

Digswell



Pre-School

Prospectus

Digswell Pre-School
St John's C of E Primary School
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DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL PROSPECTUS

CONTENTS

<u>SECTION</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1.	WELCOME TO DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL	3
2.	ATTENDING THE PRE-SCHOOL	5
3.	THE PRE-SCHOOL'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	7
4.	THE PRE-SCHOOL CURRICULUM	8
5.	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	9
6.	MANAGEMENT AND POLICIES	10
7.	DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL POLICIES	11
8.	PARKING AND ACCESS TO THE PRE-SCHOOL	13

1. WELCOME TO DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL

Thank you for choosing to register your child with us. We hope you will find the following information useful. If there is anything else you would like to know about the Pre-School, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff who will be happy to help you with your queries.

Pre-School Staff

Ekta Mason	Pre-School Manager	Honours Degree in Early Childhood Studies
Megan Hodgson	Pre-School Deputy Leader	CACHE Level 3 Award in Childcare and Education
Christine Strong	Senior Pre-School Assistant	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years
Ana Sousa	Pre-School Assistant	CACHE Level 3 Award in Childcare and Education

Age of Children

The Pre-School takes children from 2 years and they can start as soon as they reach this age if a place is available. Children can stay at the Pre-School until they start full-time school and many children who move on to morning Nursery session stay on for the Pre-School session (providing wrap-around care from 8.50am – 3.30pm for those who require it).

Opening and session times

The Pre-school currently opens Monday to Thursday from 12.30-3.30pm and Friday from 12.30-2.00pm. Parents are welcome to come and speak to their child's key worker at the end of each day. A lunch club is offered every day from 11.50am to 12.30pm when children are supervised eating their packed lunches brought in from home. Children attending Nursery in the morning will have the option of having a hot school dinner, which needs to be ordered in advance via the school office. The Pre-school is only open during school term time for approximately 38 weeks a year.

Session Fees

Fees are currently:

	Monday – Thursday	Friday
3 hour Pre-School session	£15.00	£7.50
Lunch Club	£4.00	£3.50
Pre-School session plus Lunch Club	£18.00	£10.00

There is also a registration fee of £15 which is required prior to admission to cover administration costs. ***You are not required to pay a registration fee if your child is in receipt of childcare funding.** Fees are required at the beginning of each term unless prior arrangements have been made with the Pre-School Manager. Please speak to the Pre-School Manager at the beginning of the term if you require a payment plan to be set up.

Free Funded sessions for 2 and 3 year olds

Children will be funded by Hertfordshire County Council for up to 15 hours of pre-school starting in the term after their 3rd birthday (e.g. if your child's 3rd birthday is in May, they will be funded in September).

Digswell Pre-School also offer funding for 2 year olds for up to 15 hours per week for families who meet certain criteria. For more information visit www.hertsdirect.org and search for 'Free Early Years Provision' or speak to Ekta Mason (Pre-School Manager)

We now offer 30 hours free childcare funding for all 3 and 4 year olds. Please speak to Ekta for more details about this.

Admission

We operate a first-come-first-served waiting list system at the pre-school. If you would like to put your child's name on the waiting list please contact the pre-school directly either in person, by phone (07748 851240) or email (digswellpreschool@gmail.com). We will then advise you as a place is available on your requested start date and if not, when a place should be available.

Pre-admission visit

New children are invited to visit in the term prior to admission. We ask that the parents or a carer to accompany their child on this visit so that the staff can introduce themselves to the family and ensure any queries or concerns can be addressed prior to commencement.

Toilet training and nappy changing

Children attending the pre-school do not have to be toilet-trained and we have nappy changing facilities available at the pre-school.

Most of the children attending the pre-school undergo toilet training at some stage during their time with us, and the staff are very experienced in assisting the children whilst they are still being trained.

The staff are also more than happy to change nappies when required during the session, though we do kindly ask if you could please provide spare nappies, wipes and nappy sacks in your child's rucksack as we do not supply these.

Payment of Fees

You will be advised of the term's fees at the start of each new term. Fees are payable within the first 2 weeks of each term and payment can be made via cash, cheque (made payable to Digswell Preschool) or bank transfer (bank details will appear on your invoice) If you are paying with cash please bring the correct money in a sealed, named envelope. We can also take childcare vouchers for payment, but please advise the Pre-School Manager in advance so that we can ensure that we are registered with your childcare voucher provider.

