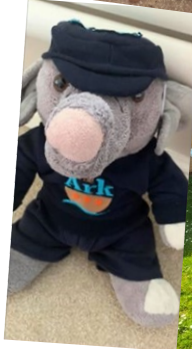


Welcome to The Ark!



We are a family, that cares for, values and encourages all by providing opportunities to shine.

Where do I drop off / pick up?



Main School
Entrance
(Homefield Avenue)



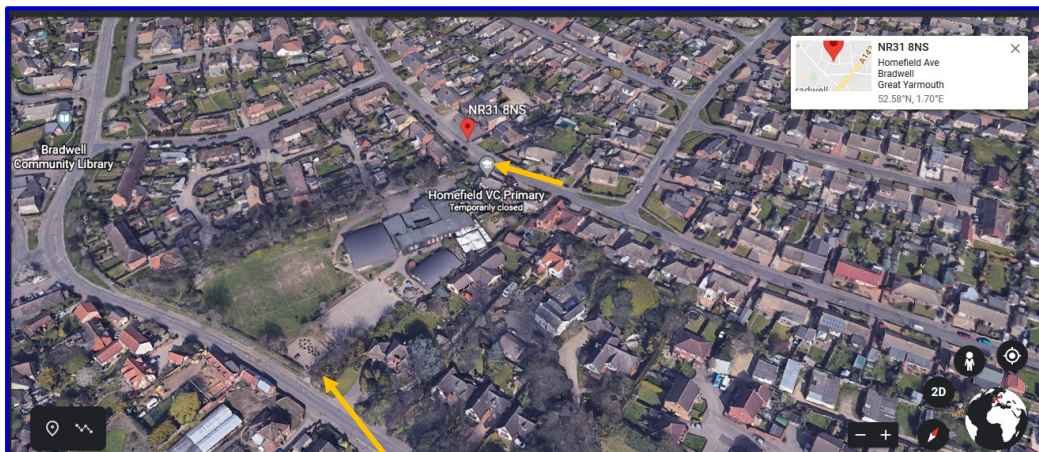
"Back" School
Entrance
(Church Lane)

AM sessions: You can access school from either of the gates and wait by the Nursery door near the gazebo.

If your child is only staying for the morning session, we walk them round to the side gate and meet you here. This is just inside the school grounds from the Homefield Avenue main entrance.

PM sessions: You can only access school via the Homefield Avenue entrance (main school will be on the playground for their lunchtime).

You can use either gate to enter the school grounds to collect your child.



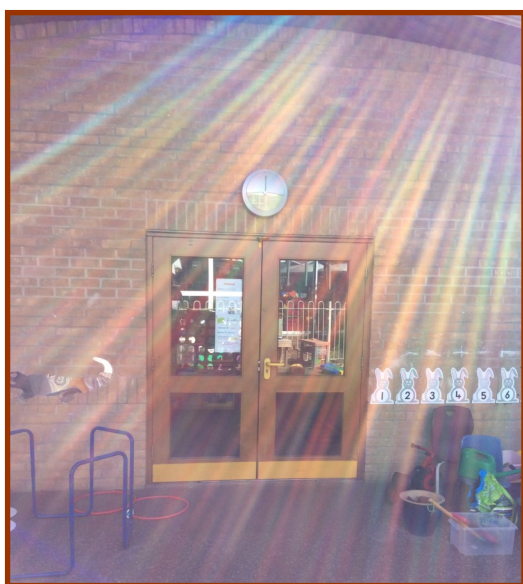
Church Lane



This is the main door to The Ark. If it is raining you can wait inside the gazebo.

AM Nursery will come in from this door.

PM Nursery will be sent home from this door.



AM sessions: Nursery staff will bring the children through the gate and wait by the little gates at Reception. We will unlock the gates where you are waiting to collect.

PM sessions: You will be allowed to walk your child to the Nursery with one of our Dinner Ladies waiting for your prompt turnaround. This is the entrance you will use to drop your child off. Our Dinner Lady will then lock the gate behind the parents so everyone is safe.

Lunches: If staying for a lunch but finishing at 12:30, or if joining us for lunch and staying for the afternoon, you will use the side gate like the afternoon children.

