Welcome to Balcombe CE Primary School!









Our 'Starting School' booklet -
a guide for parents & carers of children starting at Balcombe CE Primary School in September 2026

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Welcome to Balcombe School!

Starting school is a major and exciting event in the life of your child and we are so thrilled to be able to share the experience with you. We always look forward to meeting our new children and their families and hope that parents, children and teachers will all work together to achieve the best possible start to school life for every child. We hope this booklet will provide you with all the essential information needed to help you and your child settle into school life.







Our settling into school activities - working together to create the best possible start to school life.

We know that parents and carers know their children best and the more information you can share with us about your child before they start school, the better placed we will be to plan the curriculum to meet your child's needs. We therefore plan a variety of ways for you to work together with us in the months prior to their first term.

'Welcome' Meeting. To start our starting school activities, we hold a meeting for all of our parents and carers who have children starting school with us. The aim of this meeting is to give our new families a chance to meet the teaching staff who will be introducing school life to the children.

'Getting to know you' meetings You will then be invited to have an individual meeting with your class teacher in June or July. This is a chance for you to share information about your child – his or her likes, dislikes, strengths & talents as well as what challenges he or she may face. We love these meetings for they really allow us to get to know each other.

'Come and Play' sessions and story time Children are invited to a 'Come and Play' session where they can explore their new classroom and meet new friends.

'**All about Me' books** Children and their families are encouraged to complete a booklet all about themselves prior to starting school. These are given to children when they visit school in July and can be completed in the summer holidays and brought into school in September and displayed for all to enjoy. Not only do children feel proud of their book on display, but they always have great fun sharing them with their new friends.

We will be in contact with nurseries and preschools throughout this time period so that we can hear all about your child's successes there!

Working together when September comes…

Our settling into school programme continues throughout September. Here is an outline of how we settle children into school life when the Autumn term begins.



Starting school in small teams.

In September, to ensure your child receives maximum attention as he or she settles into school life, all children start gradually in small groups for the first few days. We also advise that all children are part-time for the first week or so in September, so that, again, we can carefully settle them in and help them to become confident as they learn about their new learning environment and new routines. Children are welcome to remain part-time for longer, of course, as all children are different

Seesaw - It is so important for children to have opportunities to share with us their learning experiences outside of school. Doing so gives us a great insight into how children enjoy their learning and the strengths and interests they have. We use an app called Seesaw, where we record learning opportunities children have at school for you to view and you can share learning experiences from outside of school. This way, together we build a clearer picture of what children can do. There will be a dedicated time to share what you have uploaded to the app in class once a week in 'Show and Tell.' Children always love to share what they have created or achieved!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) …

What is it like in Lake class?

We asked the children what it is like in our class! Here is what they said…



'Magical things happen in Lake class!'

'We have lots of fun in Lake.'

'We do lots of different things and have lots of surprises!'

'The best thing about school is that everyone is your best friend.'

'When I grow up, I am going to be a Lake teacher!'

We believe that Lake class is a very special place to be. We love to excite the children and ensure their time with us is full of awe and wonder which we can find in the simplest of things… whether it's discovering a new fact, baking a treat to eat, a surprise visitor, perhaps dressing up or venturing outdoors! We might be pirates or princesses, rainforest explorers or palaeontologists – every day will offer new learning opportunities. We do our best to create an environment where children are very happy and willing to be curious, to explore, to be creative and to be the very best that they can be.



For example, in the midst of winter, when children were fascinated by the cold and the ice forming outside and so we posed a question to challenge them to find out 'where is the coldest place on earth?' Together, we then planned a very special week – bespoke to their needs and interests - all about the Antarctic.

During the week we had been…

looking at non-fiction books - learning fact all about Antarctica, looking at Google Earth to find places near and far, asking questions to people we know who have been to The South Pole, meeting a scientific explorer, making books about penguins, cutting and fixing materials to make a sledge , climbing over and under the trim train during our explorer training, making explorer base camps and dens, exploring how the frost and ice melts, creating frozen art, learning new sounds and words, reading to a friend, reading to an adult, weighing ice blocks, investigating what floats and sinks, making maps, making pictures on the computers, listening to our friends in 'show and tell,' looking after each other, talking, thinking..

We feel that Lake class is a rather special place to be!

FAQ What will my child be learning at school?

Lake class is where the excitement begins! We base our planning on the Government's 'Early Years Statutory Framework' and use the document 'Development Matters' to support us further. We take time to listen to the children and observe their interests and make sure that our curriculum planning focuses on their passions. We also observe children's skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them so that our planning not only motivates them, but also meets their individual needs directly. We work with you closely to make sure that your views on your child's learning and development are valued and used as part of the planning process.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are seven areas of learning that are listed below. For each of these areas there is an 'Early Learning Goal' for your child to work towards throughout the year. In September, we will be offering more information about the curriculum that children will experience at school once they have settled into school life.

