



# Mulberries Pre-School



Parent

Handbook



***“Children in the early years are enthusiastic, highly motivated learners. Staff support the development of children’s language skills well so that they can begin to read and write at an early stage. The early years provision is highly inclusive.”***

**Ofsted 2018**

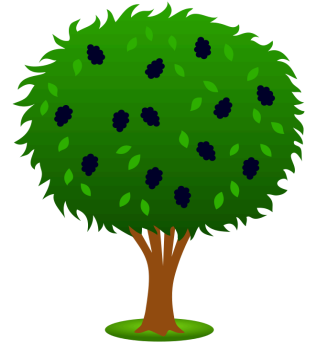
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# Hello Mulberries!

July 2025



Dear Children

We are really looking forward to meeting you when you join us in Blossom or Berries class. We have some fun and exciting things planned for you to do with your new friends. We will be painting, drawing, singing, sharing stories, dressing up, cooking, playing in the water, playing in the sand, building blocks, counting, learning to write our names, making new friends, playing in our garden where we will learn to ride bikes, climb, play circle games, build with blocks, play in the mud kitchen and much much more! Does that sound like fun? We hope it does.

Have a lovely summer and we look forward to getting to know you and your families very soon.

**The Mulberries Team**

# Welcome from our Headteacher

Dear Parents and Carers

A very warm welcome to Mulberries Pre-School! I loved school and still do. The opportunities for learning and play were something I still look back on fondly and my time spent in early years is still a vivid memory all these years later. A sure sign that the whole experience had a positive impact on me and that is what we strive for with your children.



We want the children to run through the school gates with a sense of excitement at seeing their friends and wanting to spend time within the learning environment; we want our learners to be curious about the world and be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings; we want to support them on their journey to becoming all-rounded individuals who demonstrate our values and are seen as role models in society.

Our vision is built on the fact that anything is possible – we are all ‘climbing the branches of success’ and we do this both individually and as a school. Our team are experienced and dedicated and will work closely with you to ensure your child has the very best start at Maple Tree to allow them access to a quality education.

We are all passionate about the roles that we have – to work with children is an absolute privilege and one we do not take for granted. Our school is respected and admired within the community and we look forward to you being part of our school family.

I am pleased that you have chosen Mulberries pre-school and look forward to working alongside you all in the coming years.

Best wishes

A grey rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Cath'.

Cath Bainbridge

**Headteacher**





## Our Vision and Aims

In the Mulberries Pre-school we believe that all the children are adventurers, ready to learn and discover the world around them. We offer a warm and caring environment to welcome all children aged 2-4 years old. We aim to create an exciting, fun experience inside and outside which

stimulates the children to explore, design, learn and create whilst making friends and playing. Our topics spark the children's imaginations and make our group learning challenging but enjoyable. We understand that each child is on their own individual learning journey and we aim to build close relationships with each child and their family, working closely with other professionals when required.

### We aim:

- to provide a curriculum which takes account of, and responds to the children's developmental needs and allows them to make excellent progress related to their differing abilities.
- to provide a curriculum which promotes the Early Years Framework (2021).
- to follow a curriculum which provides equal opportunities for learning and development for all the children in the setting
- to provide a safe and challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment that is sensitive to the needs of all children.
- to use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- to enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- work in partnership with parents and carers and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, gender or ability have the opportunity to reach their potential.
- to assist children's transition to our reception class.

## Values Education

At Maple Tree Primary School every individual is valued for who they are and what they contribute to our school community. Our values-based provision supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of every pupil throughout the school. Our staff and pupils are involved in promoting values and recognising where others are 'living the values'. Our core values have been selected as those which are important within our school community and which will prove important throughout life.



Through our values-based provision we aim to:

- improve behaviour and conduct by developing strong values within and amongst our pupils
- develop pupils' understanding of what values are and why they are important in life
- encourage pupils to 'live our values' in all aspects of their lives, both in and out of school
- promote values to pupils in every aspect of school life
- promote values in the way in which adults interact with each other and with pupils
- display our school values and encourage all visitors to take account of them during their time in our school
- encourage parents and carers to support our values at home





## The Mulberries Team

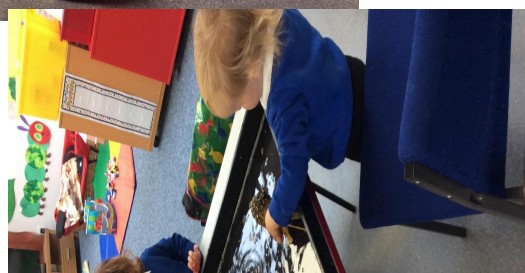
Maple Tree Primary School is run by the

Leadership Team consisting of Headteacher, Mrs Cath Bainbridge and Deputy Head, Miss Amy Hyde. Our Pupil Administrator, Mrs Lynne Fowler works closely with us.