The 'side gate' Internal gate from the staff carpark (Off Homefield Avenue). This is the gate Miss Grant will unlock to let parents in to collect AM Nursery (or for children coming into lunch). The Dinner Ladies will unlock this for PM Nursery children who anyone going home after lunch.



Who can collect my child?

Things can always occur... a flat tyre, a crying baby..

So DO NOT ever worry if you, the main carer cannot collect your child!

Firstly:



In your child's 'All About Me' book, glue in photos of the main people who you give permission to collect your child. At the start of any year, there are lots of faces for us to remember, so this really helps - especially when Nanny only picks up every third Wednesday etc.



If there is a new person because something has cropped up, please call the school office and leave a message with Mrs James or Mrs Robson. If it is an unfamiliar adult, or a parent of another child, we will need your permission on each occasion.

When collecting your child, please wait by the Nursery door, or the side gate. Please do not enter the building as we ensure a 1:1 collection so that we have seen and know that your child has gone with their adult. For this reason the Nursery door will be locked behind each child as a member of staff turns around to call the next child and support them in getting ready. Please be patient



Otherwise, that is it! We do not need people to sign log books etc.

The only time you would sign your child in is if they were late coming in due to an appointment. For this, would you please press the buzzer on the pedestrian gate to school and speak to Mrs James or Mrs Robson in the office. They will ask you to sign your child in before taking your child over to the Ark (or calling one of us to come and collect your child).

Attendance



At this stage, your child is not legally obliged to attend school. Attendance is recorded as part of our safeguarding procedures and so we can reward good attendees. Good attendance is crucial for helping to develop routines and friendships, in addition to learning too. However, it is your decision as to how many sessions you choose for your child to attend. We always recommend to start small and gradually build up. A full day let alone a full week is a long day when you are 3 or 4 years old.



Changes of sessions:

Initially we **have** to offer you five morning or five afternoon slots. This is so we can establish ratios and numbers for the nursery. At the Intake Meeting, we will then note down your preferences and work behind the scenes to ensure as many people can get their choice of sessions. Where this is not feasible we will contact you with alternatives.

At your Home Visit we will check with you about your hours, as these can change from the Intake Meeting in April to the Home Visit in September. Our Finance Lady Mrs Robson will then invoice everyone with their half termly hours (whether you need to pay or not) for your records, as well as any lunches. As we invoice each half term, we ask that changes in hours **ONLY** occur at the beginning of a new half-term. You can let us know further in advance, but changes cannot be made until a new half term.

As such, should you take a holiday, you would not be fined by the local authority, as your child is not statutory school age. However, you would still pay your Nursery fees as you are preventing another child from a space by having 'booked' it for a half-term.

For safeguarding reasons, and to support you in becoming used to school procedures, we do ask that you complete a Holiday Form. These are on the notice board in the Nursery cloakroom. This keeps us informed of why your child is not in school.



Absences:

If your child is unwell, please call the school office on 01493 661691 and leave a message. Alternatively you can leave a message on the Nursery answerphone. Please can you leave a brief message with what illness your child has, as we have staff and children with compromised immune systems and need to keep them safe.

If we do not hear from you, school operates a First Day Calling System, whereby we will telephone if your child is not in attendance. This is inline with our safeguarding policy and procedures.

There are clear guidelines, available on The Ark website, about contagious illnesses and we will insist that these are followed for the health and safety of the school community. So for example, we will insist that your child remains at home for the full 48 hours after an episode of sickness and/or diarrhoea.

GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS...



Spare Clothes

Spare clothes are essential in The Ark! Anything can happen... and not just a toileting accident ;)

Sometimes we become curious about the taps and get a little wet.

Sometimes we slip over in a puddle or on the mud...

Sometimes we spill our drink and our friend gets wet.

Sometimes we forget to put pants or nic-nocs on in the morning!



So it is always great to have some of our own clothes to change into!

- t-shirt/ top
- Sweatshirt /warm top
- Trousers /joggers / leggings
- Spare socks (more than one pair in case of accidents or puddles!)
- Spare underwear—more than one pair ideally in case of accidents.
- Spare pair of shoes in case of wet feet- cheap / old shoes (but not compulsory)



It is best kept in a drawstring bag as these sit better on the coat pegs and don't cause the coats to fall off.



