. Above all we believe in making learning fun.

Our school curriculum is underpinned by all the values that we hold dear at our school. The curriculum is the means by which the school achieves its objective of educating children in the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to lead fulfilling lives. We want children to grow into positive, responsible people, who can work and cooperate with others while at the same time developing their knowledge and skills, in order to achieve their true potential. The quality of teaching, learning and behaviour are inseparable.

# Nursery

The nursery at Orchard has a long tradition of welcoming children either as a baby or around the time of their second birthday. The next seven to nine years at Orchard affords them a unique opportunity to experience a consistent secure environment in which to grow and develop. The partnership between home and school is forged at this time and creates an invaluable and fruitful relationship with the well- being and happiness of the child at its core.

# Pre-Preparatory: Years R, 1 & 2

Above all, we believe in making learning fun.

Our children make the transition from nursery to reception in a confident, seamless manner and are full of enthusiasm for the excitement that ‘big school’ presents. They are well prepared as our nursery and reception teacher’s work closely to capitalise on the thrill starting school brings to each child.

Homework is introduced and becomes a feature in their school life.

Years 1 and 2 seek to maintain and foster the passion to learn, established so eagerly in reception, as the curriculum moves towards a more formal structure. The discipline of reading out loud to an adult each day is continued and a love for the written word, in all its many forms, is promoted and encouraged.

# Preparatory: Years 3 & 4

The quality of teaching, and of learning and behaviour are inseparable. Pupils experience the culmination of the skills and proficiencies they have achieved during their learning journey, through nursery and school, ready to be perfected and honed, in their final years at Orchard. This is a time of great progress when the individual’s confidence blossoms and responsibilities are relished. We find these attributes provide inspiring role models for our younger pupils and invaluable preparation for the challenges at their next school.

There is a traditional approach to the teaching of the core subjects: mathematics, literacy and science. Pupils are then encouraged to focus on using their acquired skills to explore, investigate and gain knowledge through thematic learning of topics.

# The School’s Pastoral Care

Pastoral care remains at the heart of Orchard and is fully integrated into the school’s daily routines. Orchard is a happy school, where laughter and smiling faces are a prominent feature. We work together, enjoy each other’s company and value the uniqueness of each child. Parents know and have confidence that their child is safe and immersed in an environment that enables each pupil to fulfil their own potential both academically and socially. Assemblies are used to reflect on religious beliefs, establish moral frameworks and celebrate a range of religious festivals.

# Homework

Homework is defined as any task, written or otherwise, set by the school for completion outside of school. As such, homework, or working at home, encompasses a variety of collaborative (adult and child) age and stage appropriate activities that contribute to our working partnership. Tasks such as written work, learning spellings and times tables, ICT assignments and individual research are an important part of a pupil’s education and can add much to a pupils’ development.

We recognise that the educational experience that any school by itself can provide is limited by the time and resources available; pupils can therefore benefit greatly from the complementary learning that they do at home, supported by an adult. We understand the time constraints parents experience though it is important that children view their parents as a dependable and supportive resource. We want homework to be viewed in a positive light by the child which can only be achieved if parents are ‘on board’. Keep the faith, this will not last forever, remember the primary aim of our teaching is for pupils to develop as independent learners. We believe that homework is one of the main ways in which pupils can acquire the skill of independent learning.

# Rewards

We use praise and encouragement as a motivating factor in our school life. Achievement is celebrated in whatever guise it presents itself, be it academic, sporting, developmental or social. Achievement raises self-esteem and is seen as a strong motivational opportunity to experience success. Pupils are awarded house points but also Achievement Apples to celebrate excellent work, good behaviour and attitudes or maybe, an out of school achievement such as a swimming award. There are also golden apples – awarded to groups of children who have excelled in some way. Pupils also nominate an individual child or group or class that they consider worthy of such an accolade. During assembly children receive their apples, which they proudly place on the Achievement Tree for all to see. At Orchard we like to celebrate all kinds of accomplishments, both big and small so that by the end of the school year the tree is bursting with apples ready to harvest and take home to treasure.

