



NORMANHURST SCHOOL EARLY YEARS

An Exceptional Independent School in North Chingford

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Early Years FAQ





Welcome

Welcome to the Early Years at Normanhurst School. We aim to care for and develop the potential of your child in a nurturing, safe environment, encouraging them to learn through play and delight in discovery. Our Early Years is an engaging and exciting place, and one that enables each pupil to become confident and eager learners, ready and excited to start school life.

The Early Years Foundation Stage at Normanhurst includes Kindergarten (2½-4 year olds) and Reception (4 to 5 year olds). Children can begin school from 2½ years, and are able to attend on a part-time or full-time basis during the Kindergarten Years.

All children flourish in our Early Years. They have excellent relationships with staff and often exceed their expected levels of progress. Normanhurst provides a happy and secure environment to learn and our pupils really enjoy their time at school.

The exciting curriculum is based around the seven Early Learning Goals, but is enriched with a wide range of other activities including Music, Computing and PE lessons; French and Drama workshops; assemblies, performances, trips and outings.

There is generous provision for the Early Years, with spacious classrooms and a dedicated outside learning area that enables learning to happen both inside and outside the classroom.

Each child has a dedicated Key Worker who is responsible for monitoring their progress and development, which is recorded in a portfolio which is available for you to see whenever you would like to.

You are warmly invited to visit our Early Years and see how happy the children are for yourself. We look forward to meeting you.

Why Choose a Normanhurst Early Years?

A wonderful place to learn

Our purpose-built Early Years area offers a spacious, bright and happy environment for your children to learn and explore their abilities. There is also an adjacent outdoor learning environment, built exclusively for the Early Years children, all of which has been designed to nourish your child's imagination. Children delight in gardening activities, exploring the sensory trays and playing on the range of equipment.

Smaller class sizes

One of the many benefits of a Normanhurst Kindergarten or Reception is the ability to have smaller class sizes. With a high number of qualified keyworkers, we give more individual attention to each child and we know each one extremely well. We consider this highly important at these early stages of the children's education when we see such rapid development.

An enriched learning experience

As we are a school and not a standalone nursery, we aim to provide a more structured learning environment in which children are encouraged to learn through play. Our specialist subject teachers enrich the children's learning experiences with activities such as sport, music, dance or computing. There is a focus on developing excellent language and communication skills, through which so much learning happens.

More resources

Our young boys and girls can access a diverse range of resources across the school site, such as the school library, computer suites, iPads, playgrounds, catering facilities and school halls. We have banks of iPads, play equipment and cooking facilities.

Beyond the classroom

Normanhurst school is located within easy walking distance of Epping Forest where we can forage and explore on our weekly walks. The school has outside space offering many opportunities for outdoor learning. The Group also has a fleet of six minibuses that enable regular visits to farms, museums, parks and zoos.

Automatic entry

Starting in Kindergarten enables parents to secure a place for their child at school, and transition from Kindergarten to Reception is automatic. Our Reception class tends to fill up quickly as we expect our Upper Kindergarten children to move up with their friends leaving relatively few places for new entrants.



A smooth transition

Primary and 'all through' schools are well suited to offering pre-school education as they provide the smoothest of transitions for the children as they move up to Reception. Teachers throughout the school form close relationships with the children from an early age and all staff liaise with each other as part of an internal well-organised handover when children move from one year group to the next.

Children cope more easily as they are used to the environment, so there is less of the uncertainty that may come from starting somewhere new. Lower and Upper Kindergarten children frequently attend assemblies or other activities with the older children and are already used to the daily routines of school life. Parents become very familiar with the site, staff and each other as well, which certainly helps the progression through the school.







School Life

Our young pupils are given a named Key Worker who is responsible for observing and developing their learning within the Early Years. The Key Worker is the first point of contact for parents to discuss all aspects of their child's development.