Prime areas of the EYFS

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

Specific areas of the EYFS

4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding the World
7. Expressive Arts and Design



Characteristics of Effective Learning

Teachers also closely observe how children learn and in particular look at:

- Playing and exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically

FAQ How can I prepare my child for starting school?

In preparation for starting school, here are some things that you can do with your child across all the seven areas of learning.

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

At home you can:

- play games that require taking turns
- show your child how to look after their toys and precious things
- help them to develop their concentration and perseverance when doing things they find difficult
- allow them to develop their independence when visiting the toilet, washing hands and dressing and undressing
- talk openly and honestly about feelings and the consequences of words and actions and whether they make others feel happy, cross or sad.

Communication & Language - Speaking, Listening & Attention

- model how to be a good listener, showing them eye contact and good body language
- play listening games
- encourage them to talk about the books they are enjoying and ask questions
- play rhyming and singing games
- ask for their opinions
- tell them about your day and then ask them about theirs!

Physical development

At home:

- support your child to become independent when toileting and getting dressed (as mentioned above)
- enjoy trips to the park to run, skip, jump, throw and catch, climb and swing
- encourage your child to help you in the kitchen and get them to mixing and kneading (or if easier – use Playdoh!) Such activities strengthen the fingers ready for writing
- encourage your child to do up their own buttons and zips as they get dressed
- try different tools for making marks - crayons, pencils, felt tips, paint brushes and chalks (it's often easier for children to develop drawing and writing skills on a larger scale before trying to draw or write on a smaller scale). Try using old rolls of wallpaper, or chalking pictures on a large scale, for example, outside on the patio.

Literacy

You will be invited into school to attend workshops that outline how we teach phonics, reading and writing in September. In the meantime at home you can try:

- manipulating clay and different types of dough – bread, play dough as well as pastry. Activities of this nature improve the strength and control of the fingers and therefore strength of the pencil grip
- climbing on the apparatus, swinging from the bars! Such activities develop arm muscle and shoulder joints all of which are used when we write effectively.

Also;

- praise every attempt your child makes at writing or making marks—such as lines, circles or shapes
- act as a role model yourself – make sure that your child sees you writing and talk about what you are writing with your child—children love to imitate. Encourage your child to sign birthday cards and make shopping lists with you.
- Have plenty of note pads around and about the house to prompt your child to write.







Mathematics

Counting opportunities are everywhere! At home you can try…

- counting the knives, forks and spoons and setting the table together
- building with blocks or Lego – how many bricks are there in a tower?
- tidying up!! Sorting and matching colours and patterns and pairing up the socks – how many do we have altogether? How many crayons can you pick up off the floor? How many bricks can you fit in your hand?
- going on a walk – count the jumps, hops, steps you take to get to a destination – how many hops do you think you can do until you get to that puddle?
- looking for common shapes as you are out and about.

Understanding the World

In this area of learning children learn about similarities and differences between objects and materials, people and communities, as well as technology.

At home you can help your child by:

- discussing the weather and the seasons and enjoying seasonal walks to observe the changes that take place throughout the year
- enjoy planting seeds and watching them grow
- discussing how toys move and work
- discussing people they see and the work they do
- meeting and talking to older people so that they can learn about how things were in the past; talk about what life was like when you were a child
- talking to them about where they live and explaining about people from different cultures.







Expressive Arts and design

This area of learning includes art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play.

You can help your child by:

- encouraging them to express their ideas through a wide range of media such as drawing, painting, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments
- joining in their role play games as they play teachers or doctors…
- encouraging them to draw on different sizes of blank pieces of paper with a range of different crayons, chalks and pencils.

FAQ What is the school day like?

Our school day

8:45am	:	Lake classroom is open and children gradually arrive from this time. All children need to be in the classroom from 8:55am which is when school officially starts. Please note that if you would like your child to attend 'Breakfast Club' which is open from 7:20am in the school hall, details will be provided in due course.
8:55am	:	School officially starts
8:55am-10:30am	:	**Learning session 1**
10:30am	:	Assembly time
10:45am-12:00noon	:	**Learning session 2**
12:00- 1:15pm	:	Lunch time
1:15-2:45pm	:	**Learning session 3**
2:45pm	:	**Story and song time**
3:15pm	:	**Home time** Please note that if you would like your child to attend our After School Club it is open from 3:15pm until 6pm, details about this will be provided in due course.

The school day continued

What happens at the start of a school session? Where do I take my child when we arrive at school?