If fees are not paid within the first 4 weeks of term a reminder will be sent requesting immediate payment and you will incur a £25 late penalty fee. If payment is still outstanding the pre-school may have to ask for the removal of the child from the group. If you are having difficulty paying your fees, please speak to the Pre-School manager or our Committee Treasurer as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, we do have to charge for sessions that your child misses i.e. due to sickness, unavoidable emergencies, holidays etc. as our running costs remain the same regardless of whether all children are in attendance.

Informal pre-arranged visits

If any parents/carers would like to have a look around the Pre-School before making any formal commitment to enrolling their children, the Pre-School welcomes you to come for an informal pre-arranged visit. Please contact the preschool either via in person, by phone (07748 851240) or email (digswellpreschool@gmail.com).

Withdrawing a child from the Pre-School

Should you wish to withdraw your child/children from pre-school sessions, we require a full half a term's written notice to the Pre-School Manager. This should be received by the first day of term for finishing at half term or by the Friday before half term for finishing at the end of term. In the absence of this written notice, there is a charge of half a term's fees, even if your child is normally funded by Hertfordshire County Council.

2. ATTENDING THE PRE-SCHOOL

The First Days

Each child enrolled at the pre-school is assigned a key worker. Their key worker (along with the other staff members) endeavour to help all children settle in quickly and will work together with parents to help their child feel happy, confident and secure in the group. This process takes longer for some children than it does for others and parents should not feel worried or embarrassed if their child takes a little while to settle as this is completely normal behaviour.

Facilities

Digswell Pre-school operates from the Nursery classroom at St John's C of E Primary School, Hertford Rd, Digswell. As the room is shared by the St John's Nursery class (they occupy the room in the mornings), the room is perfectly equipped and set-out with young children in mind, making it a safe and fun environment for all those who attend the pre-school.

Outside Area

The outside area consists of a large tarmac area enclosed on all sides by a wooden fence. Within this area are several items of permanent play equipment (eg. slide, playhouse, sandpit, etc) and in addition we have a good selection of ride-on toys, trikes and other smaller play equipment for the children to use. The outdoor area backs on to a grassy field with large trees which creates a very pleasant backdrop to the pre-school setting.

Inside Area

Creative area

A 'messy' play area allows the children access to activities such as water, sand, dough, paint and glue and encourages the development of the children's creative and technological skills.

Imaginative area

A small area of the main room is always set aside for imaginative play. A solid walled home corner gives us scope for a variety of role play opportunities.

Book corner

A well-stocked book room where the children can sit quietly on a cushion enjoying a book or sharing a story with others.

Free play area / Group activities area

A carpeted area with lots of different toys (ie construction toys, small world toys, puzzles, etc) the children can play with during free play. It is also an ideal space for group activities such as singing, dancing etc

Eating area

There are several small tables and chairs located in the middle area of the pre-school where the children can sit and eat their lunches comfortably during the lunch club part of a session.

Toilets and basins

The room comes fully equipped with child-sized toilets and wash basins, perfect for the children to use independently if they are ready to do so

As well as these main areas, the sessions will also contain several other structured activities (ie a fine motor skill task, etc) as well as activities on seasonal topics (ie Autumn, Christmas, Diwali, Spring etc).

Pre-School Daily Routine

Below is a general guide as to how we organise the sessions:

11.50am -12.30pm –Lunch club

The children are welcomed in to the pre-school in the reception area. Once settled, the children will then sit at the tables in the main area and eat their lunch (packed lunches need to be brought in from home please). Lunchtime is fully supervised and the staff are there to help encourage the children to eat independently but also offer help wherever it's needed.

12.30pm – Welcome and Registration/Free Play Children are welcomed and settled in to the pre-school session. This is the best time for parents/carers to let the staff know if their children are upset or unsettled and mention if anyone other than a recognised parent/carer will be collecting their child at the end of the session.

1.00pm – Circle time

We use this time to discuss basic concepts such as days of the week, the weather, etc and to cover the activities available for that session.

1.15pm – Adult Led Focus Activity/Free Play

Children work independently or together, engaged in stimulating and ordered activities which they have chosen for themselves. The staff spend this time with the children talking, listening, encouraging and assisting if required.

1.30pm – Inside/Outside free flow play opens

Weather permitting, the children are able to choose to play in the outside area where there is ample space and freedom to move around in a safe, supervised environment with various outdoor play equipment or they can choose activities inside. There are staff supervising both inside and outside activities.