Working closely alongside them is experienced Early Years teacher, Mrs Victoria Darnell, who will be Reception teacher but she will visit the Mulberries pre-school regularly. She is dedicated to spending time in pre-school to support and enhance the quality of the provision offered.

Our pre-school is led by a fantastic team of adults who are passionate about the work that they do and work tirelessly to ensure that the children are well cared for: Mrs Carrick and Miss Taylor are Pre-School Leads and they are supported by Mrs Hampton, Mrs Famula, Mrs Phillips and Ms Green.

We look forward to getting to know you as you drop off or pick up your children. If you have questions, please make use of our open door policy.



## Key Person and Settling In

Prior to your child settling in at pre-school, you will be invited for a meeting in the Mulberries classrooms to meet the staff and to talk about your child. This helps us to gather as much information as we can to ensure that your child settles as quickly as possible. It is also a two-way conversation and is the perfect opportunity for you to be asking questions that you may have.

During this meeting you will be told who your child's key person is. The role of key person in an early years setting is much more than just a title.

Each key person has special responsibility for a group of children and will work closely with you and your child to ensure that their childcare and educational needs are met. You will be told who this key person is and have their role explained to you. They will help your child to settle and will then be responsible for ensuring that the care your little one receives meets all of their needs.

Your child's key person will be your first point of contact with the pre-school, and is also responsible for exchanging information with you. You will get regular verbal updates about how well your child is progressing in their learning and development.

It will be the key person who observes your child regularly as they are playing and learning, they will pay attention to how your child learns, what they enjoy playing with and what they need more support with. They will also keep a record of the observations they have made, in a *Learning Journey* that documents your child's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The key person will use their observations to plan further learning opportunities that are based on your child's individual interests and needs. This is because they know that children learn best when the experiences they have are challenging and

enjoyable, allowing them to play and explore, to concentrate and to develop their own ideas.

Once you have had your pre-school 'settling in' visit, your child will be able to start their sessions in earnest and hopefully with confidence and excitement!



# Admissions

## **Pre-School for 2 Year Olds**

Maple Tree's first point of entry is the pre-school which takes children from the age of 2 years old. You can register for the waiting list at the main school office. Parents are invited to visit before their child attends the pre-school and are able to tour the school and pre-school before making a choice.

Children enrolled in pre-school will automatically move into the Berries class for 3/4 year olds in the September of their final year in pre-school. There will be an opportunity for you to defer at this point if it is in the best interests of the child. This request should be made in writing to the Headteacher.

## **Pre-School for 3 Year Olds**

Children can also enter Maple Tree Pre-School in the term after they are three, therefore, parents who would like their child to be admitted at this stage should ensure that they contact the school, as soon as possible, to enter their child's name into the school's waiting list. Parents need to complete the necessary application form for their child to start the pre-school.

Visits to the school are encouraged to help make an informed choice. Parents should complete the school's pre-school admission form and return to the school office. This year, places are offered in October for the Spring, Summer and Autumn term of the following year. Any applications received after October will be offered as spaces become available.

You will be informed about the school's acceptance of your children and they will usually be invited to a "taster session" the half term before they start. The start date and session times for your child will also be finalised in the half term before they start. All children and their parent(s) will have a home visit or 1:1 visit to the pre-school, shortly before they start. Parents will have the opportunity to defer at this point.

The children will normally have a staggered start to the pre-school to ensure a smooth transition from home to the pre-school.

Viewings for prospective parents are welcomed, please contact the school office on 01767 699806 or email [office@mapletreepriamaryschool.com](mailto:office@mapletreepriamaryschool.com) to arrange this.

## Session Times and Costs

### Blossom Class

Morning session only: Monday – Friday 9.00am-12.00pm

### Berries Class

Morning session: Monday – Friday 9.00am-12.00pm

Afternoon session: Monday – Friday 12.30 – 3.30pm

### Lunch Club

Parents of children in Mulberries who are booked in for morning or afternoon sessions may wish to book our lunch club which runs from Monday to Friday from 12.00 – 1.00pm. As this is outside of the funded hours there will be an additional cost of £5.00.

If your child stays all day, then the cost of lunch club is £2.88.

### Snack Time

The pre-school children will be supported in snack time with adult supervision. Children are encouraged to taste fruit and vegetables that they may not have eaten before and smelling and trying is encouraged where a child may be reluctant. School encourages healthy eating and fruit and vegetables are promoted within this.

- Daily snack – a piece of fruit or vegetable is provided for each child through the government scheme.
- Children may choose milk (free) or water at snack time.
- Please provide a named water bottle each day (water only please) – children will have access to fresh water throughout the day.

