

Benthal Primary School

Handbook for Parents



'An Outstanding school' Ofsted 2009

2009/10

www.benthal-primary-sch.org.uk



Aims of Benthall Primary School



ASPIRE ACHIEVE ENJOY

To encourage each member of the school community to develop positive attitudes, self-confidence and self-discipline.

To help each child develop a lively, enquiring mind and reach their full potential.

To develop the child's knowledge, skills and understanding through access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

To foster respect and understanding of religious and moral values and tolerance of all cultures in the local community and beyond.

To actively tackle discrimination and promote equality.

To appreciate human achievements and aspirations.

Welcome to Benthall Primary School

Vision Statement

Benthall Primary School is a multi-racial community school where every child has the right to equal opportunities. It is our intention to create a happy working environment where every person feels valued and feels that they have a real contribution to make.



We believe that in a stimulating and challenging environment children will achieve their full potential and learn to appreciate the diverse world in which they live. We encourage the interest and support of parents/carers and aim to create an atmosphere where they are always welcome. We ensure that the books and materials we use are unbiased and present positive images that are representative of our multi-cultural, multi-racial society.

Within this background we will promote the highest standards of achievement in all areas for all children. We aim to support the whole child in all areas of his/her development during the time they are with us.

A 'Healthy School'

We promote the health and well-being of all the children in the school through the whole curriculum. We are aiming to provide a physical and emotional environment that promotes learning and healthy life style choices.



Children have two hours of PE each week, which may be led by the teacher, a sports specialist or take place off-site for activities such as swimming. We are part of the 'Cool Milk' scheme which provides free milk for children under 5 years of age each day. Parents of older infant children can buy the milk for around £5 per half term. We also subscribe to the School Fruit and Vegetable scheme which provides one piece of free fruit or vegetable for children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 each day. We are part of the Emotional Health and Well-being Project and are lucky to have a Children's Mental Health Nurse work with us two days a week.

Parents and the School

We very much hope that parents will feel a part of the school and show an active interest in their children's education. If you would like to speak to your child's teacher about something at length please make an appointment.

Parents are welcome to see the head or deputy head teachers at any time - but it helps if you arrange a convenient time beforehand.

Open evenings are held each term and provide an opportunity for teacher and parent to discuss the child's work, progress and behaviour. All parents are given a written report of their child's progress at the Open Evening held in the summer term.

Reading books are sent home on a regular basis to share with your child. Please ensure that your child brings the book to school daily. Benthall book bags can be purchased from the office for £3.50 or £2.00 for families on income support.

It is important that your child attends school regularly but obviously they will sometimes be unwell or will have to visit the doctor or dentist. Please let the Secretary know before the day of absence - especially if it is an appointment and your child will be coming in to school for dinner. Please try to arrange medical appointments outside school time where-ever possible.

Please bring your child to school regularly and on time. School starts at 9:00am prompt and the teachers mark the registers at 9:05am. Any time after this will be marked on the register as late. Persistent lateness or absence affects a child's learning and disrupts the whole class.

The Education Attendance Advisor visits the school on a regular basis to monitor absence and lateness. She will contact you if your child's attendance or timekeeping is unsatisfactory. Please see the head teacher if there is any reason why you cannot get your child to school on time each day.

Teachers are not available to supervise children before school in the morning as this is their preparation time. Your child should not be left in the playground before 8:45am. School ends promptly at 3:30pm. Infant children are collected from their classrooms and junior children should be collected from their teacher in the playground. If you are unable to arrive at school on time to collect your child please make alternative arrangements for them and inform the school. For safety's sake we will not allow a child to be collected by someone else unless you have informed the school.

Medication of any sort should not be sent into school without prior consultation with the head teacher or deputies. Some medicines can be administered in school, but only with your written consent.

Accidents do happen and we give simple first aid. If an accident requires hospital treatment we need to contact parents quickly, please make sure that we have an UP TO DATE record of your home and work addresses and telephone numbers.

If you are thinking about taking your child on a holiday in term time please contact the head teacher before you go. Children are not allowed to take holidays in term time unless special permission is granted by the head teacher. Only one week's holiday will be authorised by the school in any academic year - and then only if past attendance has been good!

School Rules and Discipline

All members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, have as our primary aim the well being of children in our care. Our school rules are designed to achieve this. We hope that the firm, fair and consistent structure of discipline provided in the school will enable children to develop qualities of self discipline.

Children are expected to respect other people and their possessions. Those children who show aggressive behaviour are temporarily withdrawn from the classroom or playground. Violent retaliation towards aggression is not acceptable in school. Persistent disobedience will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Parents will be asked to come into school to discuss their child's behaviour if it continues to be unacceptable.

