



Ridgeway Farm

CE Academy

Welcome to Reception Class
Preparing to Start School



Believe ~ Learn ~ Grow
‘From small seeds grow mighty trees’

Welcome

Dear Families,

Welcome to Ridgeway Farm CE Academy, part of Blue Kite Academy Trust. This is an exciting time for your family as your child/children begin their school life with us. We hope that your child will be very happy, and enjoy many achievements while they are here. Ridgeway Farm CE Academy is rated 'Good' in all areas in our most recent Ofsted inspection (2025) and was also graded 'Good' in our SIAMS inspection. The school has state-of-the-art facilities and a wonderful team waiting to welcome your child.

We have put together a practical guide, combining information and advice from other parents and teachers. Some of the information it contains will already have been provided to you but we have repeated this and provided some very basic practical advice for you to refer to in one document to help you settle your child into school as easily as possible.

In term-time, your queries can be referred to Mrs Proctor in the school office who will be happy to help you.

We hope you find the booklet useful. Please let us know if you think there is something we have missed out so that we might include it in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Laura Gibbard

Mrs Laura Gibbard

Head Teacher



ALL ABOUT US

Our Vision

Our vision is for all children to believe in themselves and develop a love of lifelong learning as we grow together as part of God's family.

To help all children understand the vision and how it applies to their lives, we use the parable of the Mustard Seed from Matthew 13v32:

Believe ~ Learn ~ Grow

'It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and

birds come and make nests in its branches.'

Children at Ridgeway Farm understand that through believing in themselves and others, through the learning each day, that they will grow from the smallest seeds, just like as they enter school in Reception to the mighty trees they are when they leave at the end of their time at Ridgeway Farm. They become mighty trees, trees that others can use for shelter, comfort and strength. Our vision is that our children become these mighty trees making a difference in the local communities and with secure roots to keep them strong and upright.

We are officially a happy school!

As a school, we are dedicated to the well-being, welfare and happiness of our children, parents, staff and wider community. We use lots of different ways to support our family... some of these include:

- Dough disco – where we boogie to music with Play-Doh
- Class anthems – each class decide on an anthem that gets them grooving in the morning
- 100 Things to do before leaving Ridgeway – we have compiled a list of 100 experiences we wish our children to have before they leave our care (you can find this further down the page)
- Happiness calendar – we use Shonette's happiness calendar and choose our top 10 dates every year to celebrate in class
- Random Acts of Kindness – to show our care not only for our family within school but in the wider community too



Getting Ready for School

What will they need?

School Uniform

Our uniform plays a very important part in giving our school its identity. It helps to develop loyalty and pride in belonging to Ridgeway Farm CE Academy.

As a school, we are moving towards an *active uniform* to reflect our curriculum and the fact that our children are physically active every day. Over the next year, we will gradually phase out our traditional uniform and move towards children wearing their PE-style uniform full time. Families are still able to purchase and wear the traditional uniform items listed below during this transition period.

Please support us by ensuring that children come to school in the correct uniform. Trainers are essential every day to support active learning.

All uniform can be purchased online from Monkhouse Schoolwear Specialists or via their shop in Swindon town centre. Please use the following link to enable you to order from Monkhouse: <https://www.monkhouse.com/school/ridgeway-farm-cofe-academy-urn-142321> If you choose delivery to school, this is free!

Please note that **only uniform items with the school logo on them need to be purchased from Monkhouse** e.g. cardigan/sweatshirt and PE kit. All other uniform items, including the navy-checked summer dress, may be purchased from a shop/supermarket of your choice and **do not** need to be embroidered. We just ask that the dresses are navy check and not blue.

All belongings should be clearly named.

Hair Accessories and Styles and Jewellery

Hair should be neat and tidy and not an extreme style. Long hair should be tied back for safety reasons. Plain navy hair bands and bobbles should be worn to school. Large bows and colourful hairbands are not suitable. Hair colorants are not allowed unless special permission is given i.e. for fund-raising events. Children may wear stud earrings, but these must be removed or covered with plaster for sporting activities. Children can wear smart watches, but they must not be connected to a mobile device during school hours.