### Pre-School Uniform



Our uniform is an important part of our school identity and we expect parents to support our high expectations. If you have any difficulties in meeting any of our uniform requirements, please talk to us as we can often help families to resolve this type of issue. All of the items displayed below can be ordered and purchased [online](#).

#### Uniform items:

- White polo shirt
- Royal blue knitted jumper or cardigan
- Navy trousers or skirt/pinafore (navy leggings or jogging bottoms are also acceptable)
- Yellow or blue checked dress for summer (optional)



Water bottles are also available to purchase from the school office.



All articles of clothing, including shoes, must be clearly labelled with your child's name. If your child has lost something, please speak to your child's key person, or a member of the Mulberries team

#### Shoes

All children should wear shoes that are strong, safe, practical and sensible. High-heeled shoes or boots are not acceptable or appropriate for pre-school. Similarly, open-toed sandals, slip-on shoes and ballet pumps are **not appropriate** as they leave feet unprotected.

#### Hair

Long hair must be tied back at all times. We do not permit extreme hairstyles, dyed, gelled, spiked hair or hair with patterns or lines shaved in.

#### Jewellery

No jewellery is to be worn in pre-school, with the exception of small stud earrings. Hooped earrings and larger stud earrings can be very dangerous and are unsuitable and inappropriate for nursery, as are necklaces, rings and bracelets.

#### Nappies

If your child uses nappies, parents are required to provide spare nappies/pull ups, nappy sacks and wipes. These should be in a named bag.

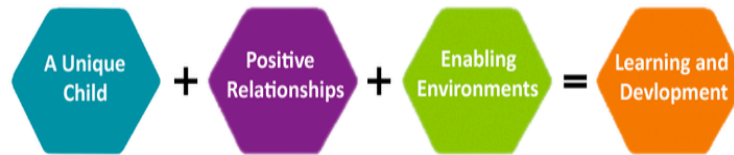
#### Additional Information

Please provide spare clothes in case of accidents.

Sunhat for hot weather and a warm, waterproof coat for colder weather. We can provide wellies.

***PLEASE NAME EVERYTHING!***

### The early years foundation stage



The Early Years Framework is divided into the following seven areas of learning and development:

- Physical Development
- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Literacy (Reading and writing)
- Maths
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive art and design

The EYFS is underpinned by four Principles. These principles are:

- A Unique Child - every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Positive Relationships - children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or key person.
- Enabling Environments - the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- Learning and Development - children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

We have termly topics to support the children's learning. Staff meet regularly to discuss the development of their key children and focus children. We use our observations and in-depth knowledge of each child to plan and support children to reach the next steps in their learning. However, it must be stressed that an important element to any child's learning is PLAY and we ensure that we have the

correct balance between adult initiated and child initiated activities.

## Supporting Behaviour

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, we operate a constructive approach to behaviour with realistic expectations of young children. We celebrate the adult role of helpful guide to support children to learn to behave well. Our approach uses our school values, positive language and good role modelling to encourage and develop good behaviour consistent with the Early Years Curriculum.

We teach children that:

- We treat other people with consideration and safety.
- We take care of the play resources.
- We take turns when there is not enough for everyone.
- We listen to each other and work together to solve problems.

We will intervene calmly, show how we expect children to behave and set rules and boundaries to help children to know what is expected of them.

We will use praise and sometimes stickers or other rewards when children have achieved a goal set for them.

Some children may find it more challenging to consistently make the right choices and have greater difficulty in self-regulating their behaviour and may need to be supported to calm. We will always work closely with parents to find ways to support their child and, if necessary, establish a behaviour plan, seeking advice from other professionals as appropriate.



## Safeguarding at Maple Tree and Mulberries



At Maple Tree, the safety of our children is of great importance; their health and wellbeing comes above all else.

We have Designated Lead Persons for Safeguarding: Miss Hyde (Deputy Head) Lead DSL and Mrs Darnell (EY lead) and Mrs Bainbridge (Headteacher) are the Deputy Designated Leads. They attend regular training to ensure they are up-to-date with practices and procedures and communicate appropriately with the relevant bodies. This also includes termly updates to the Safeguarding Governor, Mrs Tiffany Van der Werk.

If you have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of any child then you have the right to report this. You can do this through a number of channels and you may find the links below helpful:

- Central Bedfordshire Local Safeguarding Board <https://www.safeguardingbedfordshire.org.uk/>
- Police: telephone 999
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency
- National Crime Agency's CEOP Education Team [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)



## Early Years Pupil Premium

The Early Years Pupil Premium is additional funding given to our pre-school to support the quality of education for 3 and 4 year olds who are considered to be disadvantaged. The money is used to support children's development, learning and care and will be used in a variety of ways.