If you do have a spare pair of wellies, these are great for rainy days or when we go down to Bushcraft.

We do have some spare clothes but not everything gets returned or is the size we need at that time. In this instance, we may need to call you for a spare item or two.

Uniform



Our fabulous PTA offer a Preloved Uniform Service across the year.

This is a great way to raise vital funds for school, whilst also upcycling old uniforms as children always grow!

They do have Ark clothing and sometimes bookbags/ drawstring bags as not everyone who attends The Ark chooses to come to the main school

Our PTA only take the best quality clothes and they get a very good wash and press by one of our volunteers!

Harrisons: On Southtown Road, stocks all the branded school items. Do not feel that you have to have Ark clothing. We just ask that children attend in school clothing of our colours. Jogging bottoms are great for little ones as they can manage these more independently than formal trousers, when going to the toilet.

Supermarkets: Our local supermarkets will stock the white, navy, grey and blue polo shirts, cardigans and jumpers, dresses, skirts or trousers too.

A lot of people mix and match between some branded and some unbranded. The choice is yours. We just ask that where possible, clothing is manageable for the children to take off/put on e.g. shoes, trousers, Sometimes a bigger size is better as they have more room to manoeuvre out of (e.g. jumpers)..



Parent Mail

This is how school manages money from parents and carers for things like school trips, lunches, Nursery fees etc. It saves the school having to hold money on site, and is a convenient way to manage finances in an ever changing technological way. No more lost pennies from envelopes in book bags, or moments where you realise you have forgotten to send dinner money in.

Please write your email address clearly. Both parents/carers can register but please use the mobile number and email address for the same person, creating two accounts if needed. That way the email and mobile number is linked and payments etc can be seen.

Once Mrs Robson has received these details, she will generate a link for you to activate your account. This will be sent in an email (so check your junk folder just in case).



<https://www.parentmail.co.uk/help/parenthelp/>

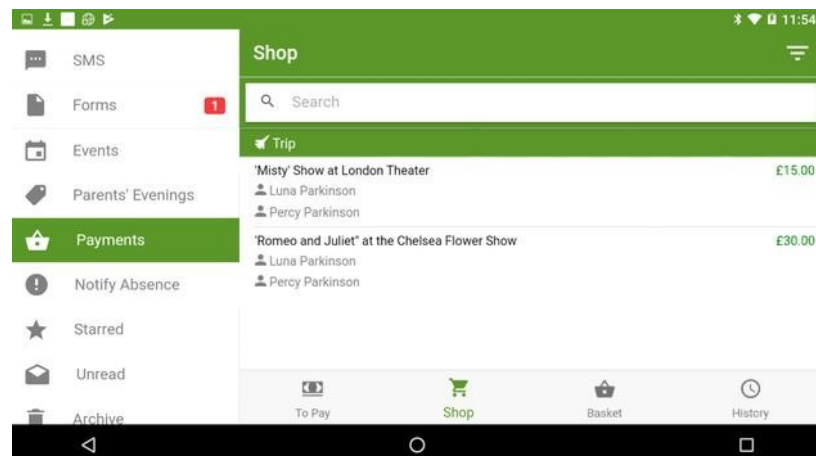
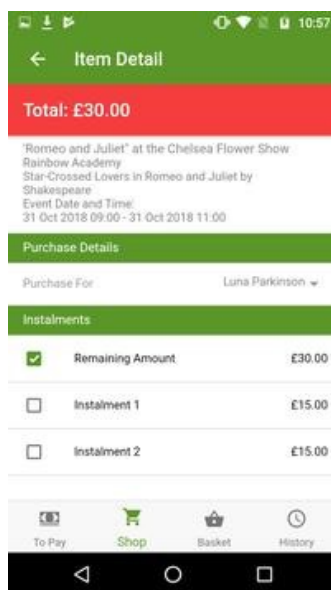
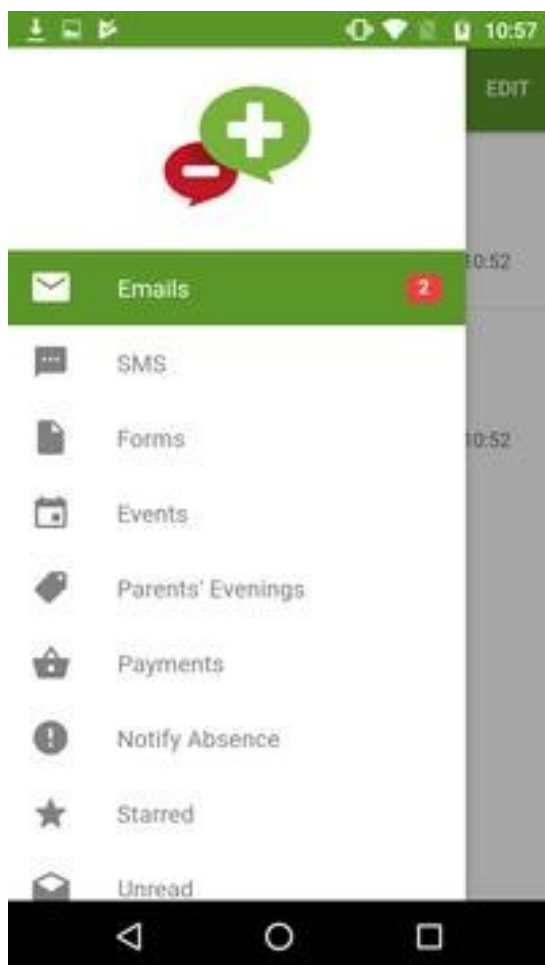
Payments are in advance. So when you are making a payment, it will be for the half term ahead, so you need to wait for your invoice. "Unused" money remains as a credit in your account.

Accounts: This is where you pay for lunches, including the daily lunch hour charge to cover staffing for that hour.

Nursery fees will not appear here, but towards the bottom of the menu in the "**shop**" (**Payments**) which has a shopping basket icon.

Breakfast Club and Afterschool Club fees are also paid in the "shop".

Any problems, Mrs Robson is always happy to help!



Social Media

The Ark has its own class blog like all the classes at Homefield. However, we cannot link it on the 'blog' webpage with the other classes. Here are details of how to find it.

<https://www.homefielddark.com/blog>

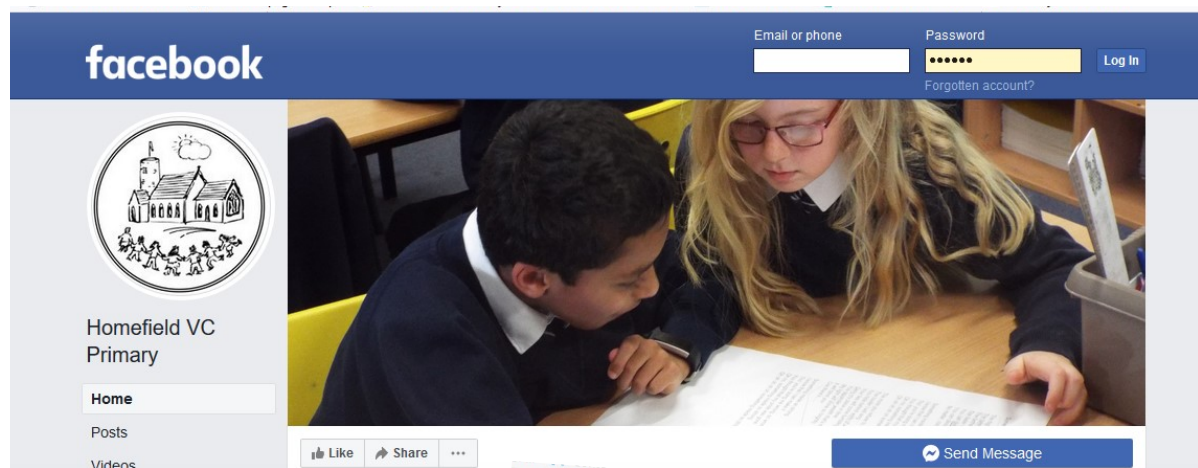


It is updated each school week and has different information to Tapestry, which is about your child.

Mr Young also has a blog which he writes weekly too. The main school website has copies of letters, dates and information should you need to find things.



The main school also has a Facebook page and Twitter account and the PTA have it's own Facebook page to publicise events, fundraising projects and demonstrate how the money raised has been spent.



