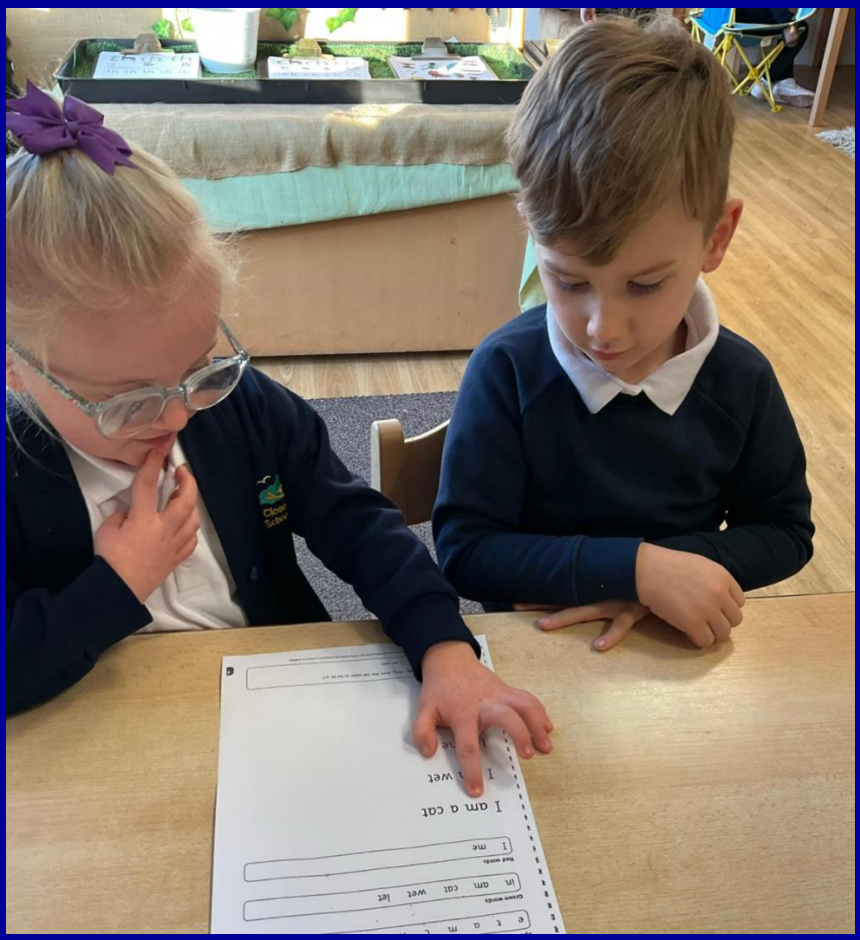
Thorney Close Primary School

Starting Reception

September 2025



Welcome from the Headteacher

Mrs. C. Jones

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are delighted that you and your child are joining Thorney Close Primary School this coming September.

On behalf of all the staff, Governors, children and parents, it is a great pleasure to welcome your family to our school community. This is an especially exciting time to join us, as we prepare to move into our brand-new primary school building on the former Sunningdale site, scheduled to open in September 2026.

Thorney Close Primary School is a happy, caring school where hard work and good behaviour are expected. We encourage children to develop their talents and seek excellence in everything they do. We expect our children and adults to support one another and to celebrate each other's achievements. We offer a safe, caring environment and provide a wealth of learning opportunities that ensures each child develops socially, academically and emotionally.

We hope that you and your child will have a happy and exciting time with us as they continue their journey through a lifetime of learning. We look forward to getting to know you and sharing your child's learning experiences during their time with us. Together we can achieve the very best for your child.

We look forward to welcoming you and your child into school soon.

With my very best wishes,

Catherine Jones
Headteacher

Getting Ready for School – Reception Readiness

We understand that all children develop at their own pace, and that we're all learning from birth. When it's time to start school, some children will need more help than others. There are key skills that all schools expect children to be learning before their first day. Practising these will make your child's journey to Reception as positive as possible. There's lots you can do at home to build your child's confidence and independence, helping them feel emotionally and practically prepared to start school.

