



# Hillside First School

Part of the Initio Learning Trust

initio  
Learning Trust

## HANDBOOK 2025-2026



*'where children are at the heart of everything we do'*

## Introduction

This handbook is designed for parents and carers of children who are about to start at Hillside First School, or for those interested in joining our school community. It provides essential information to help you understand the day-to-day life at Hillside and ensure a smooth transition for your child.

### On the following pages you will find information about:

- **Welcome to Hillside First School**
- **About Us**
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## Welcome to Hillside First School

At Hillside First School, we proudly serve children aged 4 to 9 in a vibrant community where every learner can thrive. Our commitment is to equip our pupils with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and understanding necessary to flourish in the modern world and to meet future challenges with confidence and compassion.



We provide a nurturing environment for children from Reception (4 years old) through to Year 4 (9 years old). With a standard admissions level of 60 pupils—organized into two classes per year group—each child benefits from a supportive, close-knit learning atmosphere.

Our school is set on spacious grounds that border enchanting heathland and forest. The main building houses our Reception and Key Stage 1 classes, while a recently constructed block provides modern facilities for our Year 3 and Year 4 students.

Outdoor learning and play are vital at Hillside. We boast a large field and a versatile hard play surface marked for tennis, netball, and football. In addition, the grounds feature an outdoor classroom, a Trim Trail designed to promote active exploration, and a tranquil garden area for quieter, reflective activities during playtimes and lunchtimes.



To further inspire creativity and digital literacy, we have recently launched our **Creative Media Suite**. Here, children can engage in a variety of activities—from coding and programming to junk modelling, arts and crafts, and more—fostering innovation and hands-on problem solving.

We warmly welcome you to join our community at Hillside First School, where learning extends beyond the classroom to create confident, compassionate, and capable individuals.

## About Us

### Part of Initio Learning Trust

Since January 2019, Hillside First School has proudly been part of the Initio Learning Trust. This expanding multi-academy trust currently oversees 19 schools across Dorset, delivering an all-through education for children aged 2 to 18. Through a broad and balanced curriculum, the Trust ensures every child is well-prepared for a successful future.

### How Is the School Organised?

Our school is led and managed by a dedicated team committed to excellence in education:

- Mr Dave Graves – Headteacher
- Mrs Karen Pain – Deputy Headteacher
- Mrs Clare Corrie – SENDCo

These leaders form the Senior Leadership Team and guide the school across three key stages:

- Early Years Foundation Stage: Reception
- Key Stage One: Years 1 and 2
- Key Stage Two: Years 3 and 4

### Local School Committee

Our Local School Committee works hand-in-hand with staff to ensure Hillside First School meets its goals. This committee is composed of community representatives, including parents, local business members, and teaching and support staff. The committee meets half-termly to review progress and explore new opportunities.

### Our Values

At the heart of everything we do are our core values: **Respect, Ambition, and Perseverance**.

These values empower our children to dream big and achieve their full potential.



## Admission Arrangements

Children can attend Hillside First School at Foundation Stage by joining our Reception Base, Little Owls. Little Owls is for children who will reach five years of age between September 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> in the year of admission.



At Hillside First School we adhere to the Local Authority Admissions Policy.

Full details of school admissions together with additional information and advice can be requested from the school office, or found on the Dorset Parents Guide, located [here](#)

## Term Dates 2025-26

	<b>Autumn Term 2025</b>	<b>Spring Term 2026</b>	<b>Summer Term 2026</b>
<b>Term starts</b>	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> September	Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> January	Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>Half term</b>	Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> October – Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> November	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> February	Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> - Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> May
<b>Term ends</b>	Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July

<b>Inset Days</b>	Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2025 Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025 Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2025 Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2026 Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2026 Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2026
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<b>May Day Holiday</b>	Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
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## School Information

### School Times

The school day runs as follows:

School gates are open	<b>08:30</b>
Registration	<b>08:40</b>
Morning break at	<b>10:05 – 10:20</b>
Morning session ends at	<b>12:00</b>
Afternoon session begins	<b>13:00</b>
KS1 afternoon play	<b>14:00 – 14:10</b>
End of school	<b>15:00</b>

### School Travel Plan



At Hillside First School, we encourage families to walk, cycle, or scoot to school whenever possible. This not only supports a healthy lifestyle but also benefits the environment by reducing car use.

