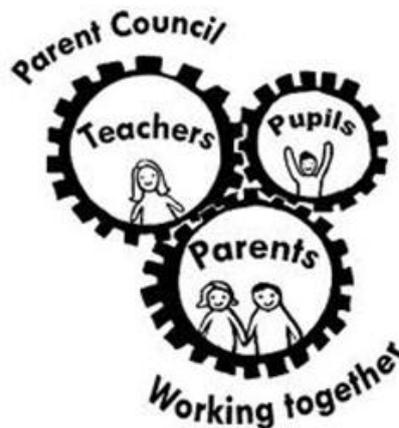


# A Guide to Hermitage Primary School ...

...for Parents

...from Parents



The Hermitage Primary School Parent Council have written and a guide for parents. This is based on our own experiences.

We hope that you find it helpful and useful – lots of it is common sense and lots of it is things we wish we had known and have learnt from our own experience!

If there is anything you feel should be added for next year, please let us know!

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## **The Alternative Induction Guide to Hermitage Primary School**

### **Written by parents for parents**

We know, through experience, there are some things that it's just useful to have in one place. The school website really does answer almost any question you can think of. This guide aims to supplement it with a few hints and tips from parents who've been through the school and want to share their knowledge.

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## General Information

This section contains useful reminders and tips for all parents, no matter what year their child is in or whether they are new to the school or part of the old guard!

### 1. If you can walk to school, do!

If you have to drive to school, park properly – it can seem like a pain at first to follow the one way system outside Hermitage but it does work in getting everyone in and out in the easiest way.

- Don't park opposite the entrance to the school road – it limits visibility and makes exiting the road much more tricky
- Don't park in the staff car park – only staff, taxis and those with express permission can – it's just not big enough for anyone else to get in there safely
- Don't block driveways or box people in (even if only for 5 minutes) it's really irritating and tempers fray with serial offenders
- Slow down and stop for people attempting to cross the road with arms full of children, water bottles, bags and musical instruments; you will be greeted with cheery waves!

### 2. Label uniform

- It's a pain but when faced with a sea of identical school jumpers abandoned on a playing field, there is a far greater chance of the right one coming home to you quickly (or at all!) if it has your child's name in it
- If you hate sewing or find the sticky labels don't actually stick, try an ink stamp to print your child's name onto their things ([www.stamptastic.co.uk](http://www.stamptastic.co.uk) come recommended)

### 3. Lost property

If your child has lost something (and they've checked their trays and pegs or lockers), then ask them to look through the Lost Property basket – it is located in the school hall. If they still can't find it, ask Mrs Bevan if you can have a rummage next time you are at school

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#### 4. Drinks and Snacks/Tuck

**All children need a named water bottle in school every day (with water in, not juice)**

Tuck is served at morning play times and the rules around it change depending on whether your child is in KS1 or KS2.

- KS1 – children have the option to buy tuck on specified days of the week. The correct money needs to be sent in, in a named envelope each Monday with your child and handed to their teacher
- KS2 – the children can buy tuck every morning and are responsible for keeping their own money and paying for their tuck each day
- The tuck menu, prices and schedule will be communicated by the school at the start of the school year and you will also be notified of any changes.

If your child doesn't have tuck:

- KS1 – a free piece of fruit is provided every day for every child in KS1
- KS2 – children in KS2 have the option of taking in a healthy snack if they aren't having tuck – just a little something to keep them going until lunch

The school takes our children's nutrition seriously and as well as a balanced school lunch menu, children who persistently bring in unhealthy snacks will be asked not to by either the teachers or the School Council

#### 5. School Dinners vs Packed Lunches

School dinners are free to all pupils in KS1. This changes in KS2 and you have the option to either pay for school dinners or provide a packed lunch. More information about this is in the section entitled 'Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2' later in this document.

#### 6. School Council

Each year, two children from each class are appointed to the School Council. Officially, one child is a School Councillor and one is a Safeguarding Councillor. Sometimes, all 14 children work together and sometimes in their separate roles to suggest and make improvements to the way things happen in school, organise charity events etc. throughout the school year. They have regular meetings. Children are asked to put themselves forward for the School Council so if you think it is something your child would enjoy, talk to them about it and feel free to ask their teacher if you want to know more about when the 'elections' take place and what is required from the children.

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## 7. Uniform

The website has chapter and verse about the official uniform rules here:

<http://www.hermitage.cheshire.sch.uk/page/uniform/885>

Summer uniform is mainly worn in the Summer term (i.e. after Easter) but some will go into it before and some will wear it into September. Bear this in mind when you are buying uniform for sizes etc.