The Department for Education has recently published new guidance for parents on preparing children for starting Reception. The information below is designed to support families in getting ready for a smooth and successful start this September.

How can I help my child get ready?

Your child will have lots of new activities and routines to get used to when they start school. There are some things they'll need to do more independently than they might have before. Research shows that a child's relationship with their parents is the most important factor in their development, and there's a lot you can do at home.

- When your child is at home with you or another caregiver, you can practise as a family with fun activities.
- Some of these skills take time to master, so it's good to introduce them gradually as part of your daily routine.

What if my child has additional needs?

- If your child needs additional support to settle into Reception, make sure you share as much information as possible with their new teacher. They can work with you to find strategies to support your child.
- Summer born children, or those speaking English as an additional language (EAL) may need more support.
- If you know or suspect your child has special educational needs (SEND), developmental differences or delays, some of these skills may not be achievable for them at this point.
- Early support makes a big difference – ask your child's nursery, school, health visitor, local children's centre or family hub for help.

The definition: skills to practise before starting Reception

New skills take time to learn. Practising at home will help your child move into school more easily and with confidence.

- Putting on/taking off their coat and shoes
- Using the toilet and washing their hands
- Getting dressed with little help, e.g. after using the toilet or doing PE
- Using cutlery (e.g. fork and spoon, chopsticks) and drinking from an open cup
- Spending time away from you, learning they can be looked after by caring adults
- Play, creativity and curiosity
- Taking part in imaginative play (e.g. role play)
- Drawing, painting, colouring and sticking
- Sharing story books with caregivers, looking at pictures and talking about the characters
- Exploring the world around them (e.g. looking closely at the natural world or playing safely with objects at home)

At school your child will be meeting lots of new people and make new friendships. Some things to help them get ready include:

Building relationships and communicating

- Being with others
- Practising sharing and taking turns with toys
- Talking to them about how they are feeling and why
- Looking at story books together and speaking about what characters are feeling is a good way to do this
- Beginning to recognise what others are feeling, e.g. understanding if a friend is sad
- Encouraging them to set boundaries for themselves and others (e.g. knowing how to say 'no')
- Singing along with songs and nursery rhymes
- Talking happily to others about activities, experiences and the world around them
- Showing they need help by speaking clearly (in basic English or sign language)
- Recognising the pattern of their name (so they can find it on their coat peg or jacket)

Listening and engaging

- Paying attention for short periods of time
- Listening to and following simple instructions
- Carrying on with a task even when it's difficult and bouncing back if things go wrong
- Getting moving for at least three hours a day
- Walking up and down steps (one foot at a time, using the wall for support)
- Climbing, running, jumping and playing
- Catching a large ball (most of the time)
- Doing simple puzzles and craft activities, strengthening their grip with cutting and sticking

Healthy routines

- Going to bed around the same time each night, waking up in time to get ready for school
- Limiting screen time to the recommended daily amounts
- Eating a healthy diet and trying new foods
- Brushing their teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day (you'll need to supervise this until they are at least 7)

What should I do if I have concerns about my child's development?

- If you're worried about your child's progress, talk to your childminder/nursery/pre-school team, health visitor, local children's centre or Family Hub.
- If your child has developmental delays or SEND (suspected or confirmed), speak to Mrs Leyland the SENDCO.

- You might want to share details about: their development, needs, what motivates them, what might trigger difficulties, how they learn best, and what strategies work well.
- Make sure you share important information with everyone supporting your child, including their new Reception teacher.

The Journey Begins….

We are looking forward to welcoming your child into Reception. We want to reassure you that we are here for you every step of the way. Starting school is a milestone for both you and your child. It is a time to be celebrated.

You will have received a letter outlining important dates in your child's transition diary, including start dates. You will have also received forms to complete which you will need to fill in and return to school by **Friday 6th June**.

Class teachers, **Mr Stewart** and **Miss Tovell** will telephone all parents and carers to discuss your child specifically. This telephone call allows a more detailed and specific conversation about your child's interests.