As a proud Sustrans Bike-It School, we actively promote safer routes to school. Children who choose to cycle must wear a helmet and be accompanied by a responsible adult.

For safety and convenience, bikes can be securely locked and stored in our bike shed at the front of the school building. Please note that bikes and scooters should be pushed when on school premises.

This plan reflects our commitment to fostering a safe, sustainable, and active journey for every child.

### Breakfast and After School Clubs

We offer a welcoming breakfast club operated by the Pre-School, where children can be dropped off from 07:45 to enjoy a relaxed breakfast before heading to their classes. Dedicated breakfast club staff then accompany the children directly to their respective classrooms.

In addition, our Hillside Pre-School runs an after school club during term time. Children from Hillside First School can take advantage of this service, with staff collecting them from class at 15:00. This excellent provision ensures outstanding, familiar care for your children in a supportive environment.



Full information can be found here: <https://www.hillsidepreschool.org/>

## Pupil Premium

The Government provides some extra funding for schools to help families in challenging circumstances. The school can use this to provide for extra learning support, help with uniform costs, travel costs for school trips and extra resources.

Families in receipt of pupil premium are entitled to free school meals during their time at school. The easiest way is to apply online [here](#).



You will need your National Insurance number to hand. You will find out straight away if you are eligible.

## Safeguarding Procedures

Our first priority is to your child's welfare and we will usually discuss any concerns we might have about your child with you. We have an agreed Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy which ensures that all staff in our school are clear about the actions necessary with regard to a child protection issue. There might be times, however, when we have to provide information to, or consult with other agencies such as Social Care before we contact you. Our responsibility to do so is determined by Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Inter Agency Child Protection procedures. Hillside First School is part of Operation Encompass and works in partnership with Dorset Police. If you want to know more about these procedures, please speak to the Headteacher.

### Our Safeguarding Team



Dave Graves  
Safeguarding Lead



Karen Pain  
Deputy Safeguarding Lead



Heather Harris  
Deputy Safeguarding Lead



James McKenzie  
Safeguarding Lead  
Local School Committee

The designated Child protection members of staff are Mr David Graves (Headteacher), Mrs Karen Pain (Deputy Headteacher) and Mrs Heather Harris (Inclusion Manager and Family Support).

We require all adults employed and working on a voluntary basis at the school to have an Enhanced Disclosure in line with statutory procedures.

## The Curriculum

### Overview

At Hillside First School we want our children to develop the best possible character and become respectful, resilient and compassionate citizens, who have the skills to succeed in our diverse, ever-changing global community. To achieve this, our curriculum is designed to provide a progression of knowledge and skills, which pupils develop through inspiring, interconnected learning. Our curriculum remains flexible to respond to the needs and interests of our pupils and changes in the local community and wider world.

Leaders maintain a strong focus on the curriculum and are accountable for its design and implementation. All staff make valued contributions towards the planning, delivery and review of the curriculum in order to continually provide the best possible outcomes for our pupils.

## Early Years



The reception year is the year where the firm foundations are laid for your child to learn to read, write and understand number. During the school day your child will have access to activities that cover a broad and balanced curriculum. During the Autumn Term we particularly focus on personal and social skills, physical development and communication and language.

We do lots of fun activities like doh disco, funky arms, Storycise and squiggle and wiggle to help us strengthen our muscles and control our bodies to become successful writers. We follow the Heartsmart scheme to help us with our wellbeing and Boris the Robot helps us to learn about our emotions.

During the school day the children have inputs on phonic/sound work, text work from a big book and number work during our snack time. Plan Do Review is when your child will access the curriculum through adult led activities and planning their own activities. As the year progresses the children will be encouraged to review their work and challenge themselves independently.

## KS1 and KS2

Each curriculum subject, and its associated knowledge and skills, is valued and afforded appropriate coverage. Subjects are either combined meaningfully in learning contexts that are thematic and age-appropriate, or they may be taught as discrete subjects, when it is considered that this will achieve the intended learning outcomes more effectively. Basic skills in English, Mathematics and other subjects are regularly applied in cross curricular contexts.

Progression of learning in all subject areas is a key element of our curriculum. Skills and knowledge are carefully developed in all subject areas based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and locally agreed syllabuses. The school has high expectations of all pupils and provides varied, rich opportunities to inspire them to achieve their full potential across all subjects.