Adult worries

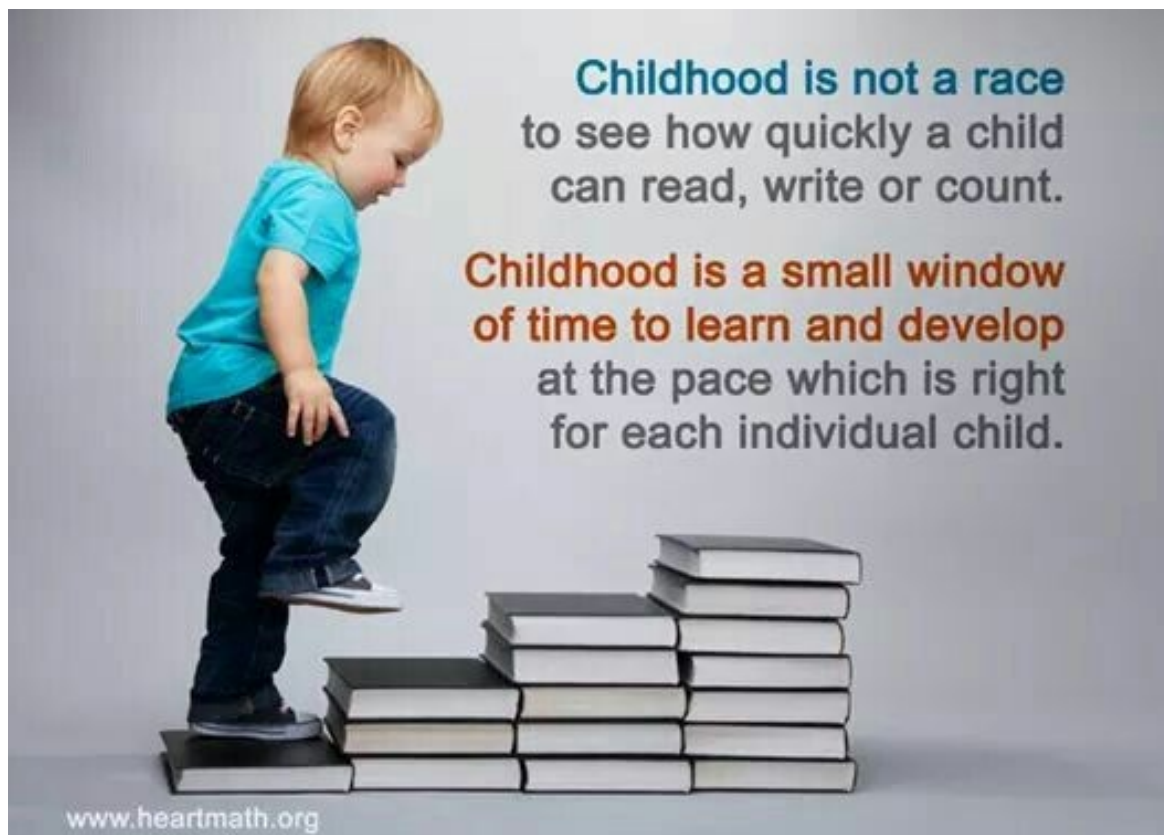
It is perfectly natural to worry. Please do not worry or compare your child to others. Do not compare or judge yourself by others too. Here at The Ark we will help your child to become the best they can be. In all areas of learning.