2.30pm–3.00pm Rolling snack

The children can choose to come and have a healthy snack and drink during this time. This is a sociable time when the children have a drink of milk or water and a small snack. The children are encouraged to be at their ease and to extend their language and communication skills.

3.00pm – Tidy up time

The children are encouraged to be involved in tidying up the toys and activities from each session.

3.10pm – Story Time/Singing

The children come together on the carpet for a story followed by some singing/music and movement.

3.20pm – Home Time

The Pre-School welcomes the parents/carers collecting their children during this time. We are always happy to talk with parents at this time, to discuss any problems or concerns and to share any observations.

3. DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At Digswell Pre-school we aim to:

- Make the transition from home to school as easy as possible for your child.
- Work with parents in an atmosphere where all children and their families feel secure, happy, confident and valued
- Enhance the development and education of the children through play activities.
- Provide the children with the materials and the freedom to experiment, investigate and learn through their play.
- Give all the children equal access to a range of appropriate pre-school experiences.
- Provide an environment where children are accepted as individuals and help the children to develop their understanding of the needs and feelings of others.

Digswell Pre-school offers your child:

- A chance to socialise with other children and adults in a friendly and nurturing environment.
- The opportunity to learn through play with children of a similar age and develop into independent learners.
- A balanced 'child centred' curriculum leading to approved learning outcomes.
- A nurturing environment where individual care and attention is made possible by a high adult to child ratio.

4. THE PRE-SCHOOL CURRICULUM

At Digswell Pre-school all children are supported in developing their potential. We plan our curriculum in line with the EYFS Framework and the seven early learning goals, which have been identified as desirable outcomes for children by the time they enter compulsory education.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas** first. These are:

- ***Communication and language;***

Children should have experience of language through talking, writing, listening and reading. We encourage the children to speak clearly and listen attentively. Through the use of books, stories, songs and rhymes we attempt to extend the vocabulary of the children, to help them to understand that written symbols carry meaning, to make them aware of the purposes of writing and, when they are ready, to use drawn and written symbols for themselves.

- ***Physical development***

The development of physical control, mobility, space awareness and manipulative skills in both indoor and outdoor environments. At Pre-school, we help the children to develop confidence and enjoyment in the use and development of their gross and fine motor skills. Adult supervision enables the children to safely develop skills associated with mobility and control of the body such as running, climbing and balancing, and also an awareness of space and others. We support the children in the development of their fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination by the use of tools including pencils and scissors, playdough, puzzles and small objects.

- ***Personal, social and emotional development.***

Helping children to develop the skills necessary to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group outside of the family unit. Our caring environment supports the children in developing confidence, independence and a positive self image. Through their activities the children learn acceptable ways to behave and to express their own feelings as well as developing an awareness of the needs and feelings of others.

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning. As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **4 specific areas**. These are:

- ***Literacy;***
- ***Mathematics;***
- ***Understanding the world; and***
- ***Expressive arts and design.***

These 7 areas are used to plan your child's learning and activities at the pre-school and the staff devise personal development plans to make sure that activities are suited to your child's unique needs. This is a little bit like a curriculum in primary and secondary schools, but it's suitable for very young children, and it's designed to be really flexible so that staff can follow your child's changing needs and interests.

5. YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Key Person

We use a key person approach at the Pre-school. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom they are particularly responsible. Your child's key person will work closely with you to ensure that your child is presented with all the opportunities to meet his/her individual needs and interests.

Your child's key person will greet your child on his/her first day at Pre-school and help them to settle during their first few weeks. A settling in record will be completed by your child's key person, which will be reported back to you once your child has settled.

You are welcome to speak to your child's key person at drop off and collection every day or you can arrange a specific time to meet with them for a more lengthy discussion.

Record of Achievement

We keep a record of achievement for all children attending the Pre-school. Your child's record of achievement helps us to celebrate together his/her success and to provide further opportunities for their progress.

Your child's key person will work with you to keep this record. To do this you both will need to collect information about your child's needs, interests, activities and achievement. This will enable the key person to identify your child's stage of progress. Your child's key person will continue to monitor and observe your child finding ways to help him/her move forward during their time at Pre-School.

Assessment

We assess how young children are learning and developing by observing them frequently. We use information gained from observations, photographs and videos of the children, to document their progress and where this may be leading them. We believe that parents know their children best so we will ask you to contribute to the assessment process by sharing any relative information about your child's interests and learning at home.