## Assessment

Assessment is used not only to inform teachers of progress, identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, but also to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the taught curriculum, its design and implementation.

Pupils work towards 'targets', expressed as small steps so that they can recognise their success. In accordance with national procedures, Hillside First School participates in compulsory assessments at the end of EYFS, Year 1 Phonics check, statutory testing at the end of Key Stage 1 and the Year 4 multiplication times tables check. These are largely teacher assessments but are supported by some tests.



We use this data to help us inform teacher's assessments and also identify areas of strength and aspects for improvement. We believe that our broad, rich curriculum and rights-respecting ethos prepares pupils to perform confidently in assessments and equips them with the tools to be successful learners with high aspirations for their future.

## **Religious, Spiritual and Moral Education**

Our school is part of a multicultural society and is not affiliated to any religious denomination. We follow a Trust wide Religious Education syllabus that considers all faiths. Assemblies are used to encourage children to consider moral issues through the use of current news items, stories, fables, folk stories and discussion. Assembly provides a moment of quiet reflection. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious education and acts of collective worship.

## **Home Learning for the Academic Year 2025-26**

### **Aims of Home Learning:**

- Strengthen the home/school partnership and involve parents in their child's learning.
- Consolidate and reinforce classroom learning, with a special focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Extend school learning through additional reading and varied tasks that support classroom concepts.

### **Reading Priority:**

- Emphasis on making reading a key part of daily learning.
- Encourages reading for pleasure and supports practice at home.
- Year R children receive extra phonics practice to build foundational skills.

### **Weekly Learning Tasks:**

- Home learning tasks are posted every Friday from 20th September.
- Tasks include reading assignments, maths activities (using platforms such as Numbots or TTRockstars), and content reviews, all designed to reinforce classroom learning.

### **Knowledge Organisers:**

- New resources introduced based on parent feedback to clearly outline key learning objectives for each topic and maths unit (e.g., Place Value).
- Serve as a guide to help parents understand the curriculum and support their child's progress.

These will be shared via Google Classroom for easy access.

### **Platform & Support:**

- All home learning is delivered via Google Classroom.
- Login details and additional support resources, including support videos, are provided to assist parents in navigating the platform.

## Trips and Residential Visits

Throughout the school year, trips provide an excellent opportunity for children to link their learning to the world in which they live. It is our view that education visits offer essential, motivating, first-hand, real-life experiences which they will remember for many years to come.

We benefit from finding ourselves on the edge of forest and heathland. We make good use of this environment, particularly during the summer term. We are well supported by local churches and the Verwood Heritage Centre.



Some of our visits have included; Priest's House Museum, Blashford Nature Reserve, Russell Cotes Museum and Marwell Zoo. We rely on voluntary contributions to support the school visits and usually seek parental assistance on such trips.

Our Year 4 children have the opportunity to attend a residential visit at Hooke Court. The children attend for 3 days and two nights and take part in a range of educational and engaging (hands-on) activities.

## Local Visits

When your child starts school, you will be asked to sign a consent form, giving permission for your child to visit local places of interest; 'local' means within walking distance. For all other trips you will be sent a letter describing the trip and asking for your permission. If we do not have your permission, we will not take your child out of school.

Teachers plan trips that have an educational value and that are reasonably priced. We do ask parents/carers to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of trips. If sufficient parents/carers do not contribute to the cost of a trip, the trip may not take place.

To ensure the safety of our children on trips out of school, teachers complete a risk assessment. Teachers will visit the destination in advance of the trip in order to complete this. Children are insured for all trips out of school.



## Extra Curricular Activities

Our philosophy for providing after school clubs is to give the children an opportunity to participate in a variety of engaging and enjoyable activities.

There are various clubs on offer to the children in all year groups. These include:

- Tennis
- Benchball and Dodgeball
- Football
- Multi-Skills
- Dance
- Gardening
- Creative Club
- Rocksteady Music
- Computing

Clubs take place at lunch time or after school. These clubs provide the opportunity for your child to try new activities, as well as develop new skills.



Several of our sports clubs are run by professional coaches on a private and fee paying basis.

These clubs enable the children to interact with their peers as well as developing their self-confidence.