We will be having two full day transition visits into the Reception classes for the children. These are the **Tuesday 1st** and **Wednesday 2nd July.** The children will stay for a free school dinner on both of these days.

Please remember that our promise to you is that we will continue to work in partnership, to ensure your child's start to school is both as exciting and positive as we can collectively make it.

Making a great start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Being a parent is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world and we believe that you are their first and most important educators. The support and encouragement you give to your child throughout their school life will have a huge impact on their achievements and successes.

Below are a few ideas of things you can do with your child, or make sure that they can do, which will make a real difference to their education right from the start:

- Listen and sing lots of songs and rhymes
- Listening games
- Playing with shapes
- Playing with numbers
- Drawing and colouring
- Respecting and getting on with other people, with good manners
- Talking to people outside the family
- Saying what they would like
- Be willing to have a go at something new
- And perhaps most importantly – share a book together every day.

Planning in Reception follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. It is also called the EYFS for short. This is the same curriculum followed in the Nursery. It continues the developmental journey of your child.

There are seven areas of learning made up of 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas as follows:-

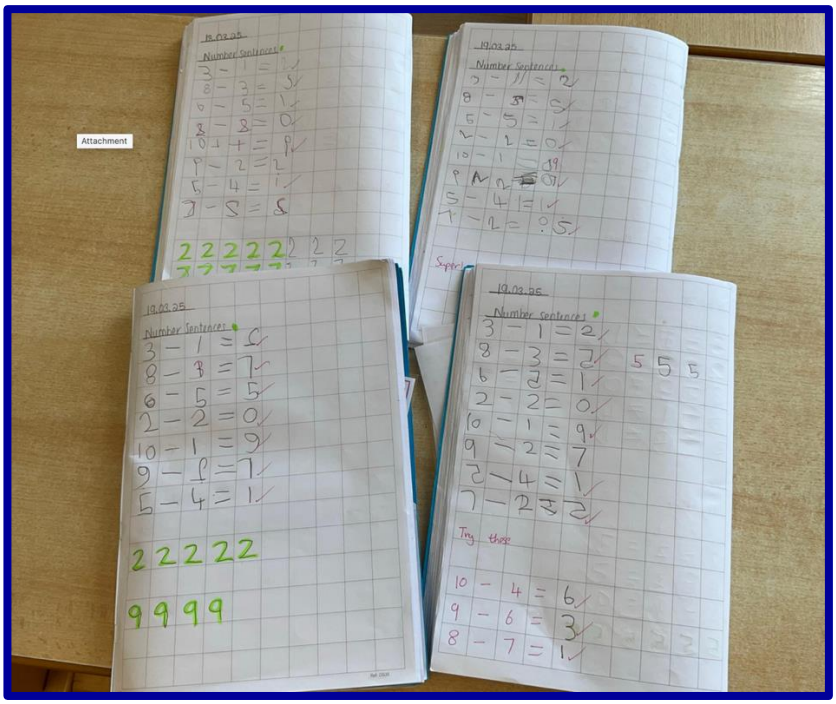
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World

- Expressive Arts and Design

The 'Foundation Stage' is well named as it is the foundation on which future learning is built. We teach the children from day one, so they are taught how to read and write and understand basic mathematics. We record in our books every day and the progress across reception is rapid. We also provide lots of opportunities for play in the afternoon, building on nursery opportunities

.



In Reception, children are given the opportunities to investigate, satisfy their curiosity, explore their environment both indoors and outdoors, share the world of books, music, drama and the arts, experience success and develop a positive attitude towards learning.

They are encouraged to make choices and are provided with opportunities through play and other experiences to develop skills and independence.

Young children learn and develop their physical, social, emotional and intellectual skills through playing and talking. They also learn how to socialise as they engage in learning experiences with other children and adults.

By the age of five, a child has learnt all the basic skills they need to survive. It's pretty amazing when you think about it, and it all takes a lot of practice. Any support you can give your child at home will maximise their opportunities to make good progress throughout their school life.