Entry at 3+ in Kindergarten

We normally accept around 15 children into Kindergarten at varying points in the academic year. Although we encourage our Upper Kindergarten children to attend for 5 full days, there is the more flexible option for mornings only while they adjust and settle in.

The young children enjoy a varied programme of both indoors and outdoors activities and experience a balance of learning through play and more formal work. They benefit from dedicated Music, Computing and PE lessons that support their physical development and we monitor their gross motor skills and fine motor skills as they develop in the classroom.

Entry at 4+ Reception

Our Kindergarten children move seamlessly into Reception at the age of 4 and are joined by new friends who come either from local nurseries or who start a formal education for the first time.

Everyone quickly becomes familiar with the routines of daily school life and our Reception pupils are eager and enthusiastic learners. We encourage responsibility with children taking it in turns to be Monitors for the day. Reception pupils help to prepare a healthy snack that includes fruit and vegetables with milk or water.

The children enjoy learning to read and practice their phonics either individually with their Key Workers or in small groups. Pencil control, letter formation and Mathematics all form part of the children's development.

Curriculum

The Kindergarten and Reception classes provide education for children from 2½ to 5 years, and the learning follows the Early Years requirements to develop skills in seven separate areas:

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design





The curriculum is structured to allow an excellent balance between teacher-initiated and pupil-initiated activities. We want our pupils to be enthused by their learning and become engaged with it; we recognise that children need to be able to shape their learning and share their ideas.

High staff to pupil ratios are maintained throughout the day with children always within sight or sound of qualified members of staff. The department adopts a topic-based approach to learning, with a range of activities in the afternoons that include art, music, cooking and physical education.

The Head of Early Years is responsible for the day-to-day development of all Kindergarten and Reception children and is able to advise parents on a wide range of issues.

Parents are welcome to look at their child's learning portfolio at any time and these are readily available in the classrooms.

Physical Education at Normanhurst provides an enjoyable, satisfying and balanced approach for all students to develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. The curriculum is taught by specialist PE teachers from Kindergarten upwards and is designed to offer a comprehensive range of experiences through which pupils are encouraged to develop the personal qualities of commitment, fairness and enthusiasm.

Pupils also have a range of lessons taught by specialist teachers such as Music, French, and Yoga.



A Day in the Life

Our days in Kindergarten vary enormously and we pride ourselves on our 'child led' approach. A day in the life of our younger children can be influenced by many factors including the weather, birthdays, special events and announcements so our staff adapt and change their plans regularly.

Our curriculum is tailored to enable children to work towards achieving the Early Learning Goals, topics, activities, trips and visits are all linked to the strands appropriate to the age of your child.

We are a Kindergarten in a school so your child will very quickly become familiar with the routines of a normal school day. Our Kindergarten class works very closely with Reception and both sets of children get to know many of the older pupils through a variety of whole school activities including sports day and whole school trips.

Our Kindergarten children are happy and extremely confident by the time they move to Reception.

Every day in the Early Years is different, but a typical day might look something like the below. Additionally, pupils may have Music, French, PE and Yoga with be taught by our specialist teachers.

7.30am

Breakfast club opens for those who wish to opt in to this additional service.

8.25am

School opens and children begin to arrive.

8.25 – 10am

Free flow activities both inside and in the garden area. Key worker groups, 1:1 activities with a number or phonics focus.

10.00am

Snack time with a choice of fresh fruit, crackers, toast and other similar items. We all drink water at this time and throughout the day.

10.20am

Story or carpet time

10.30 am

Break time with Reception

10.50am

Focused activity time as a whole department (LK or UK). For example the introduction to a new letter sound or a topic based activity.

12.00pm

Lunch with the whole junior school.

1.00pm

Story time

1.00-3.00pm

Opportunities for independent learning, exploration and play across all 7 areas of learning with self-selection of resources for activities encouraged.

3.00pm

Tidying up time, snack and group singing activities or story to end the day.

3.30pm

Home time for those not staying to club.