How do you qualify for Early Years Pupil Premium funding?

Children aged between 3 and 4 are eligible if they receive the universal 15 hours entitlement and meet any of the following criteria:

The child's family receives one of the following:

- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of state pension credit
- Child tax credit (provided they're not also entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working tax credit run-on
- Universal credit (household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax, not including any benefits - this is assessed on up to 3 of the parent's most recent universal credit assessment periods)
- They are currently being looked after by a local authority in England or Wales
- They have left care in England or Wales through an adoption order, a special guardianship order or are under a child arrangements order

All children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 qualify for free school meals, regardless of their family income, but only the children who would have qualified for free meals under the above income-based criteria will receive the Pupil Premium.

***It is really easy to apply. Call 0300 300 8306 and someone will help you with your application. It can be done as discretely as you wish.***

## School Readiness

When your child starts pre-school, it would be helpful if they could do some of the following:



Take off their coat and hang it up



Put on their coat and fasten it



Change their shoes



Dress and undress themselves



Use the toilet correctly and flush it



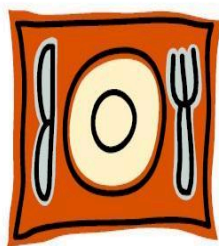
Use a handkerchief or tissue



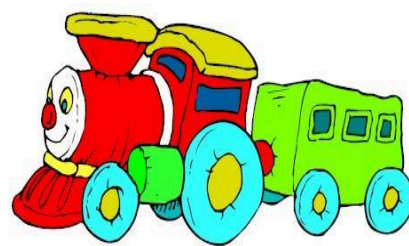
Share toys and take turns



Wash and dry their hands correctly



Use a knife and fork correctly



Help to tidy toys away

We understand that they will struggle with some of these and we will always help when needed, but a little independence goes a long way!

Your child will be well on their way to being ready for pre-school when they are comfortable with:

- Sharing books
- Communicating well
- Listening carefully
- Talking to other people outside the family
- Respecting and getting on with other people, with good manners
- Asking questions
- Accepting a routine
- Saying what they would like
- Coping with surrounding noise and activity

You can help your child to practise these things at home.

## Learning Together

Being a parent is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. We believe that you are your child's first and most important educators.

During their first years of life, your child has already learned skills that will help them to make a flying start at pre-school such as:

- feeling good about themselves
- listening carefully
- talking about their thoughts and feelings
- knowing many stories, songs and rhymes
- knowing what their own name looks like
- recognising and knowing about letters and numbers
- knowing about the different reasons for writing
- wanting to learn

All of these things continue to be important at pre-school, especially the '*wanting to learn*'.

When your child starts pre-school, the support you give them, and continue to give them over the years, will have an enormous influence on their achievements. Here

are some of the things you can do with your child that will make a real difference right from the start:

- sing lots of songs and rhymes with your child
- talk with your child about what you and they are doing
- play listening games
- play with shapes
- draw and colour
- practise dressing and undressing in the correct order
- practise putting shoes and socks on correctly
- practise zipping or buttoning up their coat
- encouraging your child to use the toilet independently

But, perhaps most importantly, ***share a book every day!***



Starting pre-school can be an anxious time for you and your child. First days at pre-school for young children are a mixture of all kinds of emotions. In pre-school we aim to make this transition as smooth as possible so that your child has a happy start to their education.

We believe that it is vital that staff and parents of The Mulberries Pre-School work together and value the importance of this partnership. As a parent, you have significant knowledge about your child and we ask you to share this with us. Similarly, if there are any important events taking place in your child's life they will affect how they are at pre-school.

If there are troubling, or routine changing events going on we need to be informed so that we can be sensitive to your child's needs and help support them.

Communication is very important and of course we will treat any information with professionalism and sensitivity. In the same way, we will keep you informed of issues at pre-school concerning your child. There are a number of ways we keep in touch:



### **Parentmail**

Weekly newsletters are sent out from the school on a Friday so please make sure the office has your email address so that they can set you up with a Parentmail account.



### **Marvellous Me**

The school uses the app Marvellous Me to send out messages and information as well as giving out praise rewards and badges. Please ask at the office for more information.



### **School Website**

The Maple Tree website has more information for parents such as uniform and term dates as well as including photos of activities and events:

[www.mapletreprimaryschool.com](http://www.mapletreprimaryschool.com)





Thank you for considering our pre-school at Maple Tree. We hope that we have provided you with the information you need to help your child to settle in our Mulberries Pre-School. For any other questions that you may have, please view our [website](#) or you can contact Mrs Fowler in our school office (01767 699806) who will be happy to help you further.