Assessment is an integral part of the daily routine in Reception. The children complete their baseline assessment tasks when they start reception. This gives the class teachers a good understanding of what your child can do already. Their progress at the end of primary school is measured against these first assessments.

It is our aim to work as a team with you and your child to gain the best from their reception experiences. There are two sets of parent consultation evenings and at the end of the summer term, you will receive a written report which shows the progress your child has made. It will also give you details about their learning behaviour and their next steps in learning as they move through to Year 1.

We value the informal discussions with you and these interactions help everyone to keep up to date and foster a mutual commitment to the development of your child. If you feel the need to contact the staff on any matter, do not hesitate to do so using Class Dojo.

Sometimes we find that children's learning progresses at a slower rate than we would expect. To help the children catch up, all Reception staff are involved in small group activities which give extra support when it is needed.

Occasionally children need more support than this. Parents are then invited in to chat to the class teacher about how we can best help. If you ever have any concerns about your child's learning, hearing, speech or mobility please do speak to us and we will do all we can to help.

Our SENDCo is Mrs Leyland who is also available to discuss concerns alongside the class teacher.

Our School Day

A typical school day may look like this:

- 8.45am – Registration and breakfast
- Phonics
- Reading and writing
- Mathematics
- Group activities
- Lunch
- Registration
- Outdoor learning
- Choosing time
- Small Group Activity
- Interventions and catch-up sessions
- Story Time
- 3.15pm - Home time

Arrival

Doors open at **8.45am**. You will be able to line up along the path safely. Children will enter the classroom with their peers. Please try to use the Class Dojo system to pass on any messages, this will help avoid it being forgotten during the morning rush.

Late Arrival

If you anticipate a late arrival, please let the school office know in advance. The doors are closed at **8.55am** and if you arrive after this time please sign in at the late door.

Collection

School finishes at **3.15pm.** Please wait by the classroom outside door and Reception staff will send your child to you. Children will only be released to known adults, indicated on the pupil information, contact and consent form. If there are any changes to collection arrangements, please let us know in writing, face to face or by contacting the school office. Obviously, you will want to be in good time to collect your child from school. If, for any reason, you are going to be late, please notify us and we can reassure your child that everything is fine.

We offer wraparound care for parents, beginning at 7:30am each morning at a cost of £3 per session. Afternoon sessions are available for £6 and run until 5:30pm from Monday to Thursday, and until 5:00pm on Fridays. These sessions can be pre-booked through the Arbor administration system, which all parents will be invited to join in preparation for September.

Lunchtimes

All children from Reception to Year 2 are provided with a free school meal. The school works with Sunderland Catering Services to provide lunches for the children. Meals are cooked on site in our kitchen by our catering team. Weekly menus are available to view on our school website and published on the school website.

We provide freshly produced hot specials of the day, fresh vegetables and salad, vegetarian choice, hot and cold desserts and sandwiches. If your child has a food allergy or specific dietary requirements, please ensure that you inform school of this, so we can write a care plan with you.

During the day, each class enjoys a healthy snack. The Government provides a range of fruit and vegetables free to the school for all of our EYFS and KS1 children. We support the children over a period of weeks to become independent in helping themselves to a piece of fruit or a vegetable each morning. Parents are often amazed at the range of fruit and vegetables that the children will try, which they wouldn't necessarily try at home.

Each child is provided with a carton of milk, free of charge for those under the age of five. In addition, children's water bottles are accessible to them throughout the school day.

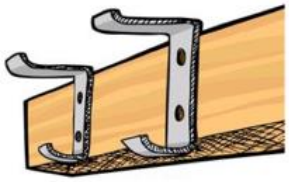
Please provide a water bottle, clearly labelled, and ensure your child brings it to school every day.

Towards Independence

Many parents or carers often worry about how they can prepare their child for starting school. We have put together some helpful hints in order to support your child as they enter this new and exciting phase of their lives.