School Winter Uniform

Grey school skirt/grey pinafore/grey school trousers
White polo shirt (logo preferred)
Navy sweatshirt cardigan/sweatshirt with school logo
Grey tights or socks
Plain black or white trainers (we are active a lot!)

School Summer Uniform

Navy checked dress or grey school skirt/grey pinafore/grey school trousers/grey culottes/grey shorts
White polo shirt (logo preferred)
Navy sweatshirt/cardigan/sweatshirt with school logo
White or grey socks
Plain black or white trainers

PE Uniform (worn on specific days)

KS1 Plain navy sports shorts or plain navy joggers
KS1 Navy polo shirt (logo)
KS1 Navy hoodie (logo)
KS2 Sports shorts (logo) or plain navy joggers
KS2 Sports t-shirt (logo)
KS2 Sports hoodie (logo)
Plain black or white trainers



Labelling School Uniform and PE Kit

Every item of school uniform and PE Kit (including any book bags) must be labelled with your child's name. As you can imagine, if a child loses a sweatshirt, and there are a number of sweatshirts without a name, it is impossible for the teacher to determine which sweatshirt belongs to whom. It can waste a lot of valuable time. Please clearly label all clothes that come into school.

Outdoor Learning

All children have an opportunity to experience Forest School, 'Outdoor Learning' sessions during the year. The children come to school in their uniform and bring their Outdoor Learning clothes in a separate bag. They will need: Wellies, extra layers (warm jumpers to go over school shirts and leggings to go over girls' tights), extra socks, a warm hat and gloves are also essential. We have sets of full waterproofs in schools for the children to use, but they are welcome to bring their own if you prefer.

Wellies

It is essential that all children have a pair of wellies in school. We are outside whatever the weather and children are also allowed to access the forest school area and mud kitchen and field during play times.



Lunch Boxes and Hot Meals

All reception children are eligible for free hot dinners. Our dinners are provided by caterers and all meals are freshly prepared on site. Dinner choices are set on a termly basis with a fresh salad cart

available. A termly menu will be on our website, which rotates choices on a 3 week basis. Provision is made for pupils with known allergies or intolerances. Your child's school meals can be ordered in advance using the app ParentPay, which you will be registered with once your child starts school. Meals must be ordered by **9:00am on the day**.

Please click [HERE](#) for our current menu.

We strongly encourage families to discuss meal choices with their child in advance, as it can be very challenging if a meal has been ordered that a child is then unwilling to eat. Supporting your child to make a choice they are happy with helps ensure a positive lunchtime experience.

If you prefer, your child can bring a packed lunch to school. The school promotes "healthy eating" and the children are encouraged to eat their sandwiches first before any other goodies.

Whilst the children are encouraged to be independent, there are Lunchtime Play leaders to assist your child, if necessary, with tasks such as cutting up apples and opening drinks.

If you are unsure of what to put in your child's lunch box, then the following may help.

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

- 2 or 3 squares of sandwich
- Drink in an unbreakable flask (no fizzy drinks or glass bottles allowed)
- Yoghurt (provide a spoon)
- Piece of fruit
- Small cake or small chocolate biscuit bar (other sweets are not allowed) or crisps

WE ARE A NUT FREE SCHOOL. NO NUTS OR ITEMS CONTAINING NUTS SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO SCHOOL AT ANYTIME. THIS INCLUDES CHOCOLATE SPREAD THAT CONTAINS NUTS.

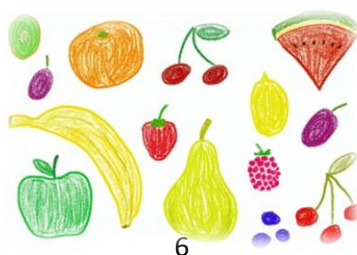


Book Bag and Other Items to Take to School

Every child must have a School Book Bag, and these will be given to your child before they begin school, with thanks to the PTA for supplying. Your child does not need any other items to start school such as pens or pencils.

