



Normanhurst FAQs

How many pupils do you have per class and what's the maximum you will go to?

Our uniqueness is the fact we have small numbers per year group. We try to keep numbers manageable for the staff and pupils learning experience. It varies in every year group and tends to be around 12 in the juniors, with a maximum of 18. We believe that small class sizes contribute to the happiness and success of every pupil.

Being a small school, how do the pupils know what competition looks like?

Fortunately, we are part of the ISA and have some great opportunities to take part in events and competitions from the local to the national scale. This can be in sport, art, drama and writing to name but a few. We also take part in more local sports fixtures and also events and competitions with the other Oak-Trees Group of schools. Healthy competition is important for life and we aim to give pupils exposure to these events to prepare for life beyond Normanhurst.

What are the benefits of such small class sizes?

Small class sizes mean a productive relationship between staff and pupils. Marking is meaningful and personalised to the learning of the individual. Verbal feedback can be given frequently and can focus on the specific strengths and areas for improvement of the individual child. Pupils get to know each other really well and develop lasting friendships that are supportive and caring. It means that as a Headteacher, I can also get to know each pupils really well and celebrate their successes in a meaningful and sincere way.

Do you have bullying and how do you deal with it?

We have an anti-bullying policy that seeks to support all the individuals that may be involved. Being a small school means that issues do not go unnoticed and the class teacher or form tutor can deal with these quickly. We aim to involve and listen to all pupils that may be having an issue and resolve the difficulties with sensitivity.

What do you do to recognise and celebrate the talents of pupils throughout their lives at school?

We have a house system that rewards collective team work and individual pupils can receive house points for work they have done, or upholding our aims and values through their positive actions. We have a whole school Golden book assembly that celebrates success on a weekly basis as well as the star of the week notice board. As well as this we have a pupil of the week certificate. The children have a number of opportunities to be rewarded and celebrated.

What are the benefits of all-through education?

Pupils will tell you that they love being on a site that can accommodate pupils from Kindergarten all the way to Year 11. It fosters responsibility – pupils take on roles throughout the school that mean they have to look after and be a positive role model. Older pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils in play and in their learning experience. The younger pupils are thrilled when a senior pupil reads or tells them something that they didn't know before and this really develops strong relationships between all pupils. Staff find the all-through education incredibly rewarding. Many of our pupils start in kindergarten and continue their journey to Year 11. There's no feeling quite like seeing a pupil develop and gain confidence over the years to become a successful young person with a great personality and exceptional grades.

How does the 11+ work?

The 11+ exam is a standard exam assessing numeracy and literacy at the end of the junior school cycle. The English part of the exam focuses on comprehension, interpretation and analysis skills whilst in the Numeracy paper, students skills in the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) are assessed as well as statistics, geometry, percentages and ratio.



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How does the option system work?

At the start of Year 9 students (and parents) are invited into an options evening whereby the various subjects on offer at the school are presented and discussed by teachers. All students must choose 4 subjects for GCSE on top of the core subjects (English/English Lit, Maths and Science).

Is it advisable for pupils to take a language at GCSE and does this help them with sixth form?

I believe that pupils should be given the tools via the careers programme that we have to make informed choices about their future. Pupils do well because they choose the GCSE pathway that they believe they will enjoy and be successful in. We encourage pupils to create a careers profile in Year 9 so that they have made a good decision for their learning style and their enjoyment. Whether they decide to take a language or not, I am confident that they have made the best decision for their future.

What is the process for 6th form?

All students (and parents) in Year 11 are invited into a presentation evening focusing on the process of selecting 6th form schools/colleges. They are informed of the various requirements of each 6th form place of education and the benefits of different types of course. Mr Botha is in charge of administering applications to 6th form and reference writing and all Year 11 students are interviewed by SLT prior to applying to assist them in the interview technique. We ensure all students have a place in 6th form by the end of the Spring half-term.

Why haven't you got many PE facilities on site? How do you overcome this?

We have an Early Years play area and a junior play area on site. We are also fortunate to have other Oak Tree Schools nearby so that we can share facilities especially when we hold competitions. We also use Larkshall Swimming Pool and the Peter May Sports Centre which are all short journeys away in our school minibus. We are a short walk away from Epping Forest and our teacher take the children for forest walks.

What does your curriculum look like?

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs and talents of all individual pupils. We follow the core subjects that you would expect to find in every school. The language that is taught since kindergarten is French and then pupils can learn Spanish in addition from Year 7. These are offered at GCSE too. We enhance our curriculum by including personal, social health education from Reception to Year 6 as we think this develops pupils critical thinking and emotional intelligence. Being part of an all-through school means that we can use specialist teachers in both the juniors and seniors—music, art, PE, drama, computing and French are all taught by subject specialists from Reception up.

How involved do the senior pupils get with junior pupils?