Useful Skills

When your child starts school it would be helpful if they could do these things for themselves:



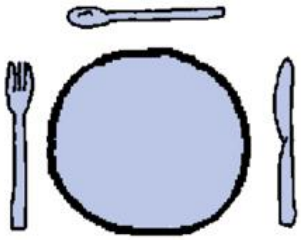
Take off coat and hang it up

Put on coat and do it up

Change shoes

Use the toilet independently

Wash and dry hands



Use a knife and fork

Help to tidy things away

Use a tissue independently

During the year, your child will develop many skills which will form the foundation of all their future learning. Your child needs your help if they are to gain the independence needed to make the best possible use of all the opportunities on offer in school. We encourage all children to be independent learners as soon as they start in school. It is therefore important that children are given the best opportunities from home to support them with this independence.

Before your child starts school try to teach them to find, put on and fasten their coat and manage gloves and hats. Teach your child to dress and undress themselves in their uniform. Remember to purchase shoes with Velcro on rather than lace up shoes, so that your child can easily remove and replace their own footwear. By teaching your child to do these things independently you will be offering your child (and all the others in the class) the opportunity to make the best use of teacher time. Keep practising over the holidays!

There are toilets outside the classroom area and children are free to use them whenever they need to. To help your child, teach them to use the toilet independently (this is essential). Train your child to flush the toilet then wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds after they have been to the toilet. Unless your child has a specific medical reason, children need to be able to use the toilet area independently.

Some parents worry that their child will need to know the alphabet or be able to write their name before they start school. This is not necessarily the case. We will teach the children how to form the letters of their name correctly as part of our learning in school. One thing that would be really useful for your child to do before they start school is to learn how to recognise their name. This will help them when locating their peg, finding lost items of clothing, etc.

Share books with your child every day. Encourage a love of stories and show them how to look after their books. Ask them to answer questions about the story, recognize familiar characters and join in

with repeated phrases. Make learning letter sounds fun by keeping sessions quick and easy and by looking for letters everywhere you go, especially those in their name!

Having lunch with friends is one of the things that many children look forward to, but lunchtime can be an anxious time for young children. You can help your child enjoy lunchtime by teaching them to sit at a table to eat their food, demonstrating good manners and correctly using a knife and fork independently. Children will be encouraged to 'try' all foods and to eat a reasonable meal.

We aim for each child to enter the classroom independently, hang up their own coat and be ready to enjoy the day.

All of these things will help your child have a positive first experience of school.

Parent Partnerships

We are very proud of our strong parental partnerships. We ensure that parents feel secure in the knowledge that their child is well cared for and happy at school. Our parents are welcome to be actively involved in their child's learning in school and are able to share learning experiences through learning journeys and parent workshops. We recognise that parents are the first educators in children's lives and value contributions to judgements about children's development. We use this information to support our assessments and share information about what your child needs to do next to develop and thrive.

We also stay in touch via:

We use apps called Abor and ClassDojo where important messages are sent home about people progress and school activities. We use the Arbor app for all communications relating to pupil welfare, contact details, attendance and administration. Please make sure that you update your mobile phone numbers and email addresses in the app so we can always contact you.

Arbor

ClassDojo

The school website also provides parents with lots of information. Our school website is updated on a regular basis and is an ideal tool for parents to use to get up to date information about the school, including the Reception curriculum.

School Website: https://www.thorneycloseprimary.org.uk/

We hold a formal parents evening at the start of the year to discuss how your child has settled into school in the Autum and Spring terms to discuss your child's progress.

Should you have any worries or concerns about your child's learning or well-being, please let your child's class teacher know as soon as possible. Staff are always happy to meet with you informally in order to discuss your child's needs.

First Week

We start school on **Thursday, 4th September 2025.**

Nothing's going to make that first day at school more fretful than trying to find a change of everything in the morning. Pack your child's bag in advance every night before a school day.

One of the banes of school life is losing possessions - something will inevitably go astray. You can minimise losses by encouraging your child to look after their own belongings, putting things away in bags and hanging items on specific pegs. When it comes to labelling clothing, maybe ask your child to choose a special symbol that is their own unique mark - perhaps a smiley face or a star - to help them recognise their own things at a glance in those fraught early weeks when everyone's items may look identical to your child's!