Drinks and Snacks

Milk is provided free of charge up until your child's 5th birthday. In order for your child to receive this, please complete the online Cool Milk form at www.coolmilk.com. Your child will also need a named water bottle, filled with water not juice please, which they will have freely available to them throughout the day. Flavoured water but not squash is acceptable. Please keep this separate from your child's book bag to avoid spills. All children in EYFS and KS1 are provided with a piece of fruit during the morning session.



First Day at School

Your Child's Class

All of the classes at Ridgeway Farm are named after types of fruit tree. Your child will be joining Apple Class, our Reception class. The Class Teacher is Miss Smith, who will be supported by a full-time teaching assistant. Another member of teaching staff will teach your child one afternoon per week when Miss Smith has her planning, preparation and assessment session (PPA), and on a Friday.

Taking Your Child into School

If you bring your child to school by car, please be aware that we do not have any parking available on site for drop off and collection times. Please park considerately around the estate. We encourage families to walk, bike or scoot as everyone lives in close proximity.

For Apple Tree Class, it is best to use the pupil entrance gate at the top of the school site, nearest the zebra crossing, as Apple Tree Class is the first class at the bottom of the pupil entrance path. We encourage the children to say 'goodbye' at the EYFS gate so they can begin to develop their independence and come into school confidently on their own. Miss Smith will be in the classroom ready to receive the children each morning.

Collecting Your Child from School

Please wait in the Reception playground. The class teacher will then hand over children individually from the classroom door. Please be patient with us as it can take a little time. Please inform the office if you have to change your collection arrangements during the day and if your child is going home with someone else. We will not hand children over without prior permission and a password if they are an unknown adult to school. Once children have been handed over, they become the responsibility of the collecting adult.

School Day

- School gates open at 8.35 am – 8.45 am
- School day starts 8.40am and the morning includes small group adult led activities, child-initiated learning, phonics, Maths, snack, English
- Lunch break starts at 12:00 noon
- Afternoon lessons start at 1:00 p.m.
- Afternoon activities include small group adult led activities, child-initiated learning, PE, forest school, story-time
- School ends at 3:15 p.m.

Reading

Reading is very important to us at Ridgeway Farm CE Academy. We follow the Unlocking Letters and Sounds phonics programme. The children will begin learning letter formation and sounds in school within the first few weeks of starting.

Once the children are settled and we have had an opportunity to assess their abilities, we will begin sending reading books home for you to share with your child and support their early reading practice. These books will be matched to the phonics sounds your child has been learning in school, so that they can build confidence and experience success as they read.

Books will be changed on a Monday and Thursday, allowing time for your child to re-read and become familiar with the text. Reading books are intended to be read more than once, as this helps children to develop fluency, recognise words more securely and grow in confidence.

Your child will also bring home a library free-choice book to enjoy with you. This is for sharing together and to help foster a love of reading.

As we begin phonics, your child will also bring home resources such as a phonics sound mat and tricky word mat to support their reading at home.



Communication between home and school

This section explains some of the ways school will communicate with you and how you, as parents, can communicate with school. If you wish to talk to the class teacher, the best time is at the end of the school day. Alternatively, messages can be passed on through the member of staff on the gate or through arranging an appointment through the school office.

School Office

The Office Administrator/School Business Manager is Mrs Proctor. Payment and permission slips for trips/school lunches is through 'ParentMail'.

Notifying School of Absences

Sickness - If your child is ill, let the School Office know by 8:45am (telephone 01793 677471). Parents must keep the school informed daily.

Doctor/Dentist Appointments - Notify the office, in advance if possible, and where possible please book appointments outside of the school day.

Holiday Leave - There is no entitlement for holidays in term time. The Head Teacher and the Academy Council may only authorise, 'exceptional circumstances' for example, leave to attend a funeral. A leave of absence form must be completed detailing the exceptional circumstances. This is to be sent into school prior to the event for the Head Teacher and Academy Council to consider. These can be downloaded from the website or obtained from the school office.

Parents' Evenings and School Reports

Parents' Evenings are held in the Autumn and Spring terms. At these meetings, you will be able to talk about how your child has settled and the progress they are making. Written reports are sent to parents/guardians in the second half of the Summer term. There will be an opportunity for you to meet to discuss the report at the end of the Summer term if needed. In addition to these, there will be parent workshops on various curriculum areas, which you will be informed about throughout the year.

