**Q&A from virtual open event for Christ Church C of E Primary School held on Dec 7, 2020**

**Q. What does a day in reception look like?**

A. Every day is different because the team follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf) curriculum, with its emphasis on child learning through self-directed play. When children arrive and are dropped off by their parents or carers (who are welcomed into the EYFS space outside Covid restrictions), the day usually starts with some “carpet time” which is led by the class teacher. Learning takes place through topics, with equipment and resources set up in different parts of the indoor and outdoor space to encourage children to engage but in the way that they want to. For example, recently the topic was “festivals” and because it was Diwali, an area had been set up to do with light which the children really enjoyed and evolved very naturally into lots of science learning. The staff team of teachers and early years educators (all of whom are [specialists](https://www.earlyyearscareers.com/eyc/latest-news/early-years-educators-not-teachers/#:~:text=For%20many%20people%20including%20parents%20and%20practitioners%2C%20there,even%20degree%20qualifications%20in%20early%20years%20and%20education.) in this age group) work alongside the children at all times.

There is a mid-morning break, during which fruit is served (and milk for those who have enrolled on the [scheme](https://www.coolmilk.com/schools/)), then it is back to free-flow learning before everyone is gathered on the carpet ahead of the lunch break. This is provided in the school hall, and children can opt for school dinners (all children up to the end of Year 2 are entitled to [free school meals](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals)) or a packed lunch from home before heading outside to play.

The afternoon session starts with another carpet time followed by more free-flow learning, before they gather once more on the carpet just before the end of the day.

**Q. What do you do to maintain a love of learning in children?**

A. By children learning through their own play, they thoroughly enjoy school. The free-flow approach is also used in Years 1 and 2 and is something very special about Christ Church School; most primary schools switch to much more formal methods of teaching and learning after the Reception year due to the move to the National Curriculum at that stage, but many children find this transition very difficult so maintaining the free-flow approach is something we find works very well for our children.

Our staff are knowledgeable, skilled and experienced, and love working with children in this way, although it seems like they are “just playing”, we know from our observations and tracking that they make excellent progress. Parents can view some of what their children are doing on [Seesaw](https://web.seesaw.me/), our online learning and communication platform (further up the school we use [Google Classroom](https://edu.google.co.uk/products/classroom/)).

You may find it useful to view the curriculum maps for our Reception year at <https://christchurch.croydon.sch.uk/?page_id=1587>

**Q. What is your approach to creative activities?**

A. We are lucky to have a lot of space for our Reception children, with two large classrooms, a covered outdoor area that children have access to at all times, and a further outdoor space called The Spinney which is wooded and has a fire pit and we use for [Forest School](https://www.forestschoolassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/) activities. We also take regular learning walks around the school and into the Rotary Field park which neighbours the school site. There are lots of opportunities for children to be creative in lots of different ways, as we work hard to offer a broad and rich curriculum that will interest and excite them.

**Q. Do you follow a particular model or programme for reading, writing and maths?**

A. We teach phonics every day, based on the [Phonics Bugs](https://www.pearson.com.au/educator/primary/browse-resources-online/english/bug-club/phonics-bug/) scheme which has online resources that parents and carers can access as well. There is an emphasis on “real” books rather than reading schemes because we aim to instil a love of reading and books in every child, no matter which books interest them (and the books written for reading schemes tend to not do that).

In terms of writing, there are always opportunities for children to mark make (the term used for emerging writing) and write, and again, it is led by them and their interests, and supported by the staff team. Two projects the staff team have been involved in are [Talk4Writing](https://www.talk4writing.com/), a teaching framework that enables children to work towards writing their own version of a story that they’ve talked about, and [Helicopter Stories](https://helicopterstories.co.uk/), which involves children dictating their stories to an adult who writes it down and then works with the children to act it out.

With regards to maths, this is something that is fully embedded into the Reception environment, often without the children realising it! For example, we might be doing a topic and there are activities around counting, using measuring equipment such as balances or rulers, identifying shapes… the possibilities are endless and ever-present.