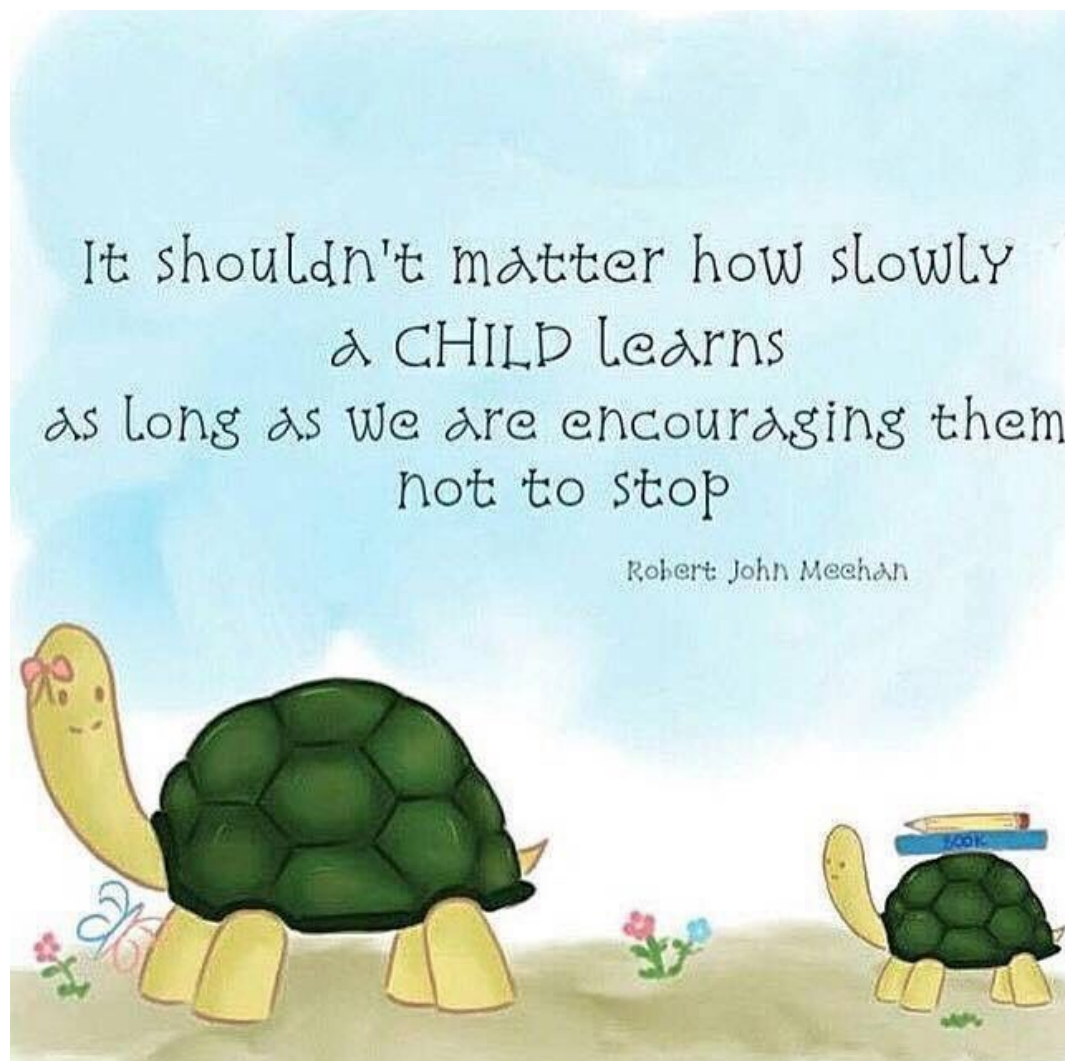
Do not panic if your child cannot do X, Y or Z... we will work with you to achieve their best. If you do have concerns, please speak to the staff. This is the start of their education from you...

The changes you will see will amaze you and you will forget how little they were on their first day. But this is where Tapestry will become a scrapbook of memories to look back on, but also stepping stones to build on as your child's journey begins.

On Tapestry 'Next steps' will be given; not just for you, but for staff to use (to encourage us to think about future topics, skills and interests), and to evidence where and how the child can be supported next.

You will be given a copy of a poster about "The Road to School Readiness" which we will work on across the year, supporting your child's transition to school. It is not a race but will make starting school easier and offer an insight into what we will cover.





Workshops and Social Events

Unfortunately a list of dates cannot be sent ahead of September as many need to be checked with staff and outside agencies. We will send lists of dates home in September and at the start of each term. Sometimes things can change (and last minute too) or things can crop up... But we like to think that we are very good at communicating with our parents.

Social Media- The school website is regularly updated and teachers use the class blogs to post reminders.

Texts: Mobile numbers are used to send text messages from the school office. Sometimes it is a change to the lunch menu, or a reminder about an event.

There are some key events which we host for the Early Years Foundation Stage. We offer workshops in the early part of the school year to support parents in supporting their children. These are informal, friendly and usually with a joke or funny anecdote or two!

-Tapestry workshop: Where we show you what it is, how it works, what you can/ cannot do and answer any questions.