It's worth ordering/buying uniform/bags with logos on a few weeks in advance as it is not always in stock and may need ordering in.

P.E. kits stay in the school all term, so they are taken in the first day after a holiday and brought home in the last week of term. If your child grows out of their school shoes during the year, it is also worth asking them about their trainers or plimsolls as these might also be too small.

## 8. ParentPay

Information on upcoming activities often lead you towards the [ParentPay](#) website to provide permission and pay any associated costs. ParentPay is also used to pay for school dinners in KS2. Thankfully, Google stores the password, but its useful to hold on to the letter with the original instructions too.

## 9. What's happening next week?

A question many of us ask on Sunday night ;-)

The following are great sources of information:

- [The school website](#). Firstly it has a calendar of events for the whole year and secondly, the teachers for each year publish a timetable for the following week, usually the weekend prior, informing you of things such as homework deadlines, project deadlines, the timetable of lessons, what day 'show & tell' is etc.
- The school newsletter. Published via email, placed on the website and put up on the school notice board (found on the way in on the Reception wall) every Friday, the school newsletter contains dates for your diary and a list of all the letters you should have received that week along with lots of other useful information.

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## 10. Social Media

There are some social media groups that are useful to join to keep up to date with news:

Hermitage Primary School on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/HermitagePrimarySchool/>

Hermitage Primary School PTFA on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/HermitagePrimarySchoolPTFA>

And you can follow @Hermitageps and @Hermitage PTFA on Twitter

In addition to this, you might find it useful to set up a closed/private Facebook group between the parents in your child's year group. This can be very handy for the inevitable last minute check of homework requirements, organising birthday parties etc.

## 11. Before and After School care

There are many options in the village for before and after school care but places can be limited, especially on certain days so do plan ahead if this is something you need. The following organisations offer a convenient and well regarded service:

- Hermitage Primary School – ask Mrs Bevan in the school office about availability and prices for both before and after school club
- Happy Days – a pre-school during the day, they offer before and after school care five days a week. Visit <http://www.happydaysnursery.net/> for more information or pop in when you are next at school, it is on site
- After 8s – an after school club for those over 6 years of age. Based in the Scout Hut in the centre of Holmes Chapel, they operate a 'walking bus' from school every day. Visit <http://www.after8s.co.uk/> for more information or call Lindsay Kerr on 07841 516888.



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## Starting in Reception

So, your child is starting school. It's an exciting step for both of you, suddenly there's things to wear, things to bring, calendars to track and staff to tell. It's a big change and a wonderful time for your child but it can be confusing, hopefully a few tips from my own experience with my daughter starting at Hermitage can help.

## In the months before school

It is useful to get some things sorted out in the months before school starts.

Your child will be invited for some half-day sessions in the summer term before they start, really useful and exciting so they will have some familiarity for when they start properly. It's good to prepare your child for some independence in things like going to the toilet, getting dressed, cutting food etc. We found playing 'going to school' to be quite useful.

Try and think about things like the ease of putting on uniform on P.E. days e.g. we found tights a no-go on P.E. days as they just were too complicated and took too long to put on when our girls were very little.

## The First Day

Ok, this is it, the day you've been preparing for all summer and for some reason the book bag has gone missing, the P.E. kit still hasn't been labelled and the water bottle has been turned into a home for a spider. It's reassuring to know that every parent has a number of stories of how they've forgotten something for their child, however, preparation and routine really is key.

Routine – working out a routine can be really useful, even writing it down before it's lodged into your head permanently. A good start could be:

- Friday night – check your child's school bag. It will come back with all sorts that your child has made or found mixed in with important letters or party invites
- Sunday night – collate book bag which should include said book and yellow book, money in a marked envelope for tuck on tuck days (if required)

The first day arrives, simply wake up the child, dress/wash/brush/feed/re-clean them, make sure you have time to take numerous pictures and place them on social media. Check your list of items to take in, walk/drive to school and relinquish your child – job done!

A word of warning, parking on the road outside school can be difficult. The school provides details of the system to follow (take in turn to drive down to the end, turn and park on the

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school side), obviously school start and finish times will be the busier, I find it easier just to park in one of the side roads, there's also a short cut-through from Elm Drive.

If your child attends Happy Days before/after school club the Happy Days staff will take in and collect the children from the school.

Reception class will file out first at 3.15pm and your child will be handed back, over-tired, chatty with their coat half-off and book bag dragging along the floor, you've done it, well done!

Once you're in the swing of things, it's good to keep on top of things. Emails from the school will let you know what's coming up, I don't think we'd survive without putting everything in the calendar. For anything you're unsure of just contact the school, they really are very helpful and understanding, but check the website first as it's packed with information. The website also has separate sections for each class, updated weekly with lesson plans and photos.