Unfortunately, because of the COVID restrictions and different bubbles, senior and junior pupils interactions have been very limited. However, normally senior pupils will take responsibility for junior pupils in their houses.

What sort of support do pupils who need extra help get? What does this look like?

Support looks different for each individual pupil. Essentially, support is always best delivered by the class or subject teacher through Quality First Teaching. We recognise that some pupils need extra support in certain areas and we will work with pupils, staff, professionals and parents to discuss the next steps in support. As we are a small school, we can look at individual needs and make an informed and individual decision.



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How do you assess pupils throughout the year and what do you do if someone is not where they should be?

Junior pupils are assessed at the beginning of the year with a baseline assessment from Reception to Year 6. This is an entirely computer based programme that younger children discuss the answers with teachers that are inputted for them. The first assessment is INCAS which gives maths, spelling, reading and developed ability score. In addition, we do in-class assessments for maths, English and science. Throughout the year we assess all subjects in a variety of ways. Assessment for learning happens on a daily basis and can include short assessments. There is a mixture of informal and formal assessment throughout the year. Pupils are assessed every half term and the data is analysed on a regular basis so that intervention and support can be applied appropriately. All pupils have end of year exams and feedback that follows.

How do we (parents) get to know how our child is doing at school?

This is a really common question and we do this very well. We are extremely open and honest and you are highly likely to see junior staff at the beginning and end of the day so that you can speak to class teacher. Every half term, there is a drop-in morning in the juniors where parent can meet the teacher and look at the amazing work that your child has been working on. We have regular parents evenings for all pupils in the school where you can meet teaching staff and have a summative document that details your child's strengths and targets. Regular reporting occurs where parents can view their child's achievements through the portal system. We are always available to chat with you about your child's work.

How does Show My Homework work?

SMHW is the standard school portal for setting and collecting homework. It can be downloaded as an app and utilised by both students and parents who are presented with log-ins at the start of term.



Normanhurst FAQs—Early Years

What does a typical day in Early Years look like?

The days are different for a variety of reasons. This can be weather dependent, topic dependent, dependent on the seasons and time of year and the interests and talents that are displayed by pupils. But we do plan a day of activities that include phonics and number work. But like any good practitioner in Early Years, we seek opportunity to further develop pupil's knowledge and understanding of the world. We encourage spontaneous curiosity and are great at 'in the moment' responsive planning to foster the children's own ideas. In our youngest children we focus on the prime areas of learning Communication and Language, Personal Social and Emotional development and physical skills both the gross skills and the finer ones - with all this in place the children have a wonderful foundation on which to build their learning.

What does your curriculum look like?

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs and talents of all individual pupils. We follow the core subjects that you would expect to find in every school. The languages that are taught in Reception are Spanish & French, alternating each half term.

How early do you start phonics and writing?

We begin phonics in Kindergarten and there is an element of phonics daily – these can be sounds and recognition and we use the Read Write Inc. phonics programme to support their learning. We look at blending in UK and Reception leading into the children being introduced to reading with the Dandelion Launchers reading scheme. We provide opportunities to write in Kindergarten – pencils, paper and other exciting media is always available for pupils to explore with their teachers and independently. They will start this journey when they are ready to take the next step. Lower kindergarten is about equipping pupils with the skills to be able to start writing and this can include developing their fine motor skills and learning to love all kinds of writing. We provide these opportunities to experiment with their writing either for purpose or for creativity throughout their school journey.

When is the best age to begin school?

All children are individuals and will be ready at different ages. We expect children to be out of nappies before starting school, unless there is a medical reason as to why this is not possible. Children in our Lower and Upper Kindergartens need to attend for a minimum of 3 sessions each week, so you need to be confident that your son or daughter is ready for that step. In our experience we find that children enjoy learning through play and socialising with other children from an early age, so we recommend starting at any age from 2½ upwards.

How can I help my child to be ready to start school?

This question is usually about how we settle the children into the setting. Due to current circumstances, we cannot currently offer a period of settling alongside a parent but Mrs Fisher will personally discuss your child's needs with you and we can arrange a personal approach to your child's settling needs. Drop off and pick up is, at present at the school gate and we have a dedicated member of the team that will greet the children each morning to ensure continuity of separation and the routine and reassurance that the younger children need. They are then taken to class where their class teachers and the Early Years team are ready to include them in the start of the day activities.

Will my child have a 'key person'?

We have a teacher and teaching assistant in Reception, two dedicated staff in both of our Upper and Lower Kindergarten classes. The ratio is 1:8 and 1:4 for the youngest children. We have extra staff that work in the department and offer additional support where needed and Mrs Fisher in her role works across all three areas throughout the day.

How do we (parents) get to know how our child is doing at school?

In Early years we are continually observing the children to capture those special learning moments and milestones, these are tracked on a programme called 2 Build a profile and sent home to parents, through the portal at the end of each term.