**Q. How do you handle discipline?**

A. We have a behaviour policy which is updated regularly, and can be found at <https://christchurch.croydon.sch.uk/?page_id=1958>. But broadly we work on the principle that children should feel part of a community in which they are valued and encouraged to learning and interact with others in a secure and constructive atmosphere, and staff treat behaviour as the way in which a child is communicating how they are feeling. Where behaviour is not acceptable, staff try and understand why children are responding in the way that they do, and support them to make positive choices in similar situations in the future.

Our values of love, courage, honesty, faith and forgiveness underpin everything we do, so for example if a child has shown poor behaviour, we talk to the child about the behaviour rather than making it a characteristic (eg. “that was an unkind thing to do” rather than “you were unkind”). We talk about how actions have consequences, and encourage children to reflect on their behaviour, because we want their motivation to come from within (because that’s the person they want to be) rather than them doing things to please others. More on this can be found at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-baby-scientist/201806/motivating-children-without-rewards>

A recent supply teacher commented on how calm she found working at Christ Church School compared to other places she had been to, despite the absence of reward schemes and so on, and how happy the children were. We believe that to be the case because children and staff strive to behave well because that is who they are and want to be.

**Q. Is music part of school life?**

A. Music is a big part of our curriculum, with all year groups benefitting from sessions with a specialist music teacher, in our music room which has a wide range of instruments, and in the hall for singing. There is a gala concert every year, a Year 6 production (for which the Y5 children act as the chorus), and nativities for Years R to 2, and when we are able to do whole school assemblies again, singing is very much part of our collective worship. The choir also sings at the Christmas lights ceremony in Purley, and we regularly go across the road to Christ Church for services of which music and singing is an integral part.

**Q. Do you take the children swimming?**

A. Usually children from year 3 upwards go for swimming lessons to Purley Pool, though this has not been possible since March 2020. We are looking into how to take this forward as Purley Pool is being threatened with closure.

**Q. What extracurricular activities are available?**

A. Outside Covid restrictions, we run many sports clubs, for example football, netball, athletics, table tennis etc, but this is dependent on staff members having the skills and capacity to run them. When clubs are provided in-house, they are provided free of charge, but we have some external providers as well who run activities on a paid-for basis or there may be a nominal fee to cover costs; in the past we have run French, football and cookery in this way. There is a lunch time orchestra and choir, open to all who want to join in (subject to their year group), and instrument lessons available on a paid-for basis for piano, brass and woodwind. There is also a Christian Club run by [Christ Church](https://www.christchurchpurley.org.uk/) staff (from the church, not the school).

**Q. What is the provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?**

A. Our school seeks to be fully inclusive, and accepts and values difference. Children learn best together, and benefit from knowing that people have differing and specific needs, and learn how to support and care for each other. We are also aware of the importance of every child’s racial and cultural heritages, and work tirelessly to celebrate different backgrounds and promote effective learning. We also take into account the particular factors which support the development of children for whom English is an additional language (EAL), aiming to overcome any barriers to effective communication in whichever way is most appropriate.

The SEND and EAL provision is a real strength of the school. We have a dedicated SEND coordinator (SENDCo) who works every day with teachers and support staff to develop support plans for children that include targets, regularly monitors and reviews these plans and targets, and works with families to achieve the best progress and outcomes for the children involved. We also liaise with a range of experts, such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists, when this is necessary, and develop Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as needed.

More broadly, we are conscious of the mental health needs of our children, and have two staff members who are trained counsellors who support our wellbeing work and work with individual children as needed.

**Q. How does the school meet the needs of more able children?**

A. Teachers are adept at identifying the needs of all children, whatever they might be, and differentiating learning so they are nurtured towards achieving their very best. Booster and enrichment sessions and activities support this.

