*“My daughter has additional needs. The school have been amazing at supporting her. They have been creative, caring, kind and have really made sure that she is able to enjoy school and take part in everything.”*

*“We love how calm and caring the school is.”*

*‘’My son loves Reception! I was worried he wasn’t old enough for school, but he comes home having tried new foods at lunch and excited about the new phonics he has learnt and the discovery time he had with his friends.’’*

*‘’My child loves meeting new friends and understanding that everyone is different and special.”*



Frequently asked questions about The Grove School

– a guide for parents

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**Together, we are on an adventure that**

**has LOVE,** **HAPPINESS,** **INDIVIDUALITY,**

**COMMUNICATION and LEARNING at its**

**core.**

**LOVE**

**We are passionate about our core value: LOVE.**

**As a result:**

**"Our children are kind, trustworthy, honest, compassionate, loyal, respectful, empathetic, friendly and show gratitude."**

**HAPPINESS**

**We are passionate about our core value:  HAPPINESS.**

**As a result:**

**"Our children are caring, friendly, positive, fun, supportive, optimistic, healthy, respectful, passionate and loving."**

**INDIVIDUALITY**

**We are passionate about our core value:  INDIVIDUALITY.**

**As a result:**

**"Our children are ambitious, aware, inclusive, respectful, flexible, motivated and courageous"**

**COMMUNICATION**

**We are passionate about our core value:  COMMUNICATION.**

**As a result:**

*“What happens at playtimes and lunchtimes?”*

We have an all-weather playground so children can go outside to play unless the weather is absolutely terrible. Reception children play in their classroom area in the morning, go outside with KS1 at lunchtimes and have another play in the afternoon. All the classes have staggered times for lunch so that the children can all have space to run around without it getting too busy. When the weather precludes outdoor play then the older children have things to play with in their classrooms and the younger ones have a bigger space for activities in the studio where they can have games, relax, or occasionally watch a short film snuggled up together.

**"Our children are open, empathetic, honest, positive, thoughtful, fair, supportive, aware, flexible, collaborative and articulate."**

**LEARNING**

**We are passionate about our core value:  LEARNING.**

**As a result:**

**"Our children are talented, ambitious, collaborative, nurturing, fun, creative, show perseverance, take responsibility, love fun and a challenge and fulfil their potential."**

We’re delighted that you’re thinking about sending your child to the Grove School. We know how tricky it can be to remember to ask everything you wanted to when you’re being shown around, so we’ve put together a list of the questions that other parents have asked. Hopefully this is helpful- but if you think of anything else, please do get in touch!

*“What should I do to make sure my child is ready for school?”*

If your child is starting Reception we ask that if possible they are toilet trained. Beyond that just enjoy your children being children- lots of play, lots of stories and lots of fun! There will be a few meetings to talk more about this before they start school once places have been allocated, and staff will visit children in their nursery settings to talk to the staff there, helping transitions for you and your child.

If your child is older and starting with us then just reassure them that we will show them how things are done- that we are very nice and will listen to them to make sure that we do the best that we can for them. There is some home learning- see the website for suggestions about things that are good to do with your kids at home.

*“How do you support friendships at the Grove?”*

We support children to develop good friendships, to have respect for each other and to value differences and how they make us special individuals. We would question any school that says that there aren’t sometimes challenges but we are there to deal with any problems swiftly and sensitively.

*“What are school meals like?”*

Our school meals are fabulous! We have our own famous Chef – Marco Pilloni- and we work with the charity Chefs in Schools to get the best local produce and the best quality food at the most affordable price. Food is integrated into the school curriculum and children have regular opportunities to cook with Marco, often using the vegetables harvested from our own class planters. Children are encouraged to try new foods from around the world- you’ll be amazed what they come home telling you they’ve enjoyed! But don’t just take our word for it- sign up to our ‘Come Dine with Me,’ experience and join your child for lunch!

*“What is behaviour like at the Grove?”*

“We know that behaviour is communication of how children feel- so we focus instead on their interests and individual needs. We want to support them through their school journey as best we can. In general, overall behaviour in the school is lovely- respectful and warm with loving staff looking after your children. Staff model great relationships and mutual respect is a fundamental part of our school ethos. The children really take pride in their learning, their class, their school, and the great relationships that they develop. This continues through the school. Come see our student council in action some time!”