In Reception, your child will have a weekly show and tell (the day will depend on what colour group they are put into). The idea of this to encourage your child to speak in front of the class and gain confidence so it's important that they pick the item and it is something they are comfortable with.



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## Year 1

### Weekend preparations

We are the parents of a child in Year 1 and another in Reception. At this stage we feel like we have a decent handle on how to prepare for and work our way through the school week now, but it still has its unexpected times and time pressures for which little planning and routine helps wonders.

### Blue book

The school week essentially starts on Sunday, with the task of ensuring our daughter writes in her “blue book”. This entails her writing about what she has been doing this weekend, usually with the addition of a few pictures. The intent is that of homework practice, which although not mandatory, gets her into the habit of having something regular to hand in each week.

### MyMaths

The other regular new piece of homework is mathematics, in the form of the online portal, [MyMaths](#). This was a completely new addition to our daughter’s learning this year and has proved surprisingly helpful. She typically been more interested in reading, writing and arts and crafts, with something of an aversion to maths. However, the weekly practice and homework exercises which can be completed at any time during the week and takes less than 30 minutes has really helped her learning. We do find trying to get this done during the week after school rather than fitting it in on Sunday works best though, from concentration point of view. The login details for both the school and pupil are supplied early in the year and are worth saving and holding on to.

### Phonics sheet

The phonics work from Reception carries on into Year 1, with our daughter bringing home a sheet of words, some real, some theoretical, to test she can understand the phonemes and isn’t reciting from memory. This sheet usually lives in the kitchen over the weekend so it gets covered.

### Reading books

In Year 1, the children can choose the books they bring home to read, rather than being assigned them. We have found it works best if these books are always kept in our daughter’s school bag, as this means we don’t have to hunt all over the house for them or remember to send them back to school when it is book changeover day. We still record each day she reads

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in the yellow reading log as was the case in Reception, although this is now checked by the older children in the school, rather than the teachers, on a weekly basis.

### **Checking the school website**

We find it very useful that the Year 1 teachers have the weekly class plan up on the website prior to the beginning of the school week so we can know what's coming and plan accordingly e.g. class outings or requests to bring in themed items etc. so it's worth remembering to check that.

One of the biggest lessons we've learned through Reception and Year 1 is that the answer to almost every question we have is on the website, so a Sunday check is recommended.

### **Other checks**

In addition to the standard uniform readiness, school reading book in the bag and yellow reading log check, we try to remember to place money for toast and milk in the children's bags on Sundays (a stack of little envelopes in the kitchen helps contain the change).

### **P.E Kits**

P.E. kits stay in the school all term, so they are taken in the first day after a holiday and brought home in the last week of term. In Year 1, they start doing more outdoor activities, so proper trainers can be sent in, in addition to the plimsoles for Reception. It's worth thinking about this from the point of view of being without those trainers at home for most of the school year, so we need to keep asking if they still fit.

### **Morning commute**

Luckily (?) for us, the kids are heavy sleepers and they are dragged out of bed at about 7.30am each morning to try to get breakfast finished by soon before 8am and them in their uniforms by 8.20am. We live about 3 and a half miles from Hermitage along the A54 towards Congleton and leaving the house at 8.30am means we can most often be assured of getting to our usual parking spot (in one of the streets off Sandiford Road) by 8.40am. Walking from here to Hermitage takes less than 10 minutes and ensures the kids get some fresh air, with the bonus of avoiding the traffic around the school.

Also, it's always possible that an incident on the M6 increases traffic on the outskirts Holmes Chapel (especially Mill Lane), so allowing 20 mins to transport the children such a short distance is sometimes necessary. If we know we're going to be late, we can give the school office a call to let them know and take the children in through the office entrance.

### **Pick up**

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Year 1 come out of school at 3.15pm, straight after Reception, so we try to leave the house as close to 3pm as possible for this on days when they are not in after school club at Happy Days. For pick up, we park just up from school, usually on Rees Crescent, where there is plenty of space up at the top of the street.

When they are in after school club we're easily able to park on the road directly outside school, which we never even try to approach at any other time.

### **Bag check**

First task upon getting in the door at home is to check the school bag for any information regarding future trips, activities or class projects. Again, it is likely all information will be on the website too, but sometimes the earliest information is found in the bag, with all pertinent details added immediately to the kitchen calendar and notice board.