Although the school day starts at 8:55am, we open the doors at 8.45am to enable children to enter gradually, rather than all at once. This ensures that everyone gets an individual welcome by their teacher at the door! It really is a calm way to start the day.
All children should arrive by 8:55am.
The class entrance for children in our class is via the wooden side gate in Westup Road to the left of the school (as you face it). Simply enter through this gate and follow the signs!

The full school day is 8:55am to 3:15pm

What happens at the end of the school day? Where do I collect my child?

Part-time children:

If children are part-time they should be collected at midday. We ask that parents/carers wait at the front of the school and their child will be brought to them one at a time.

Full-time children:

Children who attend school full time should be collected at the end of the school day at 3:15pm, from Lake's patio doors – exactly where you drop off in the morning.



Our tips for the start of the day – especially the first day!

- Get ready early to avoid rushing!!
- Arrive at school early
- Be positive and encourage your child to be excited
- Settle your child and give them a big kiss and a hug before you go
- Leave straight after with a big smile on your face ☺



FAQ What should my child bring to school?



- A **named coat** every day to keep them warm and dry during the wet and cold weather. Every day children will be learning inside and outside. Approximately half of the school day in Lake class takes place in the outdoor learning environment—whatever the weather!

- A **named pair of wellington boots** (these should be kept at school).

- A **named school book bag** that can be used to carry not only books but notes and pictures or items children want to bring home to share with you (these can be ordered from our uniform suppliers – see the next page!)

- A **named water bottle** (filled with fresh water only).

We also understand that children at times feel the need to bring items from home to share. We ask that parents encourage children to only bring in one item that fits into the book bag.

FAQ What is the school uniform like? What do I need to get?



Our uniform is robust and comfortable for a busy day of active learning at school. Children are proud to be in our Balcombe blue! Uniform can be purchased from 'Monkhouse' either online https://www.monkhouse.com/school/balcombe-church-of-england-primary-school-urn-126006 or from their shop in Haywards Heath. Friends of Balcombe School (FoBS) have a second-hand uniform shop – please contact them on **FoBSUniformBalcombe@gmail.com**

The key pieces that everyone will need are listed below. The website will contain additional items that are optional (e.g. fleeces). Please note that the items marked with a * are those that will need a Balcombe logo on and can only be ordered from the Monkhouse website/shop mentioned above.



GIRLS

- Grey skirt/trousers/pinafore (girls may wear a blue gingham dress in summer months)
- White blouse/polo shirt*
- Royal blue sweatshirt/cardigan*
- Sensible **black** shoes

BOYS

- Grey trousers/shorts
- White shirt/polo shirt*
- Royal blue sweatshirt*
- Sensible **black** shoes.

PE KIT

The PE kit consists of

- Royal blue shorts/blue t-shirt*/white socks/plimsolls – the PE kit must be purchased from the Monkhouse website. Children will not need PE kit for the first half term.



NB We ask that everyone has at least one or two polo shirts with our logo on that can be used for special days, including school photograph day. We understand and accept that families would like to buy packs of plain white polo shirts which can be purchased from supermarkets.

~ **Jewellery of any sort should not be worn** ~

FAQ What are the arrangements for dinners, snacks and milk at school?
Will my child have a drink or a snack?



We provide free fruit every day so that children can have a healthy snack. Children should bring in full water bottles which they can sip throughout the day. We do have drinking water in the classroom to enable water bottles to be refilled as it is important that children have access to water throughout the day. Learning is such thirsty work!
We also participate in a milk scheme which you may join if you wish, details of which can be sought from our school website or directly from the Cool Milk website Cool Milk Registration information



Lunch at School

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 are entitled to receive a free hot lunch every day – this is part of the government funded scheme known as Universal Free School meals. When children enter year 3, parents will need to pay for their hot meals. Towards the end of July, further information will be sent out regarding how to order and how to advise of any allergies or special dietary requirements.

Should parents choose for their child to have a packed lunch from home instead, then a healthy balanced packed lunch is crucial as a school day can be very exhausting. Please make sure that your child has a range of healthy foods to eat and a bottle of water to drink.

Due to the severe allergies of some children in school, children must not bring in food containing NUTS. Please note that Nutella and some other products (hummus, pesto, cereal bars) contain nuts.

FAQ: Is there any provision before and after school?

Breakfast Club and After School Club

Breakfast Club runs from 7:20am until 8:40am, After School Club runs from 3:15pm until 6pm, Monday to Friday, term time only.
Children can choose from a selection of foods and they can have a choice of water or milk to drink. There are a variety of resources available for the children to use as well as lots of outside play opportunities. It is such a fun way to start and finish the school day!
More details about how to book and register your child, will follow in July.

We also have an extensive extra-curricular club schedule which is updated on a regular basis that children can enjoy from year 1 up.

Pupil Premium

The government gives money to schools to help children from lower income families do their very best. This funding is called ‘Pupil Premium’ – we will provide details about this scheme in towards the end of July.

FAQ What happens if my child is absent or ill?



If your child is feeling unwell while they are with us at school, we will contact you (or your emergency contact).

If your child is ill and unable to come to school you should notify the school by telephone (01444 811403) or e-mail (parents@balcombeschool.co.uk) before school starts at 8:55am letting us know the reason for the absence. You should do this **on each day** of the absence.

Parents should notify school immediately of any contagious diseases, e.g. Coronavirus, Chickenpox, German measles, Measles, Impetigo, Ringworm, Head lice, Sickness/Diarrhoea or Slapped Cheek. Your child should stay at home until they are completely well, keeping to government guidelines or Public Health England advice.

Please note the following;

- If your child has been sick or had diarrhoea, he/she should not attend school for **48 hours** following the last episode.
- If your child has a rash or spots you should seek medical advice before they are brought into the school environment.

Medicines

Generally speaking, we advise parents to keep children at home if they have been unwell and prescribed a short course of medicine from a GP, such as antibiotics. Of course, each situation is different.

If medicine is required during school hours, school staff are able to administer prescribed medication only. Parents must bring the medicine to the school office in the prescribed container with the prescription/dose label.

Medical needs



If your child has any chronic, long term medical need such as asthma, or any allergy, parents must complete a Pupil Health and/or Asthma Pupil Health form which can be found on our website - this should be completed and submitted as soon as possible and before the end of the summer term prior to your child starting school. If your child requires medication for a long-term medical condition, a medical log will be completed by the school on receipt of the completed forms from the parents.

Absence for reasons other than illness

An absence request form must be completed for any proposed absence from school that is not because of illness. Absence requests for holiday during term time **will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.**

Accidents at School

We have trained first aiders at school every day who will take care of your child should they hurt themselves.
In the event of a more serious accident or illness occurring, and the school being unable to contact you, we will make arrangements for your child to be accompanied by a member of staff to hospital, if we consider it necessary.

Also…

Please note –

- Dogs are only allowed within the school grounds for education purposes or as a registered service dog.
- It is illegal to smoke on school premises.

FAQ When my child is at school – how will I know how he or she is getting on? How can I be part of school life?

Throughout the school year, there are many opportunities for you to share in your child's school experiences and feel part of our school community.

These include:



- **Opportunities to talk to your child's class teacher at the start of every day.** When you drop your child off at school in the morning, you bring them to the classroom where you will find us at the door, waiting for you all! We are always available for quick messages then. You can also see us at the end of the day as well when it is time to collect your child. It is also possible to telephone the school and speak to us over the phone at lunch time, or, arrange to see us at a mutually convenient time. We will always make time to chat.
- **Seesaw –** As mentioned earlier we use an app called Seesaw where we post information about learning opportunities at school. Details to follow when we start school in September.
- **Individual Learning Plans.** In addition to the above, every term we will share with you individual plans for your child so that you know exactly what specific skills he or she is learning at school.
- **Open mornings**. Once a term you will have an opportunity to come and look through your child's 'Learning Journal' with them.
- **Parents Evenings**.
- **School trips…special days…**
- **Regular school newsletters.**
- **Our website**: www.balcombeschool.co.uk



My Child At School - 'MCAS.' MCAS is a portal that allows parents access to their child's information. It is our data source for personal information such as date of birth, home address and contact details and allows parents to update their child's basic details should a change be required. MCAS also enables parents to book and pay for extra-curricular clubs, school trips and book twice-yearly parents evening appointments. Information on how to register and set this up will be sent out in September once your child starts school.

Term Dates – 2026/2027

Autumn Term 2026	**Starts: Tuesday 1st September** **Half Term: Monday 26th October to Friday 30th October** **Ends: Friday 18th December** **Inset: Tuesday 1st September, Monday 2nd November**
Spring Term 2027	**Starts: Monday 4th January** **Half Term: Monday 15th February to Friday 19th February** **Ends: Thursday 25th March** **Inset: Thursday 25th March**
Summer Term 2027	**Starts: Monday 12th April** **Half Term: Monday 31st May (Bank Holiday) to Friday 4th June** **Ends: Wednesday 21st July** **Inset: Monday 7th June**

We very much look forward to meeting you and your family and hope that you will enjoy being a part of Balcombe School.







A final note…

Please remember that you are welcome to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about school — whether during these initial stages or at any time throughout your child's schooling.

Our contact details are:

Balcombe CE Primary School

London Road

Balcombe

West Sussex

RH17 6HS

Phone: 01444 811403

Email: parents@balcombeschool.co.uk

Website: www.balcombeschool.co.uk

Executive Headteacher: Mr Ben Turney

Chair of Governors: Mr Ian Tremble