3.30- 6.00pm

Tea time and other clubs

Keeping you Informed

We value our close relationships with parents and consult with you on a regular basis. From formal parent/teacher consultations, to drop-in meetings and informal coffee morning chats with the Group Principals and Headmistress.

Parents are also welcome at exhibitions, performances, sports days, our annual Prize Day celebrations and Christmas concerts. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and some accompany school trips or help out at school events.

Drop In Mornings

Regular drop in mornings are an excellent way for you to gain an insight into school life and come and see for yourself what your children have been doing.

Always Contactable

If there is anything that you forgot to mention during the school day, staff are contactable by email or phone, and will always endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible.

Social Media

Our social media accounts, which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, are updated on a daily basis with pictures and school news.

Drop Off and Pick Up

There are numerous opportunities for information to be shared between parents and practitioners. Staff will be on hand every morning and afternoon when you pick up and drop off your children, and will be happy to talk to you about any questions or concerns you may have.

Monthly Newsletters

Every month the Early Years classes are included in the whole school newsletter, which details both key events and general classroom activities that have taken place that month. The newsletters are a great way to see how the Early Years engage with the whole school community.

Parents' Evenings

We also offer regular parent consultation evenings, so that you are able to make regular appointments to come in and discuss your child's progress.

Weekly Photos and Recaps

Every week you'll receive a recap of the many activities the pupils enjoyed throughout the week. This will be accompanied by a range of photographs, providing an additional glimpse of their school day. These encourage discussions between the parents and children in order to further extend the children's critical thinking skills.



Pastoral Care

Pupils' wellbeing underpins all aspects of school life. Normanhurst is a school with a friendly family atmosphere, where pupils feel safe and are encouraged to share their problems and concerns. The Headmistress, Head of Seniors and Head of Juniors are responsible for Pastoral Care with the Form Tutors also playing an important role.

We work closely with parents and those caring for our pupils. Seeing them every day as part of the dropping off and picking up routine gives us opportunities to chat and share information. We build positive relationships with our parents who support us by informing us of their child's 'WOW' moments.

Our Early Years team is approachable and willing to support parents with general advice about their children's education and developmental milestones.

Meals

We understand how important it is to provide nutritionally balanced healthy meals for growing children. All of our meals are cooked onsite using a selection of fresh ingredients. Lunch follows a three-weekly menu offering choice and variety. We cater for allergies and other dietary requirements. Children are also provided with snacks which include fresh fruit and vegetables.





Beyond the Classroom

We make the most of our location, taking learning outside the classroom and into the local environment for Art, Science, Geography and more. We use a number of Olympic quality local sports facilities and offer a wide range of sports throughout the school. Trips and outings form an important part of the curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 11.

Extended Day

We offer a Breakfast Club and After School Club for pupils from Kindergarten to Year 5. Breakfast Club is available from 7.30am and After School Club runs until 6pm.

Extracurricular Activities

There is a broad extracurricular programme providing enriching opportunities for pupils to develop new skills, participate in sports and enjoy a range of creative and musical activities either during or after school.





Admissions

In order to secure a place on our waiting list parents will need to complete the Online Registration Form which requires a non-refundable deposit payment of £50.

A place on the waiting list does not guarantee admission. The School must feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers.

Entry into the Early Years (Lower Kindergarten, Upper Kindergarten & Reception) – children aged 2½ (rising 3) to 5

At all points of entry in the Early Years, the School sets its own tests as appropriate through extensive informal observations that take place by one or more members of staff during an extended Taster Session.

We are looking to admit boys and girls who:

- Are able to interact appropriately with children of a similar age and adults
- Display a level of behaviour that meets the school's high expectations
- Are able to listen to directions and follow instructions
- Are able to concentrate on set activities
- Are able to use the toilet independently, and are dry at the point of entry
- Are able to use language appropriate to their age.
- Children must be 3 in the term in which they start school (rising 3) to join Lower Kindergarten.