Newsletters

Our school newsletter is sent out monthly. This is useful for sharing information about various events or notifications from school and sharing what learning the classes have or will be doing. We do not provide a paper copy of this newsletter (in an attempt to save as many trees as possible), instead it is emailed out and a copy is always available on our school website for your reference.

Please click [HERE](#) for the Newsletter page on our website

Social Media

Ridgeway Farm CE Academy uses Facebook to share information with parents, carers and the local community. It is worth following for information.



Tree Tops Breakfast and After School Club

If you wish for your child to attend the breakfast and after school wrap around care, please request to be added to the booking system by emailing the office admin@ridgewayfarm.bluekitetrust.org

Our wraparound care provision supports families with both before and after school care. Breakfast Club is available five days a week (Monday to Friday), providing a calm and positive start to the day.

Our After School Club runs Monday to Thursday, offering a safe and engaging environment for children at the end of the school day.

Cost of breakfast care is £4.00, this includes a choice of cereals and toast.

Cost of after school care £9.00, this includes a healthy snack.

Drop off in the morning is from 7:30 and children must be collected by 6pm.

Please note that Tree Tops will not be opened on teacher development days or during school holidays.

Please click [HERE](#) for more information about our Wraparound Care

Getting Ready for School



www.startingreception.co.uk

Starting Reception offers families clear, practical ideas around developing independence, establishing routines, supporting early communication skills, and preparing children emotionally and socially for their first days in school. Schools may also find it helpful to highlight the free **Potty Training Guide** and **Toothbrushing Guide**, available through the site.

Your child learns more in their early years than at any other time in their life. To help them make the best start to their reception year it is hugely beneficial if over the coming months you can practice the following skills:

- Familiarity with a range of traditional stories such as The Three Little Pigs and popular stories such as The Gruffalo
- Taking their coat and shoes on and off without help
- Dressing and undressing themselves ready for PE
- Ability to ask to go to the toilet and use the toilet independently, including washing and drying hands
- Ability to sit at a table to eat using a knife and fork
- Recognising their own name

Reading

At school, we recognise the great importance of reading and the influence that parents and carers can have on children's literacy. Reading is a very complex skill and children learn to read in a variety of ways. Here are some ideas to help you to support your child's reading:



- Recite nursery rhymes
 - Read, role play and retell traditional stories such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears
 - Share picture books and talk about them
 - Make up stories together
 - Show them that you enjoy reading and value books
 - Visit the library
 - Talk, talk, talk
- Spilt words up into sounds to help develop their phonic knowledge. Can you get your c o a t? Let's go to the sh o p s.

Writing

Learning to write is fun! Early writing involves control of lots of muscles in the hand. Things you can try at home are:

- Let the children see you writing and let them try too
- Dot –to-dots, mazes or spot the difference
- Colouring inside the lines
- Use scissors safely
- Giant writing in the sand, mud, water
- Make models with play dough
- Help them to write their name



Numbers

At this age, Maths is all around. Spotting numbers on signs, counting out amounts, recognising who was first or second in a race or spotting patterns are all important mathematical skills that can easily be practised at home.

- Encourage counting objects by pointing individually at them
- Talk about quantities using words like bigger/smaller and more/less
- Encourage them to recognise the patterns on dice or dominoes as representing numbers
- Play games that involve counting e.g. snakes and ladders, Orchard Games
- Look for house numbers
- Sing number songs e.g. 1 2 3 4 5 Once I caught a fish alive



Term Dates 2026-2027

Please click [HERE](#) for our Term Dates and Calendar of Events

Autumn Term Dates

1st September – INSET

2nd September – 21st October

2nd November – 18th December*

*27th November - INSET

Spring Term Dates

4th January – 12th February

22nd February - INSET

23rd February – 25th March

12th April – 28th May

30th April - INSET

3rd May – Bank Holiday

Summer Term Dates

7th June – 21st July

22nd July – INSET

23rd July - INSET