



Middle School

Key Stage 2/3



Information for new families

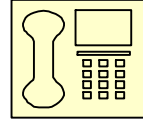
We hope the information in this booklet will answer some of your questions. Parents are children's first and most important educator; a two way flow of information between families and school is vital to the development of a positive working relationship. This will ensure we are able to provide a caring environment which meets the needs of your child: educationally, socially and emotionally. Children are most successful when there is a positive partnership between parents and school.

The Walnuts School

Admiral Drive
Hazeley
MK8 0PU

Tel: 01908 563885

Email: admin@walnuts.milton-keynes.sch.uk



The information contained in this booklet is in addition to the whole school prospectus, which provides comprehensive information relating to the school's admission policy, ethos and values, staffing and a wide range of issues relating to the school day, education and assessment.

Walnuts is a community residential and day special school for children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD's)

The Walnuts is based at two sites:

1. The Lower School Department at Hertford Place, Bletchley.
Tel: 01908 646119
2. The main school at Hazeley, Milton Keynes.
Tel: 01908 563885

01908 563885

At the main school, the telephone will be answered by one of the admin team who will be happy to deal with any enquiries or take messages.



Our Headteacher is Jo Yates and Head of Middle School is Doris Evans. They are always willing to discuss with you issues about your child's education, behaviour management and welfare.



Classes in the Middle School Department

Primary Classes

Rowan
Hazel
Oak
Maple
Chestnut



Secondary Classes

Willow
Birch
Redwood
Beech
Poplar

Key Workers

In addition to your child's class teacher, a member of staff from your child's class may be named as your child's 'key worker'. The role of the key worker is to help ensure your child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. They will help your child become familiar with their new class and to settle in. The key worker will continue to build a settled and secure relationship with your child and continue to be their key worker for the rest of the school year. They will keep you informed about daily progress and ensure that a positive relationship develops that benefits both you and your child.



Positive relationships

We want our children to feel safe and happy so they are able to develop their full potential socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. We aim to provide a secure and caring environment that supports each child's need for a broad and balanced curriculum. We want our parents to feel welcome and involved from the beginning of their child's school life.

We aim to work closely with all parents. We will listen to your views and seek information about your child so we can build upon your child's experiences, knowledge, understanding and skills and thus provide appropriate opportunities to meet your child's needs.

We hold Parents Evenings every term, and also hold a yearly Annual Review to look at the Statement of Special Educational Needs as necessary. We will look at what is working well for your child and what progress they are making, as well as look at what is not working so well and what additional support might be needed. The Annual Review is usually held within 12 months of the last annual review date or the date of the finalised statement.

Home visits

Your child will have been introduced to their class and staff on their visit to the school. Before your child starts at school the teacher and a teaching assistant may visit you at home. This gives your child an opportunity to meet staff within the security of their own home. As parents we are sure you will also have a lot of questions to ask and this is an ideal time for those questions to be asked and answered.

Starting at the school



Starting a new school is going to be a big step for your child and will involve change. Children/Young People with autism can find change challenging, change can equal anxiety.

First session at the school

- The length of stay for your child's first session will be negotiated with you, they may need a transition period also.



- Every child is different. Some Children/Young People are happy to stay all day, others may need some time to settle in.
- Staff will use this time to work with your child. Using information from yourself and school observations, at the end of the first half term you will be invited to meet the staff to discuss how your child settled in.

Parent Support Groups

The Walnuts hold a Parents Friendship and Support group for both the main site at Hazeley and the Lower School Department. This is an informal group providing an opportunity to meet with other parents. There is also a fund raising group called 'Friends of Walnuts'. You are warmly invited to be part of these groups. At the main school we hold a parent support group specifically for parents with children at the main school, to which you are warmly invited. It is a chance to meet and chat with other parents and Walnuts staff on an informal basis.

Time of school sessions

9.00a.m. - 3.00p.m.

Arrival:

On arrival the children will go straight to their class. As many of our children may have spent some time travelling to school, time is made available for toileting, play or quiet activity to prepare them for learning. Staff will read the home/school diary to inform them of any information you want us to know about to help us settle your child into the school day.

End of school day:

If your child has school transport, staff will ensure your child is safely put on the bus along with equipment to go home.

If you are collecting your child, please note that car parking can be a difficulty, please be patient.

Relative or friend collecting:

In the interests of safety, please let us know if someone other than yourself is going to be collecting your child. Providing us with written permission and a photograph can help us prepare your child about who will be collecting them.

Absences:

If your child has to miss school through illness or a medical appointment, please let the school know as soon as possible.

If your child has transport it is your responsibility to phone and cancel the transport arrangements for the duration of the absence.