## Attendance

Being at school is a very **important** part of any child's life. It enables them to learn, to make friends, to gain important knowledge and to develop a variety of skills which will prepare them for adult life. School and parents/carers are partners in making this a success. As parents or carers it is **your legal responsibility** to make sure that your child makes the most of this opportunity by attending regularly.

1. We are unable to authorise school absences, except in exceptional circumstances.
2. We will try to ring you if your child is absent and we have not heard from you.
3. We monitor attendance carefully and we will write to you if your child's attendance drops below 95%.
4. If attendance remains low we will ask you to meet with us to discuss the way forward and possibly ask you to provide medical evidence before we will authorise any more absences.



If your child is away from school, you must contact the school before 09:30 so that we know that your child is safe with you. This is a legal requirement and any unauthorised absences will be noted on your child's Annual Report.

Please let us know in advance if your child is going to be withdrawn for medical or dental treatment. If your child has to leave school for an appointment, or because they are unwell, please sign your child out at the school office. Time in school is important and, if possible, try to ensure appointments are made after school and during school holidays.

## Holidays

Following the changes to the Attendance Regulations, schools are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances." Under these regulations, holidays are not considered as exceptional circumstances and may result in a penalty notice.

The Local School Committee at Hillside First School have determined that exceptional circumstances are:

- Bereavement. Up to 3 days for a close family bereavement. (Close family is the child's great grandparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings (brother/sister), cousins, mother, father, carer and guardians.)
- Any major incident in the lives of parents or carers of the child, causing practical difficulties for a child getting to school will be given up to 3 days leave of absence.
- Any family crisis. Up to 3 days.
- Close family wedding. (members as above) Up to 2 days per year.
- Leave following the return of a lengthy absent parent

All other exceptional circumstances need to be discussed with the Headteacher. All applications for leave of absence during term time must be made by letter to the Headteacher.

### Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

The Local School Committee and staff at Hillside First School have a commitment to inclusion, and children recognised as having additional learning needs. We aim to ensure the best match between identified need and provision. The ethos of Hillside First School aims to support positive attitudes towards individuals with different needs. This is expressed through the language we use, our relationships with one another and through the resources and environment we provide.

In school, there will be children with SEND and these may include children who find reading and writing difficult, have speech and language difficulties, who find concentrating hard, who may have behaviour challenges, or other needs. In Hillside First School, the class teachers are responsible for teaching and caring for SEND children under the guidance of our SEND Coordinator (SENDCo). This means that the SENDCo will be able to ensure these children receive any extra help that may be available.

Regular consultations with parents ensure the best possible outcomes for the children. We also liaise with a range of outside agencies including Health, Education and Social Care.

The school recognises that parents have a wealth of knowledge about their child and always seek to work in partnership with parents. Parents are fully involved in all arrangements concerning their child.

The Local School Committee and staff at Hillside First School continually improve and review accessibility and actively seek support and advice from the Local Authority advisors to make appropriate provision. The staff also ensure that access arrangements are taken into consideration when planning activities and field trips.

### Dorset Family Information Service

The Family Information Service provides a wide range of information on their website [here](#), offering advice, guidance or help for families, carers and young people. They will also give information over the telephone or via the internet.

These are a few of the many subjects covered:

- Looking for 0-19 information, advice, guidance or help?
- Brokerage and outreach services
- Support for children with additional needs
- Childcare information
- Activities and clubs
- Holiday club information
- Financial support

### Equal Opportunities

We uphold the right of all pupils to receive the highest quality education regardless of age, race, ethnicity, special needs or disability, family or social background. We believe that the community of the school should reflect the diversity of its local and regional community and that diversity can, and should, enhance the 'life experience' of those within the community.

## School Uniform

We have a uniform at Hillside First School. The owl is our school mascot and appears on our royal blue sweatshirts, cardigans and fleeces.

### Uniform for Boys



Grey shorts or trousers  
Sky blue polo shirt  
Royal blue sweatshirt\*

### Uniform for Girls

Grey skirt, pinafore or trousers  
Sky blue polo shirt  
Royal blue sweatshirt or cardigan\*  
Summer option: blue and white dress



### All Children

Shoes: flat, velcro, buckled or laced shoes (black or navy).  
Summer option: flat sandals with closed toes.