Benthal School is part of the wider community and we are determined to develop positive attitudes in all children in and out of school. Racist or sexist remarks or behaviour, name calling or bullying of any kind WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

The rules are few but they are there for your child's safety and well-being and so we ask for your co-operation in seeing that they are followed.

Nursery

We have a Nursery which children at present attend either for the morning or afternoon session. Most children come into the Nursery class when they are three and a half years old or shortly afterwards and stay in the Nursery for three terms. You will need to go to the school office to fill in an application form for a nursery place. There is no automatic transfer from the Nursery to the Primary School so you will have to apply to the Learning Trust for a Reception place. Please ask at the school office for further advice and a form.



Admissions to Benthal School

It is a legal requirement that all children receive full time education from the beginning of the school term following their fifth birthday. However, the policy in Hackney is that children who are about to reach their fifth birthday receive full time education. Children are able to start in September if their birthday falls between the beginning of September and the end of February. They are able to start in January if their birthday falls between the beginning of March and the end of August.

Parents are welcome to visit the school by arrangement with the Headteacher or Deputies. Application for admission to Hackney Schools should be made direct to the Learning Trust during the year before the child is due to start school. Further information on admission procedures can be found in the "Starting Schools in Hackney" booklet. Application forms and the booklet are available from the school and the Learning Trust Offices. Children often transfer to Benthal from other schools when they are older. You can contact the school office for an admission form and put their name on our waiting list.

Starting School

Before your child starts at school you will be asked to bring him/her along to visit the school, fill in the necessary documents and discuss any problems or queries with the Headteacher or Deputies. You will be asked to sign a copy of the Home/School Contract at this meeting and receive a copy of the behaviour Policy.

For younger children you will also be invited to visit the school on another occasion with your child for a session in his/her new classroom so he/she can meet the class teacher and support staff and become more familiar with the new surroundings.

Infant children should be brought into the classroom each morning. Junior children are more independent and should come into the school building by themselves at 9 o'clock. Please let the teacher know if anything has upset or worried your child as this may affect their work and mood.

ALL CLOTHING SHOULD BE MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME. WE CAN THEN BE SURE IT WILL BE RETURNED IF LOST.

The Curriculum

We offer a broad based curriculum covering all areas and aspects of education. Language development is an essential basis for learning. Talking to your child and reading to him/her is the most important thing you can do as a parent/carer. We send books home on a regular basis for you to share with your child. It is also helpful if you supplement the range of books we offer by joining the local Public Library and regularly borrowing additional books for your child to share with you. We value children's early attempts at writing in order to encourage them to be confident and independent writers. Alongside this we teach correct letter formation, handwriting skills and spelling patterns.

The school is culturally diverse and many of our children speak more than one language. We view the children's bilingual abilities as an asset. We have extra support staff who work with children who have English as an additional language. Every effort is made to help these children to become fluent in English whilst continuing to value their mother tongues and cultures. The content of the Literacy Framework is taught through a variety of methods appropriate to the age of the children.



Infant mathematics is essentially activity based as good practical experience provides the basis for a deep mathematical understanding. Recording of mathematics takes various forms. Children will work through all aspects of number, measure, shape, space and data handling.

The content of the Numeracy Framework is taught through the topics planned for each year group. Parents can help children with mathematics by practical activities at home such as counting stairs, cooking, shopping, sharing etc.

As children move through the school, the teaching methods become more formal, but much emphasis is placed on children having practical mathematical activities and a sound understanding of mental strategies.

In Science many of the activities will be of a practical nature, encouraging children to develop their natural curiosity to explore and investigate. Children will have many practical experiences which may include investigations of the following; living things and life processes, forces, floating and sinking, light, sound and electricity.

Information and Communication Technology is a fast moving area which encompasses all areas of the curriculum. We have computers in each classroom, a suite of computers and interactive whiteboards across the whole school. Children use a wide range of programmes and also access the internet for research work.

At the start of each term or topic, the class teachers send out news letters explaining the work to be covered and ways parents and carers can support their children's education. This letter also gives information about PE/Games and homework set.

Our Gardens

The school is very lucky to have very good outside areas for the children to use. Not only do we have very large and separate playgrounds for our Nursery, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children but we also have specific areas set aside for the children to use. We have a Wildlife Garden which is planted to attract insects and birds, a Pond Garden which is home to newts and frogs and an Organic Vegetable Garden in which the children grow a wide variety of different fruit and vegetables.



In 2009 our Garden won the Best Educational Garden in the Hackney in Bloom competition. This was a lovely reward for the hard work the children put into the garden each year and also shows how well the area is used as a curriculum resource by the school.