### **Summary**

Year 1 has seemed to be a smooth continuation of Reception, with a little more of a shift to classroom teaching and regular pieces of "homework". We've certainly found value in a well-maintained calendar and routine of preparation for the week ahead, which makes the inevitable rush at either end of the day manageable. The other learning has been that if we're in any doubt what's happening, check the school and class website.



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## The move from Year 1 to Year 2

Although Year 2 is still part of the Infants (aka KS1), there are some changes that can make it feel like a big step:

- Children are no longer handed over to class staff at the Reception class door – instead they enter school through the side gate
- You will no longer get the opportunity to see a staff member from your child's class on the door – but, there is always a member of staff welcoming children by the side gate who will pass on any messages to class teachers
- Pick-up is different too – it's still at 3:15pm but children are brought into the main playground by the Year 2 teacher and handed to parents there (if you have a child in Reception or Year 1 and a child in Year 2 don't worry about having to be in 2 places at once at 3:15pm – wait at the front of school for your younger child to be released and then walk round to the playground. The Year 2 teachers will happily hold onto your child for a few minutes while you make your way round
- There are no more colour groups or show and tell days to remember!
- Children will be assigned a locker and not a peg – somewhere different to get them to check when they've lost something!
- P.E. kit changes – as the children get a bit older the type of sports they do changes and you will need to provide navy blue tracksuit bottoms and trainers. Sweatshirts are optional but not necessary as the children tend to wear their school jumpers/cardigans
- There is the option to start peripatetic music lessons – which means your child can have musical instrument lessons during the school day with music teachers who come into school and charge by the lesson. This is very handy if you want to start (or continue) an instrument but can't fit it in on an evening or weekend
- SATs happen in Year 2 – the school organise the SATs in an extremely low pressure/business-as-usual way so your child doesn't feel any stress or worry about them. Miss Wilson will hold an information session for parents in the Spring which explains the process and will answer any questions.

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## Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2

We haven't written a full guide for each year in KS2 as we felt it more appropriate to tackle the Juniors (aka KS2) as a whole.

In KS2 the school day changes slightly – there is no afternoon play time and school finishes at 3:30. In Years 3 and 4, the children are released directly to their parents/guardians in the school playground by teachers, in Year 5, they emerge from the classroom themselves and are expected to find their parents themselves or return to the classroom to wait and in Year 6 children can walk home unaccompanied if their parents give written permission.

The focus on music increases and children can join the school choir - normally the choir practices once a week at lunchtime and they perform in a number of concerts and events throughout the year. Anyone can join and the emphasis is fun. If 'Choir Uniform' is specified for a performance the children need grey skirt/trousers, a white shirt with a collar and as school tie. Ties can be bought at Sam Dale's shop in HC and school also have a small amount they can lend for performances (ask Miss Whittingham if you want to borrow a tie).

Sporting opportunities increase in KS2 and there are a mixture of school sports teams, activities and sporting tournaments that children can take part in. Some of these require the children to volunteer to be part of a team so you may find out that a sport is happening and your child is not involved because they didn't put their hand up in class. On other occasions, children are selected by the teachers to take part. If your child is disappointed at not taking part in something then check that they expressed interest at the time and have talked to their teacher about it.

Residential Trips start in KS2. In Year 3 the children go away for just one night, increasing to 2 nights in Year 4 and then 4 nights in Year 5. The majority of children really enjoy the residential and they are often a highlight of the year – the school works hard to prepare the children for the experience and there will be an information evening for children and parents before each trip where you can find out more details and ask questions. The teachers also post blogs and pictures of the trip on the class page of the school website so parents can get a glimpse of what the children have been doing each day.

In addition to the yearly residential, the children also have the opportunity to go to France - the trip runs every 2 years so, depending on timing, your child will be offered the chance when they are either in Year 5 or Year 6. The information is given and places reserved in the spring term before the trip takes place the following autumn term (so autumn term of Year 4 if your child's opportunity to go is in Year 5).

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Universal free school lunches only apply in KS1 so when your child moves to Year 3 you have the option of continuing with school lunches and paying for them, or sending your child in with a packed lunch each day, or a combination of the two. You can even decide on the day as the teachers ask each morning who is having school dinner that day. If you pay for lunches you need to set up an account with ParentPay and pay for meals via the internet. Everyone receives a letter explaining the process and Mrs Bevan in the office can help if you have any queries. Meals should be paid for in advance - parents add a lump sum to their child's account which steadily decreases as lunches are eaten and should be topped up as needed. The ParentPay system has a facility to send text messages to warn you when the dinner account funds are getting low.