Make sure you have something fun to keep you occupied during those first few days, be it shopping, walks or work. If you can meet up with a parent who's an old hand at this school lark, even better, as they can reassure you if you start to get too anxious.

As a parent, you have to accept that starting school is a stage in your child's development and they are becoming more independent. If you are finding the experience difficult, try and put on a brave face in front of your child and then go around the corner and weep! And when that glorious first day is done, you can start the age-old tradition of asking, "What did you get up to at school today?"

As you're walking to school on that very first day, remind yourself that there's a whole cast of new characters to get to know - teachers, teaching assistants, other parents - and a plot that is yet to be written. You may be the producer of this adventure; the teacher may be a director; but it is your child who is about to join the cast of their very own wonderful school community!

School Uniform

Our school uniform gives your child a sense of belonging and pride in their school and stops any worrying about what they will need to wear each day. Our school uniform consists of the following items:

- Sweatshirt or Cardigan (with/without school logo)
- White polo shirt (optional with school logo)
- Grey 'school type' trousers, shorts, skirt, skort or pinafore dress
- Black school shoes (flat sole/low heels, not trainers or boots)
- Black, grey or white socks/tights
- Blue check dresses (optional - Summer term only)

- Outdoor coat

We give the school The school PE kit and you provide pumps or trainers.

In Reception, each afternoon, we go outdoors in all weathers, so your child will need a warm outdoor coat with a hood and in winter a hat, scarf and gloves. Children will need a sun hat and sun cream in the summer.

The children regularly spend time in the outdoor area. This is a wonderful opportunity to engage in learning outside of the classroom.

We kindly ask the following:

- Provide a pair of labelled wellington boots. These can be left at school and will be sent home at the end of each term. Please note, we will go out in all weathers.
- Long hair should be tied back at all times. Hair accessories should be simple and limited to the school colours.
- We prefer children NOT to wear jewellery because of potential for accidents. However, small round 'ball like' silver/gold earring studs ONLY may be worn. These MUST be removed for PE/Games or covered with a plaster provided by home and the child needs to be able to do this themselves.

Safeguarding

Thorney Close Primary School takes the safety of its children very seriously and adheres to all safeguarding policies and procedures recommended by the Local Authority. We have a regularly reviewed and rigorous Safeguarding Policy. A copy of the Safeguarding Policy is available on request from the office, or from our school website.

All staff, including our volunteers and supply staff, must ensure that they are aware of our rigorous safeguarding procedures. All adults who work in the school are subject to Disclosure Barring System (DBS) investigation procedures as well as rigorous employment and interview checking procedures.

Sometimes we may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. We will always ensure that our concerns about our pupils are discussed with their parents/carers first unless we have reason to believe that this is not in the child's best interests.

The well-being of each child is the responsibility of the class teacher under the oversight of the Early Years Lead, Deputy Head Teacher and Head Teacher. If you have any concerns about safeguarding, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the safeguarding team.

- Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs Jones.
- Our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs Leyland. T
- he Governor responsible for safeguarding is Lorraine Scott

Any on-going ailments for which medicine may need to be administered e.g. asthma, allergic reactions, must be included on your child's form. Please make sure you regularly check the dates on these medicines and replace them when necessary. Staff cannot give medicines of any kind to the children without a medical prescription.

On the rare occasions where a first aider is required to administer medicine at school, you will be required to fill in a medical consent form and ensure the medicine is in date, labelled and has dosage instructions. With the exception of inhalers, no medicine is kept in the classrooms.

Attendance Counts

Our expectation is 96% Attendance

Absence

When your child is unwell you should inform the School Office before 8:45am.

Telephone: 0191 5250808 and select option 1Leave your child's name, class and reason for absence.

Abor Notification: Messages can be sent through Arbor to notify the school of your child's absence.

Email: - parents@thorneycloseprimaryschool.co.uk detailing your child's name, class and reason for absence.