Phonics Workshop: Even in The Ark we teach phonics. Here we explain all five phases, what key words mean and how to support your child in early reading and writing relevant to their age/class.

Funky Fingers: This is an initiative to help with writing development as in the last decade or so it has been shown that children's fine motor skills and pencil grip has not been as developed as previously. Funky Fingers are fun activities and exercises that build up the physical strength, control and coordination in the arms.

Christmas and Easter Decoration Day: Parents get to come into The Ark and spend time helping their child make decorations for Christmas/ Easter.



Others include: The Christmas Nativity, The Easter Bonnet Parade, Sports Day and fundraising events by our PTA.

The Secret Reader



This was an initiative started in 2020 which sadly got interrupted by COVID-19. The aim of The Secret Reader is to encourage the children to develop a passion for books and reading by having "secret", timetabled adults to come in and read their favourite children's book, or their child's favourite book,

This is something that I would like to continue in The Ark as in its infancy has been very successful.



So far we have had Mummies, Daddies, Nannies and Grandads come into read as well as an auntie and our local police officer (and school parent) PC Bladon. There were other local members of the community planned to 'appear' and who knows... someone may have a special friend that is a celebrity/ works in an amazing profession... who knows!

These would be slots that can be signed up for, so that each no matter when your child attends, they will at some point see at least one Secret Reader. Therefore it would not be on one set day each week.

Stay tuned.... And don't worry! The children always love seeing someone new...you don't need to be David Walliams.



Our Routine

Routines are really important for young children as it enables them to feel safe and secure as they know what to expect.

At the start of each session we follow the same routine to help the children settle quickly. Once the door is opened/ gate unlocked, the children will come in and have their coat hung on their pegs. As the year goes on we will encourage the children to try doing this themselves. Book bags will get placed into the Book bag box. Water bottles will then get placed in the water bottle tray, just by the door of the classroom. Again, as the year goes on we do encourage the children to do as much for themselves as possible. After this, the children will go to the circle table to find their name card (with personalised Ark animal on) and place it in the pot 'so we know who is here' (self-registration) and so that they begin to become familiar with what their name looks like. The children are then able to play for thirty minutes in whatever activity they choose.

Over the year this activity is tweaked; the thirty minutes of free play becomes reduced and changes to Link Provision tasks. The animals are cut off from the name cards to support looking at the names and not just finding the animal.

To support your child, please make goodbyes short and sweet. Prolonging a goodbye causes unsettlement. We are masters of distraction and will call if there is a problem. All children settle but can try to play on your emotions if they think it will make you stay.

- Always say "Goodbye" and have your hug, kiss etc
- Always remind your child that you are coming back for them.
- Always say that you will be back soon, and let them know that you are doing boring things at home/work whilst they are not with you ;)
- Have an All About Me completed with your child as these are worth their weight in gold when the children first start, feel unwell or upset...or want to introduce themselves to new friends—even the staff have an All about Me book!

Class Mascots

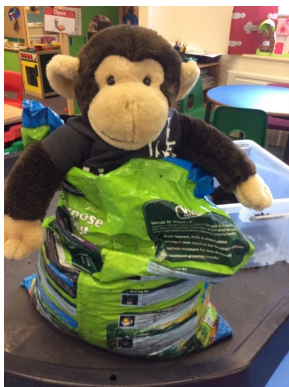


We also have the class mascots who need cuddles...

These are Mr Wrinkles and Monty the Maths Monkey.

Both animals have their own school uniforms, book bags and spare clothes bags. They also have their own diaries and stories. Each week the mascots go to different home s with a child for a "sleepover". It is a prestigious honour to be picked and is often linked to being a superstar that week, having conquered a personal challenge or through turn taking.

Mr Wrinkles' likes children to mark make in his diary so he can show his friends and to share his adventures with the nursery, His purpose is to encourage the children to make marks for a reason (early writing development) but he often has photos and notes made by adults too.



Monty likes children to take part in mathematical activities with him and to have this recorded in his diary. Like Mr Wrinkles, his purpose is to encourage mathematical interest and skills in a variety of ways, with notes and photos from adults added too.

Please do not stress about having them at your house,. Enjoy the fun! Share in how sweet the children look cuddling their new friends at bedtime...and the sheer number of wardrobe changes these animals receive!