Transport:

If you live more than 3 miles from the school, transport will be provided by the local authority. If you have any queries about transport please contact Nikki Rowley on 01908 252526.



Uniform:

Uniform is optional at present. However, if you would like an order form, these are available from reception, but will be included in your admission pack.

Red sweater – Pupils in

- Rowan
- Hazel
- Oak
- Maple
- Chestnut

Green sweater – Pupils in

- Willow
- Birch



- Redwood
 - Beech
 - Poplar
- Black/Grey trousers (jogging bottoms if more comfortable), skirts or pinafores
 - White Polo shirt

Orders must be accompanied with payment, cheques to be made payable to 'The Walnuts School'.

Book Bags:

A Walnuts book bag can be purchased for you to keep your child's home / school book and other books in. This often acts as a visual cue that it is time to go to school. Cost is currently £3.75.

School Dinners:

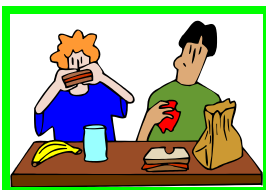
Cost = £2.00 per day.

The school makes its own school dinners and is happy to meet different diets and cultural needs. **Please note we are a NUT FREE school.**



Packed Lunch:

You are welcome to send in a packed lunch for your child. Please be aware that we do not have fridge space for packed lunch boxes – so please ensure an icepack is put in the lunch box to keep it cool. **Please remember not to include any NUT products.**



Snack:

We provide a range of daily snacks, both healthy and motivating. In the older classes, pupils also shop for and help prepare snack. We ask parents to make a voluntary contribution of £10 each half term towards the cost. This money also covers the ingredients used in cookery lessons.



Medicines in school

We only administer medicine prescribed by a doctor. All medication has to be in its original packaging with instructions on how to store and administer.

- Children with epilepsy or a regular prescribed medication will have a care plan drawn up that is agreed between the home, school and health professionals.

School makes a lot of additional demands upon your child. If they are not well, they are unable to cope with the demands of a school day; which can delay them getting better. In fairness to other children and staff, please keep your child at home if you suspect they are unwell.

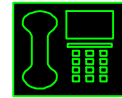
Children with diarrhoea and/or sickness are asked to stay at home for 48 hours to help them get better and prevent the spread of the infection. This is in line with Local Authority guidelines.

Toilet training

Toilet training will be undertaken in consultation with families when appropriate. We are happy to discuss this with you and support you with any necessary symbols. We apologise in advance, but we cannot wash soiled underwear, these will be sent home in a sealed bag.

Accidents at school

Unfortunately accidents do happen, even with close supervision bumps and falls can occur. All accidents will be appropriately treated by a first aider. This will be recorded and you will be informed the same day. If a serious accident occurs and your child needs to go home, the school will use your contact numbers to contact you immediately. It is important that you can be contacted at all times. Please keep the school informed of any change in telephone numbers.



What will the children be learning?

Key Stage 2 and 3

The National Curriculum provides the framework for the curriculum at Key Stage 2 and 3. A topic approach covers many aspects of the curriculum enabling children to more easily make links across their learning. English and Maths are taught as separate subjects and work is individualised for the needs of pupils, whether they are developing early skills or working at a level closer to their chronological age. In addition, independence skills, life skills, physical development and personal and social skills are given a greater emphasis than is usual in mainstream schools.

Motivation and children's motivators

You will be asked before your child starts school what items your child likes to play with, use, tap, look at, spin etc. or what topics or subjects interest your child to engage them in learning activities and develop and extend their communication skills. Not all of our children will use spoken language but we use a range of different augmented systems such as PECS, signing and a range of technological devices e.g. Big Macs, I Pads, Go Boards and similar equipment.



Interdisciplinary Therapy

Interdisciplinary Therapy:

At The Walnuts, the Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapist set targets, write reports and deliver therapy collaboratively. This collaborative way of working is supported by the SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) approach which is being introduced across The Walnuts this year. SCERTS is designed to help families, educators and therapists work cooperatively as a team. Therapy targets are written jointly by both the Speech and Language Therapist and the Occupational Therapist and are incorporated into each pupil's IEP. Programmes to help pupils achieve their targets are then incorporated into the school day by classroom staff. Progress towards achieving targets is monitored and reviewed by the pupil's lead Therapist at least termly.

New pupils are assessed predominantly through observation and discussion with the class staff; this will be shared with you at the time of your child's annual review. The therapists will contribute to the annual review process for your child by providing a report. In most cases this report will contain a summary of the therapy your child has received during the year with relevant therapy outcomes and provision recommended. New starters and those students who have transitioned from Lower to Middle or Middle to Upper school will receive a more detailed therapy assessment report at the time of the annual review. Therapists will not attend annual reviews unless it is agreed by the Head of Department, class teacher and parent in advance.