Your child's key person will complete a summary assessment on your child's learning and development at the end of each term. A transition assessment will be completed when your child leaves Pre-school to move onto school. This report will be shared with your child's school teacher so that they can continue to support your child moving forward in school.

Progress Check at age 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requires that we supply parents/carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the 3 prime areas of learning and development- *personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, and physical development*. Your child's key person will complete this assessment on your child once he/she has settled into Pre-school at the age of 2. This will be shared with you at the end of the first term your child has completed at the setting.

If you have any further queries about the learning, development and assessment of your child, please speak to your child's key person or the Pre-school Manager.

6. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PRE-SCHOOL

Digswell Pre-school is a registered charity that is managed by a committee of parents who are responsible for maintaining and administering the policies of the Pre-School and organising fundraising events.

The Committee

As the pre-school is managed by a volunteer committee, we are always keen to gain new members. The committee is currently made up of past and present parents, grandparents and staff and together we help manage and run the pre-school in close association with the staff. The Committee meets on a fairly regular basis at the local pub (The Cowper Arms, Digswell) and meetings normally involve an agenda, a drink and a friendly exchange of ideas on the latest pre-school topics (i.e fundraising, upcoming festivals, etc). New faces to these meetings are warmly welcomed! If you'd like to find out more about the committee and how you might like to get involved, please speak to the Pre-School Manager who can pass on details of when the next committee meeting is being held or arrange for you to have a chat with one of the committee members.

The Pre-School Committee are also aware that there is often a wealth of experience, knowledge and useful contacts contained within the small group of parents and carers of the children attending the pre-school. In recognising this, we want to encourage anyone who has anything they think could be useful to the pre-school to please let us know.

Some areas the Pre-School always need help with are:

- Anyone with a specific skill – ie marketing, fundraising, craft/arts, baking, entertainment, etc
- Anyone who owns or works for a business that can either donate the occasional raffle prize or can supply the pre-school with useful supplies (either donated or at reduced rates)
- Anyone who has a spare hour or two to help out with fundraising and marketing events for the pre-school (ie baking cakes, manning a stall, dropping some leaflets through letterboxes, at shops etc)

All support we receive is greatly appreciated and we'd love to hear from you if you think you can help us out!

The Pre-School Learning Alliance

The Pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and is registered with Hertfordshire County Council's Children, Schools & Families Service (Tel: 01438 737500).

Parental Involvement

At Digswell Pre-School, we strongly encourage parents/carers to take an active part in the Pre-school and their child's experience whilst there. We recognise parents as the first and most important educators of their children and we respect the special relationship between you and your child and hope to work together to provide consistent care. Parents are always welcome to come and discuss any concerns, problems or changes concerning their child with the staff.

Donations

As a registered charity, we are always turning to the local community and parents for their support in helping the preschool to continue operating successfully. We run various fundraising events throughout the year and will be asking parents for their support through donations on a regular basis. We are grateful for all contributions.

We kindly request a £10 donation per child to cover the cost of snack each term and may occasionally request a small donation toward craft materials as well.

7. DIGSWELL PRE-SCHOOL POLICIES

The Pre-school has a complete set of policies covering a wide range of issues. These policies are always kept on pre-school premises and on display. A copy of the policies is available upon request.

Health and Safety

- First Aid

All our staff are trained in First Aid.

- Fire Drills

These are carried out at regular intervals. You will be notified when a fire drill has taken place on a particular morning/afternoon by a notice on the front door.

- Sickness

It is important to inform the pre-school staff if your child has been unwell. If your child has been unwell with vomiting or diarrhoea, we do ask that they are kept at home for 48 hours before returning to pre-school.

- Accidents and emergencies

All accidents will be recorded in our accident book, which will be discussed with the collecting parent or carer at the end of the session whereupon a signature is required to confirm the accident has been reported.

Please ensure that we always have your correct and up to date details especially your telephone number as well as the emergency contact number.

- Medicines

All children must be registered with a General Practitioner. Please notify the pre-school staff of any allergies or particular concerns regarding your child. We do not administer medicines, apart from supervising asthmatic children to use an inhaler and administering antihistamines or epipens in the event of an emergency. We must have written permission in order to carry out any administering of medication. All medication must be marked clearly with your child's name and the dosage required and any medication administered will be recorded and shared with the collecting parent/carer who will need to sign the medication book.

Equal Opportunities

Digswell Pre-school has a commitment to equality of opportunities and welcomes all families in the community regardless of means, social group, disability, race, colour, ethnic origin, culture, religion or belief. All children in our care will be treated and respected as individuals whose needs we will endeavour to cater for. We recognise and respect differences in race, culture, religion and language and attempt to develop the children's awareness of all cultures, genders, disabilities and abilities.