# Sanctions

The Headmistress reserves the right, in her absolute discretion, to exclude from the School any pupil whose:

* behaviour, attendance, or academic progress is unsatisfactory. or if
* the behaviour of either or both parents is, in the opinion of the Headmistress, unreasonable and affecting or likely to affect adversely other pupils at the school or well-being of staff
* if either parent libels the school in any way which damages its public reputation.

*A fully copy of the school Behaviour Policy is available on the school website.*

# Expressing Comments or Concerns and Complaints Procedure

We have an open-door policy at Orchard and, as partners in the education process, your opinion matters. So, let us know directly, in person, via emails, the Forum, the Class Rep, or by picking up the phone, we want to hear!

We know the wellbeing and happiness of our pupils combines to form an essential component in their journey through Orchard. Equally we want our parents’ journey to be a happy one and for them to have trust and confidence that by working together we can achieve amazing outcomes.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.

The complaints procedure and anti-bullying policy and other relevant policies are available online via the school website or upon request at the office.

If parents of pupils at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. Any complaints regarding the school should be made using the correct and official channels so we can work together to help resolve any concerns that parents may have.

# Activities

There are a wide variety of clubs on offer, both before and after school and at lunchtimes. We aim to cater for all interests and the School Council (made up of representatives from the school classes) regularly undertake pupil surveys to ensure that there is something for everyone. The clubs run according to the time of year, but include, knitting, sewing, Lego board games, photography, chess, recorder, choir, rugby, athletics, running, football, badminton and cricket.

# Countryside

The school is nestled in the heart of the rolling countryside, and this creates the perfect backdrop for our approach of inspiring a fascination with nature and the great outdoors.

From the beginning the outdoors has featured large in the life of Orchard pupils. The local Nature Reserve provided such a magical playground during our early years that we have endeavoured to create a similar experience for the children here on our school site. Working closely with English Nature, we have planted over fifty locally sourced trees together with a hazel walk leading to a tree house. A delightful reading corner is hidden under a canopy of trees, and for more rigorous pursuits we have, tractor tyres and activity trail. The camouflaged den and seating area around the fire bowl provide opportunities for imaginative play and a meeting place for our Beaver Scouts.

Children are heavily involved in the cycle of growing and seasonal change. We are active members of the RHS Campaign for School Gardening, and our kitchen garden has earned their highest award.

Our bird aviary is home to an ever-increasing number of budgerigars. They have a new extension with viewing area for our shorter pupils. The extended chicken run is home to our very friendly chickens who often can be seen running across the playground to the pond area or their exercise maze under the trees.

# Music, Dance and a little Drama!

The joy of dancing, singing, and pretending starts early at Orchard and great performance naturally follow. We take every opportunity to come together and perform, be it an impromptu or scheduled occasion. Music and dance specialists come into both school and nursery to share their expertise and inspire our pupils.

Our concerts and musicals are usually ‘sell out’ events and create a wonderful feel-good factor within the school community.

# Healthy Sporting Interests

Sport is an integral part of Orchard life. We embrace the wider social and health benefits of sport and assist children in making informed decisions about adopting a healthier more active lifestyle. Through participation they learn about the importance of key values such as honesty, teamwork, fair play, respect for themselves and others, and adherence to rules.

They also have the opportunity to learn about competition and how to cope with both winning and losing. The extended playing field and the marked playground provide a great opportunity to extend our range of sport activities.

# Special and Additional Educational Needs

Orchard School does not discriminate in any way regarding entry. The school welcomes pupils with special educational needs if its learning support staff can offer them the support that they require. We welcome pupils with disabilities if our site can accommodate them. However, we require parents/guardians of children with special educational needs or physical or mental disabilities to discuss their child’s needs with the school. Parents/guardians must provide a copy of an educational psychologist’s report or a medical report if they have one.

# The School’s Moral and Spiritual Life

As part of culture of Orchard, we live, on a daily basis, our values and aims, thinking of others and what we can do to make a difference. Each term has a focus looking outward to the needs of others with our older pupils becoming role models and ambassadors leading the school on a more altruistic pathway.

# Finally

We hope the school and nursery handbook helps to give you an insight into the philosophy and ethos of Orchard School. We strive as a community ‘to be the best that we can be’ and we know that we can only achieve our aims if we form relationships to enable us to work together in partnership.

## “At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of parents.” Jane D Hull