Occasionally, if this is an identified need, pupils may be identified for individual or small group work with a therapist or assistant therapy practitioners under the guidance of the therapists.

However, for many of our pupils it is the consistent implementation of strategies across a child's day that will have the biggest impact.

PECS:

PECS stands for the Picture Exchange Communication System. This 'system' can be used to help children with some spoken language to structure and extend what they want to say (augmented) or act as an alternative communication mode for those children with little or no spoken language. The use of PECS does not inhibit a child's ability to acquire spoken language. The speech and language therapists at Walnuts work as part of a multi disciplinary team to support all staff in the delivery of speech therapy for your child. PECS may be included in your child's speech and language targets, please speak to the class teacher to discuss this further. At the Main School Dinah McCarthy - Speech and Language Therapist and Speech and Language Therapy Assistant, would be happy to speak to parents about their child's needs.



Children with English as an additional language

In our school we have many bilingual children and staff. These are some of the languages spoken: Bengali, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Lingala, Polish, Somali, Swahili/Kiswahili, and Urdu.

At the Walnuts School we encourage parents to continue to use their home language in their family environment. This is fundamental in maintaining positive connections within the family. Speaking home language will help to support a full and rich communication within the family. As the child's home language develops, the linguistic skills they acquire will be transferred to the new language and their understanding of the way language works will be strengthened.

INDIAN DANCE DAY



Not all children with Autism will develop spoken language. But for all basic communication skills it is important to grow up in a relaxed and competent language environment.



Research shows that being bilingual has its advantages. Children who are bilingual tend to be more aware of others, are more creative and are better at problem solving. (EMASS literature)

SHARING FOOD AT EID



A recent research report of a survey of bilingualism in autism spectrum disorders shows that children with autism who were exposed to different languages were acquiring the languages they were exposed to. There is evidence that bilingualism can

benefit children's overall academic and intellectual development.

(International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, January 2012).

VISIT TO THE GURDWARA



AFRICAN DRUMMING



Language and culture are inextricably linked, so using the home language of the culture a child grows up in will give their experience more meaning and will help the child in making sense of the world. School need to support the use of home language as far as possible by acknowledging the cultural and language experience a pupil has through culturally relevant resources and displays. Any involvement of parents and family in the school setting to help achieve this is welcomed by all at the Walnuts School.

Children learn through their experiences. We celebrate different festivals throughout the year enriching those experiences through play and learning activities, food tasting, trying on different clothes, music and art activities as well as visits. We are always interested in parents/carers getting involved and helping out, both within school and the Residential House.

We would really welcome all communities getting involved; this could be through special cooking days, where parents/carers could help our children cook foods from their own cultures. We also have a parent support group which welcomes all involvement, as well as a Friends of Walnuts Group.

Equal opportunities

We endeavour to provide each child with the same opportunities irrespective of race, gender, religion or social class. Through our work we aim to challenge all stereotyping and prejudice and to promote harmony between children.

Equipment and resources the school supplies

1) Home/school diary

This is a book to help keep you informed about your child's school day and to help the communication between home and school.

A member of the class staff team will write in this book to give you the key points about your child's day at school/and ask you questions/or pass on information. In some classes this happens daily but in the majority of Middle School Classes this will be once a week.

It is helpful to staff if you too can write each day/week in the book informing staff of your child's progress at home so we can celebrate with you and integrate such progress into your child's schooling. It is also helpful if you can inform us about changes and whether we need to be aware of factors that affect your child's behaviour e.g. not sleeping / eating as well as they used to. Your child's teacher is also happy to talk to you about your child. Please use the home / school book to arrange a meeting or telephone call so a convenient time for both parties can be agreed. Staff meetings, courses and other appointments means that teachers are not always immediately available but they will get back to you as soon as conveniently possible. Further information about the curriculum/trips and special events may also be included. Any confidential information is sent in a sealed, separate letter. Any significant information from parents is brought to the attention of the Head of Department.

2) Library and reading books

We hope that all of our children will develop a love for books, stories, pictures and facts. For this reason we will send home a reading or library book at a suitable developmental level for you to read to your child. For those at the early stages of literacy the expectation is simply to share the story, for your child to learn to spend time looking at a book in the company of another person. Learning to respect the book (not tearing pages out or

scribbling in the book), learning to turn the pages appropriately, open the flaps / look at the pictures – you can help your child to point to an item in the picture that you name. Learning to look and listen until the end of the story. As you can see there is a lot to be gained by you reading regularly to your child, we hope that you will take this opportunity and record in the recording booklet how your child responded to the reading session.