*“How much physical exercise will my child get in school?”*

We know how important physical activity is for children. In Reception and KS1 we have PE every day. In KS2 we have structured PE lessons twice a week but we also take lots of other opportunities to be physically active- including the Grove 2K which the whole school took part in last year!

*“How does the school support special needs, additional needs or mental health concerns?”*

We have a really strong team of special needs coordinators who are very accessible if you want to talk to them about your child. The school is inclusive and all children access all areas of the curriculum. We put any money we can into funding additional adults so the children get more directed time with our talented staff.

We work hard with the children to develop a clear understanding of mental health and how to look after your mental health. We have a lovely nurture dog called Lola, who walks and reads with children throughout the school (and loves cuddles and belly rubs!!). There is a resident play therapist parents can buy into, and we have a pastoral teacher for children who need some additional support at times.

*“What other curriculum opportunities are there?”*

The curriculum is made up of two core subjects: Literacy and Maths and lots of foundation subjects: music, RE, PE, personal development (we call this ‘Team Grove,’), drama, history, geography, design technology, IT and Spanish. Apart from Spanish, which starts in KS2, the other subjects are incorporated through the school from Early Years onwards. Children really love the depth of knowledge and understanding that they get in each subject and the hands-on experience. Look on our website for more details.

*“Are there before and after school clubs?”*

“There is a daily breakfast club that runs from 8am and an after-school club that runs until 5pm. They are not run by the school but they take place on school premises.”

*“How are the classes organised?”*

We have one whole unit with two free-flowing classrooms of up to 45 children in Reception with two teachers and at least two teaching assistants. The children have daily input into phonics and maths every day and their learning is then based around ‘discovery time’ where they learn through directed and carefully provided and resourced areas to play with adults and each other.

When they move into Year 1 we use our professional judgment based on who learns well together and what makes a balanced group of children from a variety of backgrounds and learning perspectives to make up 3 Year 1 groups who will join up with 3 Year 2 groups. From there the classes are 3 classes of Year 1 and 2 mixed, 3 classes of Year 3 and 4 mixed and 3 classes of Year 5 and 6 mixed.

*“Are there other clubs available?”*

“We’re lucky to be in the centre of Totnes- so we have plenty of providers offering a diverse range of clubs. We offer gardening, drama, music, pottery and sports- an up-to-date list is provided every term. These clubs start from Y1 as Reception children tend to be too tired to manage clubs as well as a full school day.”

*“How will I know how my child is getting on at school?”*

We have parent consultations every term and a written end of year report. We run drop-in sessions through the year where you can come into the classrooms and chat to us. Staff meet and greet the children every day and can pass on any messages. The teachers are on the school field every Monday morning if you want a quick chat face to face, and if you have questions staff check emails every day that they work. We will also get in touch with you if we need to!

*“What other opportunities do children have to be outdoors?”*

We developed the school build to make sure that all of the classes have linked outdoor learning spaces for the children to use all year round. We don’t forget learning through play and discovery as they move through the school- this is still a very important part of child development and we make sure that there are opportunities wherever we can. We have a teacher in every class trained in Forest School so the children use these skills within their learning and do some Forest School specific skills building- we use settings like Leechwell gardens and areas in and around Totnes. We also run trips for all classes including walks around our local area and town e.g. the Castle, the Library etc.

*“Can I as a parent get involved in the school?”*

There are lots of ways that you can get involved! We invite DBS checked volunteers into the school to help, we like parents to join us on school trips, we invite parents to come in and talk about curriculum areas. We also have an active parent fundraising group. We put out a weekly school newsletter with events and news and there are some great groups that you might like to join to discuss key topics from the parent survey. You might even want to consider becoming a school governor.

*“What is the school doing to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?”*

We weave knowledge and understanding about equality and diversity throughout all of our subject areas and daily school life. When we choose key people to look at in our learning we look into their protected characteristics and any barriers that they might have faced- this develops an understanding in children about how ambitions can be realised for all. We try to make opportunities that are real for children to see what it is like for others, to see themselves in situations and to think about what it must have been like to experience lives with different viewpoints. Aa group of parents and governors are meeting with staff to look into what we do at school and what happens locally so we can develop an even greater depth of understanding within the school community.