Home work expectation increases in KS2 – the best place to find out what homework your child has been set is the class page of the school website. Each class publishes a weekly timetable which details the class timetable and homework requirements. Children are also asked to start completing Project Work where they independently produce a piece of work based on a brief given by the teacher. Normally, one piece of project work is set each term and class teachers will outline topics, guidelines and deadlines at the appropriate time.

In KS2 children do not take part in the Christmas nativity production, instead they will be in the school summer production and may perform in the Spring/Christmas musical concert.

Some events are split into KS2 and KS1 attendance – for some it's strictly for the KS group your child belongs to e.g. Sports Day, PTFA Discos and for others it's fine to bring older/younger siblings along e.g. Fairtrade Breakfasts. If in doubt, ask in the office and Mrs Bevan will fill you in.

Children have the opportunity to learn to swim with school – this can change but currently swimming lessons take place in Year 6.

Start to consider where your child will attend High School when they are in Year 5 – most of the High Schools have Open Evenings you can attend to find out more information. Hermitage is a feeder school for Holmes Chapel Comprehensive and the children visit HCCS to take part in activities during Year 6. As with Primary school applications, the application process is handled by Cheshire East Council so make sure you are familiar with the process and contact the Council admissions team if you have queries.

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## Year 6 and the transition to Year 7

By Year 6 you will be pretty au fait with how the school works and the various clubs and activities throughout the year.

At the start of Year 6 children get the chance to apply for 'Roles & Responsibilities' – a number of positions such as Head Girl and Boy, Sports Captain, Eco Officer that Year 6 children fulfil. The children decide which role(s) they would like to apply for, complete an application form and then attend a short interview. Mrs Ross and Miss Whittingham assign the roles which are then kept for the remainder of the year.

The four big things in Year 6 are:

- Being a Reception buddy
- Min-Y-Don residential
- SATS
- Taster days at High School

As the new Reception children settle in September, Mrs Vernon and Miss Whittingham work out buddy matches. The Year 6 children get to be a buddy to a new Reception pupil. The system works really well for both children as Year 6 get the responsibility of supporting the youngest pupils and the new Reception children get their own buddy to help them. Quite often buddies will buy each other small gifts at Christmas and at the end of the year. The parents of the Year 6 and Reception buddies get invited to a coffee morning in Autumn term so that the children and parents can all meet each other. This is well worth attending if you can as your child will probably be talking a lot about their buddy and it is a great way to put a name and face together.

In Spring term the children go on a week-long residential in Wales. Billed by most pupils as the "best residential of them all" Min-Y-Don is an outward bound week in February where your child will get to partake in a whole bunch of activities such as canoeing, rock climbing and team building, whilst learning about independence and being away from home for a while! (They even make their own lunch!)

The week is scheduled as a chance for the children to relax before the starts of the SATS revision, the 6 week long revision timetable that takes place in April and May.

Whilst SATS is always seen by many as a "scary" time, the school is totally set up in preparing children for these exams with extra tuition available at lunchtimes to go over difficult topics

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as well as using previous test papers so the children gain confidence and get used to what the exams will be like.

During the week of SATS the school offer a breakfast club where children can go into school early and enjoy a bacon sandwich and a chat to their friends before taking the SAT paper of the day. They even get a chunk of chocolate as they walk into their exam!

Following a well earned half term break, Year 6 will then start activities that help the transition to High School. The majority of Hermitage pupils go to Holmes Chapel Comprehensive. If your child will be attending a different High School then let Miss Whittingham/Mrs Ross know so that they can liaise with your chosen school and make sure your child can attend their introductory events.

Holmes Chapel Comprehensive hold a number of activities which happen in late June. This consists of two days:

- Curriculum Taster day – whereby the children try a variety of subjects
- Pastoral Day – where children meet their tutor groups and spend the day doing several activities within those groups.

There is also a parents evening at the school, to learn more about the transition and how the High School works.

Before the children leave for pastures new, they appear in their final show and also have a leavers' assembly in the final week.

Things to think about during your child's last year in primary school:

- Independence – before you know it your child could be walking up to a mile a day each way to their new school. From having probably dropped them off at Primary school for 6 or 7 years this is a big step and during their last few terms it is probably worth letting them have some independence in terms of letting them walk to school on their own (if this is feasible). Walks to the village with their friends and perhaps the library or Costa (a great favourite) starts to get them out into the big wild world in a measured way
- Start getting the children to check their class timetable each week via the school portal (if they are not doing this already). Knowing what is happening each day and having the correct book, trainers, musical instrument etc. with them stands them in good stead for High School when they will need to know themselves which lesson is on which day and when homework has to be in!

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- Remind them to enjoy every last minute. They may not realise it now but Primary School can be some of the best days of their lives, even if they don't know it at the moment 😊



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