When the children are ready they may also bring home reading scheme books, words and letters. Not all of our children will learn to read but together we can encourage them to develop a love of all books.

3) [Visuals](#)

Many children with autism find the use of visual symbols can clarify the spoken word when used contextually. As we all are aware learning does not begin and end at the school gate. So as not to confuse your child we will be seeking to work closely with you and share information about symbol use. Staff will be happy to print symbols for you as soon as possible but please be aware that you might be in a queue.

4) [Information / courses / workshops.](#)

The school runs a number of courses for parents. This year we will be delivering a new programme, designed to meet the need of parents of children aged 8+, who have a diagnosis of autism. It looks at the characteristics of autism, visual structure and development of communication and behavior management. Additional information about special events, visitors, concerts etc will be sent out to you as the occasion arises. If you have an email address and are happy to have information sent via email this ensures that letters do not go astray between home and school and helps keep costs down.

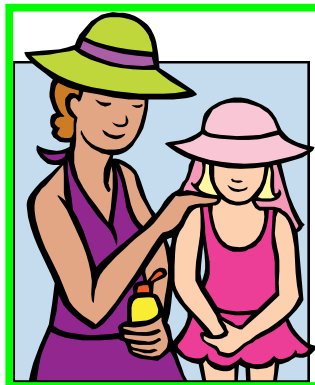
Equipment your child needs

- A) Coat— preferably waterproof.
- B) A pair of wellies - may be required in some classes. Class staff will let you know if these are needed. We encourage the children to experience a range of activities and play experiences both indoors and out. This includes being outdoors enjoying all types of weather.)
- C) Change of clothes bag - may be required in some classes. Children enjoy water play and often get very wet despite aprons - again, class staff will inform you if these are needed.
- D) P.E. bag - Your child will be encouraged to change for P.E. for hygiene reasons but also to practise their independent dressing skills. They will need a pair of shorts and a t-shirt which can be left in school for weekly use.
- E) Swim bag - A swimming bag, swimming trunks or costume, towel, and swimming nappy/pad (if your child has toileting difficulties). Swimming kit will be sent home, to be returned for the following week.

Swimming takes place on different days for classes.

- F) Home—school bag - You can provide your own bag or you can purchase a purpose made home -school bag from the school office at the cost of £3.75. The bag will be used to transfer the home- school diary, reading book and any letters to and from school.

- G) **Nappies/Incontinence Pads** - If your child requires nappies/incontinence pads, you need to regularly supply the school with these and wet wipes would also be appreciated. Staff will inform you through the home / school book when your child's supply is running low and needs replacing. Rashes do occur from time to time - if you want staff to apply creams please send the cream in its original container with a written permission slip from yourself.
- H) **Sun hat & sun cream (summer term)** - To protect your child from the hot sun we will encourage the wearing of hats. Not all children with autism can tolerate a hat on their head. For this reason we ask you, during the hot weather, to apply sun cream before your child arrives at school. We are happy to re-apply sun cream if you supply the cream and appropriate permission slip. We cannot use a generic sun cream on your child - only the sun cream you supply.



Please ensure that you label all of your child's clothing and any other items / equipment that belong to them.

Additional Information

Walnuts Care is a separate, standalone not-for-profit company that offers extra-curricular activities to the children at our school.

It organises a Play scheme for all pupils:

- One week at Easter and three weeks during the summer.
- Demand for places is high, whilst every effort is made to meet demand, you may not be offered all of the sessions you request

Walnuts Care also organise packages of respite care. This is where you pay for an experienced and qualified member of staff to work / play with your child after school and / or at weekends.

Please contact Jerry Aldous, Manager of Walnuts Care on:
Tel: 01908 662288

Social Worker:

Please discuss with the Head of Middle School.

Children with Disabilities Team:

The Children with Disabilities Team works with families who have children with a disability. We offer a range of services including short breaks, liaising with other professionals and supporting transitions. The service is decided through assessment with a team member, yourself and other professionals involved with your child. Our aim would always be to try to keep the child with their family.

The team has a duty worker who you can talk to from 9.30am - 1pm each working day. The telephone number is **01908 253617**.

Useful contact information

Duty Telephone number:	01908 253617
Emergency Social Work Team:	01908 265545
Carers Milton Keynes:	01908 231703
Autism Helpline:	0845 070 4004
Parent Partnership, Milton Keynes:	01908 254518

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/autism

Advice and support for people with autistic spectrum conditions in Milton Keynes.