School Lunches

The majority of our children have a school dinner. These are cooked on site and meet the very important quality and nutritional requirements set out by the government and, more importantly, our children and parents!



Dinner money is payable in advance on a Monday. Please put the money in an envelope with your child's name, class and amount clearly written on it. If you feel your child may be eligible for free school dinners, please ask for an application form from the school office. This form should be returned to Pupil Benefits Section at The Learning Trust or to the school secretary, with all relevant documents, who will then forward it to the Learning Trust. Children may bring a packed lunch, but it is important that these are of the same nutritional quality as the school dinners and certain things such as chocolate, sweets or fizzy drinks are not permitted.

Support Services

The school nurse pays us regular visits. Before medicals the school will contact you.

The school dentist visits each year and recommends any treatment necessary.

The Education Attendance Advisor visits the school to oversee attendance and lateness. The Advisor also discusses ways in which families can be helped to improve attendance. The EAA is a valuable link between home and school and can be contacted through the school or The Learning Trust.

The Education Psychologist visits regularly to discuss and advise on problems giving concern as do our Occupational and Speech and Language Therapists.

The Children's Mental Health Nurse works with children and families two days a week.

Special Educational Needs

At certain times during their education a number of children may need particular help.

Provision is made for children who have physical, learning and behavioural difficulties within the classroom. There are teachers and assistants who will help provide individual and small group support to children who have been identified as needing extra help. Parents are always consulted and often asked to provide additional support at home. If further help and advice is needed the school is able to call upon relevant external support services.

Benthal School's Special Needs Co-ordinator is Mary Vince. Mary can be contacted at the school to discuss issues regarding individual children.

Child Protection

We follow the London Child Protection procedures. Our school is responsible for the welfare of every child. We may need to share our concerns or issues that relate to the well being of your child. To avoid any misunderstanding it is important that parents/carers inform the teacher if their child has any injury, accident or upsetting experience. On some occasions other agencies, including social services, will need to be involved. It may be necessary for this to be done before informing parents/carers. The designated teachers for child protection are Mary Vince and Sarah Thompson.

Complaints Regarding the Curriculum

Any complaints regarding the curriculum should be sent to the Chair of Governors, Mr Maurice Wren, and will be investigated by a panel of Governors. Maurice can be contacted via the school Office.

Sex Education

Sex education within the school is an integral part of the curriculum. It is taught in Years 5 & 6 and covers puberty, personal hygiene and relationships. Parents will be invited to a meeting prior to these lessons to view the material and discuss what will be learnt.

Religious Education

Children and staff come from a variety of different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds. We hope to help the children develop a caring and responsible attitude towards each other and encourage a respect for the cultures and beliefs of others, both inside and outside school. We hope they will develop pride in their work and learn to appreciate other people's effort and achievements. These themes are developed in our assemblies in which children and teachers take part.

Parents are reminded of their right to withdraw children from school assemblies or religious education should they wish to do so. To do this please make an appointment with the headteacher to discuss the matter.

Friends of Benthal

Friends of Benthal is a group of parents and other friends of the school who organise functions and fundraising events for the school and local community. All parents/carers/friends are welcome to attend the regular meetings held at the school.



The wonderful adventure playground equipment in our playgrounds was purchased last year through Friends of Benthal fundraising.

Governors

There are several parent governors, elected by parents, on our governing body. Their names and some information about them is obtainable from the headteacher or can be found in the Governors report to Parents. You can contact them at any time to discuss parental issues.

Outings

Children are often taken on Educational Outings and parents will be notified of this by letter. For this type of outing you will be asked for a voluntary contribution towards the costs i.e. entrance fees and travel.

Theatre groups, musical performers and other visitors regularly come to the school to extend and enrich the children's experiences.

Sometimes the class teacher may take groups of children for a walk around the local area at different times of the year or to the local park. You will be asked to sign a consent form for these shorter trips when your child is registered.

After School Club

The Benthall After School Club is open Monday to Friday 3:30pm - 6:00pm. It has places for 50 children aged 5 and over and provides a variety of different activities for the children to take part in. This is a popular resource and you will need to contact the PlayCentre manager via the school office to check for places.

After School Clubs

The school is part of an association of four local primary schools who offer a combined series of after school clubs. This enables us to offer a very wide range of after school activities for the children. Our school website carries the list of activities for the current term. These vary term by term, but there are usually about 20 different clubs, ranging from the sporty such as football and table tennis, musical such as African drumming, to the more academic such as computer programming.

Breakfast Club

The Benthall School Breakfast Club is open Monday to Friday 8.00-9.00am
To register contact the Learning Mentor. There are limited places and priority is given to working parents. The cost is £2.50 a week.