Special Needs

Digswell Pre-school will make every effort to support children with special educational needs and give them access to the whole curriculum. We have one member of staff who is SENCO trained and attend regular training. If you would like to discuss the Pre-School's ability to meet the needs of your own child please talk to the Pre-school Manager.

Behaviour

We aim to help the children to understand their feelings, cope with problems and resolve conflicts through explanation, reasoning and discussing feelings. We encourage the children to share equipment and to show consideration for others. By co-operating in the social organisation of the group we hope that the children learn a sense of right and wrong behaviour. We encourage the children to apologise if they have upset another and will discuss the issues of any unacceptable behaviour that has occurred. Sanctions, where necessary, are immediate and relate to the rules broken. A child in our care will never be physically disciplined and behaviour difficulties will be discussed with parents.

Dress

Please send your child to Pre-school in practical play clothes. Aprons are provided for messy play activities but some accidents are unavoidable. To help your child to be independent please send them in clothes that they can easily manage themselves, i.e. elastic waistbands. Please try to avoid belts and dungarees. Long dresses can be dangerous on the outdoor equipment, as can open-toed sandals and shoes. If you send your child to Pre-school in wellington boots please make sure that they are clearly marked with their name and that they have a pair of indoor shoes to change into. In hot weather please supply your child with a hat and a t-shirt which covers their shoulders and upper arms, and ensure that they are wearing sunscreen. We ask that **all children** bring a change of clothing in a named bag, which can be left hanging on their peg in the lobby area. The Pre-school cannot accept any responsibility for any items of clothing which may be lost.

Collecting your child from Pre-school

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the Pre-School session, together with any personal items (bag, comforter etc) and any creative work that your child has produced during the session. If you are not able to collect your child as planned, please inform us as soon as possible so that we can co-ordinate the necessary back-up measures. If you have arranged for someone else to collect your child and they are not known to the pre-school staff, we will adopt a password system. Your child will not be released to anyone who cannot supply us with the password, even if your child knows them.

Snacks

Each afternoon the children have a drink of milk or water and a small healthy snack. If your child has any food allergies, please tell us about them on the registration document. We work closely with parents to ensure all children enjoy a pleasant social snack period during which good manners are encouraged. Water is available throughout the whole session.

Birthdays

To celebrate your child's birthday at Pre-school, parents are welcome to provide a birthday treat for the group to have at snack time, e.g. biscuits or small cakes, but please avoid anything containing nuts.

Parents Complaints

If you have any concerns about the pre-school please do not hesitate to speak to the pre-school leader. If you are not completely satisfied with the outcome of this discussion, please put your concerns in writing to the Chair of the Committee. If together we cannot reach an agreement then an independent mediator may be invited to help resolve the issue or you can contact Ofsted on 0300 123 1231.

8. PARKING AND ACCESS AT THE PRE-SCHOOL

Unfortunately parking is not available directly at the school as there is only a small staff car park. However, there is parking available at the following locations which are only a short walk to the school:

- Bottom of Harmer Green Lane – just off Hertford Rd (B1000)
- The Forge, Hertford Rd (B1000) – a small amount of parking available outside Digswell Arts Trust building (this is the closest parking to the school but spaces are limited)
- Viaduct Car Park, Digswell Park Rd – just off Hertford Rd (B1000) – plenty of spaces available but the furthest distance to the school

The Pre-School is located at the Nursery Classroom, which is the separated, smaller building at the end of the quadrangle (to the right of the playing field).

Access to the school at the start of a session

When entering the school you need to use the main entrance side gate and head all the way down to the second gate and enter the quadrangle. The Nursery/Reception building are on your left down the end of the quadrangle as you enter these gates and the Nursery building is the door on the right (the door directly in view is the Reception classroom).

Access to the school at the end of a session

The side gate to the school grounds (just after the Tudor-type house on the corner of Hertford Rd and Harmer Green Lane) should be unlocked just before 3.00pm and is a definite short-cut to the Pre-School if you're coming from this direction. The main gate on Hertford Rd is accessible at all times.

Access to the school between 12.00pm and 3.00pm

Only the main gate entrance is accessible during these times so please ensure you use this entrance if you are coming to the pre-school between these times.

And Finally.....

We really look forward to meeting you and your child and hope you have a happy and enjoyable time with us!