In all cases there will be a discussion with the parents by the Headmistress to establish that the School is right for the child.

Children are able to start at different points in the academic year in Lower Kindergarten, Upper Kindergarten and Reception.

- A taster session will be organised in school as part of the admissions process prior to offering a place.
- Parents will normally be required to have registered with the school prior to the Taster Sessions.
- A formal offer will normally be sent to parents at least seven months prior to the intended start date
- The Acceptance Form must be signed and returned to the School Office by two weeks after the formal offer date, after which point if not returned the offer will lapse and a new offer will be sent to the next child on our list.
- School experience sessions are used for staff to observe the children in school and to help the children to acclimatise to their new surroundings. A school experience session will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

Fees and Funding

We recognise that parents make many financial sacrifices when choosing us for their children's education, and we pride ourselves on providing an all-round educational experience that extends well beyond the traditional confines of the classroom.

Our fees represent excellent value for money, especially considering the number of specialist staff and high staff to pupil ratios.

Termly Tuition Fees

For Academic Year September 2021 to July 2022

Early Years	
Lower Kindergarten: Minimum of 3 half-day sessions per week	
Upper Kindergarten: Minimum of 5 half-day sessions per week	
Morning sessions (including lunch)	£500
Morning sessions (not including lunch)	£460
Afternoon sessions	£255
Full Day	£715
Full time	£3,575
Reception	£3,650



Early Years FAQs

How early do you start phonics and writing?

We begin phonics in Kindergarten and there is an element of phonics daily – this includes phonics, sounds and recognition. We move onto blends and word building in Reception. We provide opportunities to write in Kindergarten – pencils, paper and other equipment is always available for pupils. 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, letter formation and learning to love all kinds of writing. We provide opportunities to write spontaneously as part of imaginative role play and creative activities.

Where do I go for help and information?

Our staff will always be happy to discuss your child's learning programme with you. Timetables and information letters are sent home weekly to keep you informed about the topics and your child's work. Evidence is kept in each child's personal portfolio and they also have books and folders that you will be able to look at regularly.

We offer an information meeting for parents about the phonics and mathematics programmes that we follow in school. This enables parents to support their children at home.

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. We provide flexible sessions in Kindergarten, and expect the children in our Reception to attend full time to benefit from the full range of our educational programmes.

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 3 upwards.



Will my child have a 'key person'?

There is regular contact with your child's Key Worker. Before your child joins Normanhurst, you will be invited into school to meet staff including the EYFS Coordinator and your child's Key Worker. In addition they will spend some time with you finding out more about your child and giving you time to share information with us.

Once your child begins school, there are daily opportunities to meet and talk to the Key Worker and other members of the team. There are special parents' meetings for specific discussion on how your child is progressing, and 'getting to know you' mornings when parents are invited into school for informal meetings with staff and other parents.

When should my child start reading?

Children start reading in Kindergarten with our phonics and reading schemes. Not all children progress in reading at the same rate at this early age. Please do not worry if your child is not at the same level as their friends. In Reception, children start by taking home picture books to describe to their parents and make up their own stories. Once the children have learned their sounds and are confident at recognising them, reading books with words are sent home with word recognition sheets.



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 for the individual child. Pupils get to know each other quickly and easily, developing lasting friendships that are supportive and caring.

Do you accept the Government Nursery Grant or Employment Tax Schemes?

Yes. We administer the Essex County Council Nursery Grant scheme on your behalf and apply the large discount to your termly fees. All children between the ages of 3 and 5 benefit.

Some companies provide their staff with Nursery Vouchers, which are a tax saving benefit for employees to use for nursery care. Although we cannot administer this scheme for you, we are registered with multiple schemes and apply these discounts to your termly fees.

COME AND VISIT US

Open Days in March and October.

Personal tours can be arranged at a time to suit you.

CONTACT US

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