

## **Plain text version of the West Sussex County Council leaflet: Starting School**

### **The right time for your child to start school**

All parents want to help their child to get the most from their time at school. In West Sussex, we are committed to supporting you to ensure that happens. Starting school is a memorable point in a child's life and there are many processes in place to make your child's start at school as smooth as possible. Children may attend a range of early years settings before they start school. This is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which continues into school to the end of a child's Reception Year.

All children are offered a place at school to start in the September of the academic year (September to August) in which they turn 5. Although children do not have to start school until the term after their fifth birthday, the majority of children start school in the September before they turn 5. They continue their learning in the EYFS supported by the staff in school who respond to individual children's needs.

### **Flexibility for you and your child**

Parents know their child best and some parents may feel that their child would benefit from a later or more flexible start to school. In West Sussex, we offer parents the flexibility to choose when their child starts school. Children do not have to start school in September. The only rule is that your child must start their full-time education by the term after their fifth birthday. Once you have been offered your child's place at school, they can start at the beginning of any term during the reception year.

If you feel that your child would benefit from starting school later, we recommend that you talk to the school as soon as possible to discuss this decision. A Spring or Summer Term may suit your child better. You may also wish to discuss with your school whether a gradual start may help your child settle in. This is sometimes called a staggered start. Children who do start school on a part-time basis

will no longer be eligible for the Free Entitlement (Early Years Provision) funding at an early years setting.

If your child is summer born and you consider that they are not ready to start school before their fifth birthday, you may discuss with the Local Authority, and the admission authority for the school you want, the option of your child being put in the younger year group. For further information regarding this entitlement please see the Information for Parents Booklet from the Pupil Admissions Team, or contact them directly (see back page).

### **Love of learning**

The first five years of a child's life are crucial. This is when a child develops the skills and love of learning that will help shape the rest of his/her life. The Government designed the EYFS for all children to follow until they leave their reception year.

The EYFS provides children of 5 and under with a solid base of skills, knowledge and understanding; literally a foundation for their future education and development. It is a play-based curriculum which encourages young children to learn through play, exploration and first-hand experience.

### **A broad range of skills**

To ensure all children aged 5 and under develop the broad range of skills they will need throughout their lives, they will learn through guided play in 7 areas of learning. These are split into:

- 3 prime areas - Communication and Language; Physical Development; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; *and*
- 4 specific areas – Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World; and Expressive Arts and Design.

Further information on the EYFS can be found online at [www.foundationyears.org.uk/parents](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/parents)

If your child has attended an early years setting they may have a Learning Journal (record of development) which should be forwarded to their new school. This will help your child's new school understand their progress to date.

### **Helping your child to thrive**

All children are different and have different needs whether they attend a day nursery, nursery school, playgroup, pre-school, childminder or school. West Sussex County Council wants parents to have the freedom to ensure their children's individual needs are met.

As a parent or carer, you can choose (in discussion with the head teacher of the school you have been offered and the supervisor/manager of your current setting or childminder) the term in which your child starts school. Flexibility and understanding are vital to learning and developmental success. Children learn best when they are happy. Your child will learn through guided play, steadily developing skills and understanding. All children follow the EYFS until the end of the academic year in which their fifth birthday falls.

### **Choosing a school - points to consider**

Look out for Open Days to go and visit the schools you are interested in your child attending, or ask for an appointment if you can't get along to the day. Visiting the school is the best way to decide whether it will meet your child's needs. Think of questions you want to ask when visiting schools to find out more about the school environment and whether it will suit your child.

Read a copy of the school prospectus and their latest Ofsted inspection report, available on each school's website (search via [www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions)) or by contacting the school directly. These will provide you with information about how well a school is performing. Inspection reports can also be viewed on the Ofsted website [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports). Read the oversubscription criteria (available from the Pupil Admissions Team,

see back page) for the schools you want and how places were offered the previous year. This will help you to make realistic applications and to avoid disappointment.

The Parent Partnership Service offers support to you as a parent to complete your Schools Admissions Application. This includes helping to formulate your thoughts when choosing which type of school may be best suited to your child.

### **Preparing you and your child for school**

This can be a busy and exciting time with lots of things to organise and prepare for. There are a variety of things you can do to help make the process a bit easier.

- Find out about school visits so that you are able to attend. You may need to book time off work so that you can share this experience with your child.
- Don't be embarrassed to ask the school lots of questions. They want you to be fully informed and happy with arrangements so that preparations for school are stress-free.
- Find out if your school does staggered starts for new children. This means that your child might not start on the first week but later on in the term. If so, you may need to extend your child's time at their childcare provision.
- Share information about your child which could be important for the school to know, such as allergies, health issues or additional needs.
- As soon as you know term dates and half-terms, make a note of these. This way you can avoid booking holidays in term-time and have time to organise childcare if you need it. It is important to check with your child's school if you are thinking of taking your child out of school during term time.
- Start to gather together all of the things your child will need, such as school uniform, PE kit, lunch box etc and ensure all are clearly labelled or easily identified.
- Remember, children grow very quickly so don't get the uniform too soon. Also, some schools may sell second-hand uniforms.

- Talk to your child about the meal they will have (packed lunch or school dinners) so that they are prepared for lunch times.
- Share books about going to school to talk about learning in a positive way. Your local library is likely to have some books and it's free.
- Encourage your child to do things independently and build up their confidence.
- Let them ask you for help when they need it rather than offering it so that they will be confident to ask others for help at school.
- Think about what your daily routine will be like once your child is at school. You will need to make sure they arrive on time and have what they need for the day.
- If you work, will you need childcare at the beginning or end of the school day or during the holidays?
- Find out about what your child is learning at school and get involved wherever possible. Your child will be delighted that you are interested in what they are doing. Children learn best when they are happy.
- Your local Children and Family Centre will have information leaflets and useful advice about starting school. Find your local centre online via [www.westsussex.gov.uk/cfc](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/cfc) or contact us.

### **Childcare before and after school and in the holidays**

We can provide you with details of suitable childminders, breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday playschemes. Our leaflet, Discover Childcare, helps you choose suitable childcare. Visit us online or contact us for assistance.

### **Contact us**

#### **Pupil Admissions Team**

- Information about infant and primary schools
- Parents Information Booklet
- Oversubscription Criteria
- Request paper copies of application forms

Internet: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions)

Email: [admissions.north@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:admissions.north@westsussex.gov.uk)

or [admissions.south@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:admissions.south@westsussex.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0845 075 1007

Opening hours: Monday – Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm

### **Parent Partnership Service**

- Assistance with completing the application form

Internet: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/parentpartnership](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/parentpartnership)

Email: [parent.partnership@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:parent.partnership@westsussex.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0845 075 1008

Opening hours: Monday – Friday 8.00am to 4.00pm

### **Family Information Service**

- Information and guidance about your childcare needs
- To find your local Children and Family Centre

Internet: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/freechildcare](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/freechildcare)

Email: [family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01243 777807

Post: West Sussex Family Information Service, Early Childhood Service, 1st Floor, The Grange County Hall, Chichester West Sussex, PO19 1RG

Find us on Facebook: @FISWESTSUSSEX

Opening hours: Monday – Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm