

Questions raised by parents at the Welcome Meetings on 15th September 2021 for Key Stage 1 and 2.

Curriculum

Is there a difference how subjects are taught in year 1 and year 2?

In both year groups children have input as a class. However, in year 1 children complete some activities through Continuous Provision or sometimes in adult led small groups. In year 2 they will sometimes be in small adult led groups, sometimes whole class.

How are children grouped?

It depends on the activity. Sometimes it is ability grouping, sometimes friendship, sometimes mixed ability.

What and when are SATs?

SATs take place in May for the year 2 children. It is a national assessment of children's reading and writing. At Vallis we make it as normal an experience as possible for the children.

Has there been a difference between those who were in school for lockdown and those who were in school?

Every child had a different experience. Some children at home accessed a lot of the work on google classrooms, others found it very tricky to work at home for many different reasons.

What is KS1, Phase 5, Y1? How do they relate?

Key Stage 1 is all children who are in Year 1 and Year 2. Phase 5 is the phonic phase that is covered throughout Year 1.

How are years 3 and 4 taught together?

In KS2, we follow a 2 year rolling program of topics so that all children cover the necessary skills without duplicating experiences.

English

Do the children have a reading scheme/book band colours they progress through?

We use a variety of reading schemes which are colour banded to support the children as they learn to read. They do not need to read every book within a band before progressing onto the next colour. The book they bring home will be a book which they should be able to read around 95%+ of the text. During guided reading children will read a book which they will need more support with while being introduced to new phonemes, vocabulary and spelling patterns.

What is phase 5 phonics?

Phase 5 phonics is the phase that is covered during year 1. Those children in KS1 will receive a set of graphemes for each phase at parents' evening.

What are nonsense words?

These are not real words. These are words used to check the child's phonic knowledge and ability to blend sounds. Sometimes they are called alien words. They are used in the National Phonics Screening check for year 1 children.

What is an independent Key Stage reader?

A child who has read the colour banded books. Books that the children choose from are different in KS1 to KS2 so that children are accessing age appropriate texts.

How do you get children to understand what they are reading instead of just recognizing words?

During Guided Reading sessions and Storytime, we discuss texts and words.

Do the children read 1:1 with a teacher or TA or is this their guided reading?

Guided reading is the main time that children read to the teacher or TA, this may involve discussion, word spotting, reading to a peer or 1:1 with the adult. Some children may also have additional opportunities to read 1:1 to help support a struggling reader or when we are lucky enough to have additional volunteers coming into school.

How much reading should we be doing at home with the children?

As regularly as possible, even if it is for just ten minutes a day. However, we know that is not always possible.

How can parents support independent readers?

When the children become independent readers they often enjoy reading by themselves. It is still an important skill for them to be able to read out loud on some occasions but other ways to support them is ask them to tell you about the story, who are the main characters, which was their favourite part, were there any words they didn't understand?

How often do children visit the library? Do they get to explore all books?

Classes book group or whole class sessions in the library. This might be to carry out library skills, explore the variety of books, choose sharing books or simply to have a story read.

Maths

How is maths taught? We don't want to use the wrong language and methods at home.

Big question! We have in the past had Family Learning events where parents and carers have been invited into school to see examples of maths lessons and work. The calculation Policy on the school website shows some of the methods used in school.

How are ability groups arranged? Are children aware of lower? middle etc?

We use flexible groupings in maths. In KS1, children are grouped according to how they have achieved in their previous learning. In KS2, children can choose from a range of activities which vary in challenge. They are not in fixed groups but might be guided towards a particular task when necessary to further challenge or support them.

Homework

How is homework different in KS1 to KS2?

As children move through the school there is more of an expectation for children to complete homework where possible. If children would like support with completing homework they can attend Homework Club in KS2.

Is the homework compulsory?

There are no sanctions for not completing homework but we hope that many of our activities are ones that you will enjoy engaging in with your child linked to the current topic.

Are you happy for us to adapt homework to meet children's interests?

Of course!

Should KS1 children be writing their own homework or can parents help?

We encourage the children to do as much as possible (even if it's not spelt correctly!) but we are happy for parents to support them too.

If time pressures mean homework is not done or a child is reluctant to do work at home, what does this mean for the children?

In KS2 they can go to homework club if they would like support with this. There are no sanctions for the child.

Are homework activity grids reviewed?

The homework grids are changed to link to each topic although of course the curriculum does not change so some activities maybe similar to ones an older sibling may have already completed. We regularly review how homework is set and with the addition of TTRockstars (an online resource) into KS2 we feel that there are opportunities for all families, those who prefer more formal homework and those who like it to be more creative.

Is homework submitted on Google Classrooms?

We don't currently use this platform. Children draw, write, stick their responses into their homework book/learning log.

Other Opportunities

Do you need volunteers for reading?

We really appreciate volunteers coming in to hear readers, support with school trips etc. This was something we really missed during the pandemic. Please see the office if you would like to do this to organize your DBS check.

Will there be more after school clubs? Are there any after school opportunities for learning other instruments? Or non-sport activities?

We hope to be able to increase our club offerings again soon. It is certainly something we will be looking into.

Will there be school trips?

We are really looking forward to being able to organize school trips again this year and having visitors and speakers coming in to talk to the children.

Are there monitor roles/responsibilities?

Golden children are chosen every day in KS1 (every child does it) and they carry out any jobs for the teacher (getting snacks, collecting photocopying, holding doors etc). Before Covid restrictions we also had eco monitors, library monitors and reading ambassadors. We are gradually reinstating these. Two councils are also starting up this half term where a representative from each class will be joining.

Do children do swimming at school?

This year each KS2 class will have a term of swimming at Frome Leisure Centre. Each class will go weekly for ten weeks. The swimming teachers at the leisure centre support children of all abilities.

How often does year 1 go to forest school?

A small group will go for two sessions for a full morning with Mrs. Lucey during the year. However, this year every class in the school will also get approximately 10 sessions a year with Miss Clayson.

How much of the outside space is used?

As much as possible and now as restrictions lift we hope to use the school field (off Whatcombe Rd) more regularly too.

Routines

Is there a better way of communicating with the school other than the link book?

We have an open-door policy and are happy to chat to parents at the end or start of the day or book an appointment for a convenient time. If you email the office they will pass any communication onto the teacher concerned or phone and ask for a teacher to call you back when it is convenient for them. The link book is mostly used as a home reading record but other messages can also be recorded here.

I'm not sure what my child's teacher looks like is there a better way of organizing pick up?

All staff are having up to date photographs taken this week. These will be on the windows outside each classroom and hopefully soon on the school website.

Why aren't Reception children downstairs?

EYFS children currently have access to their own toilets and playground. If they were downstairs the KS1 children (Y1/Y2) could not be together, and although the last couple of years restrictions have prevented this, they often work collaboratively and on the same topics. But we do regularly review how the school operates.

Do the children eat much at lunch? Can they change if they don't like it?

Class teachers are made aware if children are not eating their lunch (or only pudding). Unfortunately changes can't usually be made as lunches are ordered according to menu choices

Why are there brownies and cakes?

Our caterers follow clear government requirements around nutrition in school (The Schools Food Standards). This document encourages healthy and nutritious meals that do not include salt and only minimal fat and sugar. Although cakes and brownies are included on the menu, they are planned to form part of a healthy, balanced diet, and contain minimal sugar. This is true of all the puddings that are prepared for our pupils.

What are the expectations around PE kit? Have they changed?

Yes, we are in the process of changing expectations around PE kits. Where children were asked to wear black shorts and plain coloured T-shirts and black daps, we now ask for plain white T-shirts.

Any other questions

Is there a policy/ limit on screen time?

Screens in school are used as learning tools, although the overall time spent on computers remains minimal. Sometimes children might watch a program or film as a class reward or on special occasions such as an end of term treat. KS2 children watch Newsround as part of their global awareness.

What is the approach regarding colouring in as opposed to free drawing?

Colouring in is often an activity some children will choose during wet play, Golden Time or for the younger children it maybe available in Continuous Provision. Drawing would also be available at this time too. However, drawing is of course a skill that is taught during art and encouraged to illustrate work etc.

Will there be an opportunity to meet our child's teacher?

The w/b 18th October there will be face-to-face parent meetings to discuss how your child has settled back into school. Please also look out for Family Learning Events and Open Classroom opportunities. You are very welcome to come and talk to the teachers when you see them at the start or end of the day.

What is Golden Time?

Golden time is a 30-40 minute slot on a Friday afternoon that the children have to socialize with their peers, choose their own activities or games to play that would not usually be available, especially for those children in years 2-4.

What are your policies for Bullying?

We take cases of bullying very seriously in our school. Children are encouraged to speak to adults when there is a problem. We speak the children involved to resolve the issue as swiftly as possible, helping the children to understand each other's feelings, what is and is not appropriate behaviour, and help the children to put things right. Sometimes a sanction is needed. Although it is rare in school, when unkind behaviour starts to be repeated, we continue with the above process, but may decide that other measures or support need to be put in place. We talk to the parents of children when this is the case.

Please find the Anti-Bullying Policy here on the school website.

Enhancing inter-gender participation?

We encourage all of our children to participate in activities. They are grouped in lots of different ways across the school day. We teach the children to respect all people and welcome diversity, whether they be gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or neuro diversity.

Our children work well together and they are praised for this and teamwork is celebrated through Team Ant certificates and in Celebration Assemblies on a Friday.