Please do not send attendance messages through Class Dojo, as they may only be visible to the individual staff member they are sent to. If that person is not in school, the message may not be passed on in time.

If your child has suffered from vomiting or diarrhoea they must stay at home for at least 48 hours after the last bout suffered. This is to protect all the other children and staff. If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you. It is important that we have your up to date contact details. If any of your details change, please update your Abor account.

It is essential that your child arrives on time every day. Lateness affects your child's education. Five minutes late every day adds up to 3 days missed from school over a year. 15 minutes late adds up to missing 2 weeks over a year. So being late can add up to a lot of lost learning time. Please help your child to be punctual.

It is also important that you are punctual in collecting your child at the end of the session. If you are going to be late you must call the school to inform the Office staff who will pass the message to the Reception Team.

We give attendance a high priority in our school. Low attendance is always investigated. If your child is ill you **MUST** contact the school using the Abor app or telephone the office before 8.45 am to inform us of the reason for absence. Do not use class door to report a pupil absence this is not the purpose of this communication system. In the interests of children's safety, it is our policy to follow up any unexplained absences.

We **do not** authorise any extended leave or holidays during term time, even if your child is under the age of five. Fines will be issued for any holidays or unauthorised absence patterns in line with the Together for Children information provided in your admission pack.

Members of the school team have been trained in the delivery of First Aid and First Aid equipment is available outside the Reception classrooms. Minor injuries can be treated in school but parents will be informed immediately in the event of a more serious injury. Parents must inform the office of any change to emergency contact telephone numbers.

Our school has high standards and expectations of behaviour for all children. If we have any concerns about your child's behaviour, we will contact you in order for us to work together and support your child. We do not tolerate bullying of any child. We do not tolerate racist or homophobic comments in our school.

Pupil Premium

Introduced in 2011, the pupil premium is a sum of money given to schools each year by the Government to improve the attainment of children who are currently entitled to free school meals or have been entitled to free school meals at any point within the previous 6 years.

The Government expects each school to choose how to spend their pupil premium money, as we are best placed to identify what would be of most benefit to the children who are eligible. Please see the Pupil Premium Report on our school website for a detailed breakdown of how we have spent this year's funding and how we intend to spend the Pupil Premium next year. Often, all of the children in a class will reap some benefit from how the school spends its pupil premium: for example, if the money is used to fund an additional teaching assistant who works across the whole class, rather than providing one-to-one support.

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension credit
- Child Tax Credit – provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190

OR if they have been:

- Looked after by the Local Authority for at least one day
- Have been adopted from care
- Have left care through special guardianship; and
- Subject to a child arrangement order – setting out with whom the child is to live (formerly a 'residence order')
- To claim this money for your child, you are asked to complete a section on the Family Portal which you have used to apply for school places.

It is vital that parents still apply to register their free school meal entitlement to ensure that funding is available (£1,515 per child) to provide children with the support they require.

Equality

At Thorney Close Primary School we welcome the equality duties placed on schools. We believe that all pupils and members of staff should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential whatever their background, identity and circumstance.

We are committed to creating a community that recognises and celebrates difference within a culture of respect and cooperation. We appreciate that a culture which promotes equality in relation to all protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) will create a positive environment and a shared sense of belonging for all who work, learn and use the services of our school. Our commitment to equality and diversity is a fundamental part of our drive towards continued excellence. We recognise that equality will only be achieved by the whole school community working together and expect that you will support this fundamental part of our work.

And Finally…

We hope that you and your child will enjoy your time with us here at Thorney Close Primary School. We appreciate the trust you are showing by placing your child in our care. Together we will provide the best education we can to unlock your child's full potential.

You may like to become a school volunteer and work with small groups of children on a range of activities such as cooking, reading, computing activities, gardening and sewing. If you have any special skills you would like to share, please let us know.

All parent volunteers need to complete a DBS check which can be arranged by appointment through the school office.

If you require any further information, please speak to any member of the Reception Team, or visit the school website.