**Q. Do you have wraparound care?**

A. Breakfast club is provided on-site by staff from Purley Nursery School from 7:45am. After-school care is provided at [Purley Nursery School](https://www.purleynurseryschoolcc.com/) for the younger year groups, and by [Play Place](https://www.playplace.org/after-school-projects/play-place-purley-croydon.html) for older children. Both collect from school at the end of the day and run until around 6pm. All are extremely popular and need to be booked well ahead. These are paid-for schemes. Please note that the after-school care was not being provided at Purley Nursery School at the time of writing due to Covid restrictions but will be back up and running when it is feasible to do so.

**Q. What is the progression like to secondary school?**

A. Children go to a wide range of secondary schools – from local schools like Harris Purley, Riddlesdown, Woodcote, Thomas More and Oasis Coulsdon and faith schools like Archbishop Tenison, to the grammar schools like Wallington Girls and Wilson’s and private schools such as Croydon High, Old Palace, Royal Russell, Whitgift and Trinity. We work with every school in terms of transition for the children, and have good channels of communication. But every child who comes to Christ Church School remains a Christ Church student, and we have many who return for school events such as fairs and productions, and come for work experience, which is a joy for everyone.

**Q. How did the move from one to two form entry affect the feel and character of the school?**

A. If anything, it strengthened the feel and character of the school, with a bigger but equally dedicated staff team. A member of staff who worked at the school when it was one-form entry, then left for several years before returning in September 2020 has commented on how the family feel of the school remains as strong as it ever was, if not even stronger. This is very much a school that regards itself as a community of staff, children and families, and is constantly working towards the best outcomes for everyone.

**Q. What is the staff turnover within the school?**

A. We pride ourselves on growing teachers and staff, providing a lot of opportunities for professional development. Over the last decade or so, four of our teachers have become Head Teachers, which is phenomenal, and we are also proud that we have supported several teaching assistants in their quest to become teachers. Otherwise, staff tend to leave because they are moving geographically, or are stepping outside education, and staff tend to stay for a long time because they enjoy working her. We have also seen significant growth in our staff team over the last decade as we have grown from one to two form entry.

**Q. Are the financial problems at Croydon Council expected to impact on staffing?**

A. We are keeping a close eye on this, but it feels unlikely from a staffing point of view: we are well regarded as running a very tight ship financially, with diligent oversight from the governing body’s finance committee. What might happen is that staff are cut at the Local Authority itself, which could affect the support we receive in terms of school advisors and so on, but we are lucky to also receive excellent support from [Southwark Diocesan Board of Education](https://education.southwark.anglican.org/) (SDBE) because we are a church school.

**Q. Isn’t a new head starting soon?**

A. Yes, Mrs Pike recently retired after 15 years at the school, including 13 as head. At the time of writing, Mrs Hudson, deputy head, was acting head, with Mrs Gravett moving outside her Year 4 class to become acting deputy head, supported by assistant head Mr Lane. In January, Mrs Richardson is joining as head and is excited to start at a school that is so aligned with her beliefs in an education that is inclusive, nurturing and always trying to help every child achieve their best outcomes, whatever they might be.

**Q. How many siblings are expected to join in September 2021?**

A. 27

**Q. Do I need to complete the supplementary application form, even if my family doesn’t attend church? And when do I need to apply by?**

A. We request that you do, even if you are not a church attender. Please note that children and families of all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed at our school, and everyone is treated with respect. The form and our admissions criteria can be located at <https://christchurch.croydon.sch.uk/?page_id=1851>

Parents and carers need to apply for a primary school place by January 15, 2021 at <https://www.eadmissions.org.uk/> The primary school prospectus produced by Croydon Local Authority, which details how the application and admissions process works is at <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Schools/Prosepctus/Primary-School-Admissions-202122.pdf>. You will be notified of the outcome of your application by email on April 16, 2021 and have two weeks to accept or decline the offer.

**Q. I’ve got a question that isn’t answered here, who do I direct it to?**

A. Please do look at our website at <https://christchurch.croydon.sch.uk/?page_id=3171>, including our prospectus, as there may be answers there. Otherwise, please email your question to office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and we will do our best to help you.