**Please note fashion footwear, trainers, shoes or sandals with heels and opened toes are not suitable.**



**P.E. Kit:** black football shorts or cycling shorts, white collarless (not polo) t-shirt and trainers with velcro fasteners. Black tracksuit bottoms and black tracksuit top. Please note skirts are not suitable.

**Coat:** warm, waterproof coat for playtimes and lunchtime.

*\* Items with the school logo are only available from [Bartletts Schoolwear](#) in Wimborne.*

**PLEASE ENSURE ALL ITEMS OF CLOTHING ARE CLEARLY AND PERMANENTLY LABELLED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME**

It is not appropriate for children to wear jewellery to school, nor should nail polish be worn. Children are allowed to wear earrings during the school day, provided they are small studs. These must be covered for PE and parents accept responsibility for injury caused or loss of items.

Key stage two children may wear small, discreet watches (they must not have a photo facility on them), but will need to remove them for PE. The school accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to watches.

Shoulder length hair should ideally be tied up at all times, but definitely for PE.

## Food, Money and Personal Possessions

### Hot School Meals

At Hillside First School, hot School meals are offered to all children in the school who stay for lunch. These are ordered online from Chartwells [here](#).

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal under the governments 'Universal Infant Free School Meal' scheme. However, parents/carers should still apply for FSM as all children who are registered as being eligible will also receive additional Pupil Premium funding which can be used to support their learning and give access to educational experiences.



### Packed Lunch

Please put your child's packed lunch in a watertight container, clearly marked with your child's name. Please do not bring fizzy drinks or use glass containers. Drinking water is freely available at lunch time. Children are encouraged to bring water to school in a water bottle. The bottle should be clearly named and will be stored in the classroom. For health reasons, children should take the bottle home to be rinsed and refilled daily.



### Mid-Morning Snack

As part of the government's health eating policy, the school is provided with fruit and vegetables daily for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. In Year 3 and 4, children are encouraged to bring fruit, vegetables or a healthy snack to school with them.

### Cool Milk

Milk can be ordered online from [Cool Milk](#). This is kept refrigerated during the morning. Children under five years of age are entitled to this free of charge.

### Money and Personal Possessions in School

Unless specifically asked to do so, children should **not** bring any money to school. Mobile phones, other electronic devices and toys are not permitted in school.

### Health & Wellbeing



The school has a number of trained ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants). We are able to offer a range of interventions to support with specific emotional needs, including a nurture group.

### Illness

**Please think carefully about whether or not your child is well enough to be at school.**

A child who is unwell will gain very little from being at school, whereas some quiet time at home is likely to help them recover more quickly and prevent the spread of illness. In cases of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, please keep your child at home for two school days after the last episode to prevent the spread of the virus.

### First Aid

Staff are trained to deliver first aid at school. A qualified first aider will always be present on any school trip. If a child requires first aid for any reason, while at school or on a school trip, we will record the incident and a report slip will be given to the child to take home. In the case of a head injury, parents/carers will be informed in person or by telephone regardless of how minor the injury appears.



### Medicine

If your child needs prescribed medicines during the school day, please contact the school office to complete the necessary consent forms. Please note we will only administer antibiotics at school if they are needed 4 times a day.

### Asthma Inhalers

Parents/carers should ensure that named asthma inhalers are with children in school at all times. If your child needs an inhaler, these will be kept in your child's classroom. Please speak to the school office to complete the appropriate paperwork.

## Communication to Parents/Carers

By knowing the children really well we can respond to their needs, build confidence and support their learning. We learn about the children by establishing trusting relationships with them and by building good relationships with parents. We will keep you regularly updated with information regarding your child's learning.

Parent helpers are welcomed in school and on school visits. All adults in school must have clearance from the Disclosure & Barring Service. We also invite parents to class showing assemblies and performances where pupils celebrate their work.

Our Home School Agreement outlines the way that school, parents and children should work together.

We will communicate with you through:

### ➤ **Arbor**

This is a cloud-based management information system and preferred method of communication. You can log into the Arbor App or Parent Portal to update your child's information, receive communications, update consent preferences and make payment for clubs and trips. Arbor information and support can be found on our website [here](#).



### ➤ **Newsletters**

All newsletters are sent out via Arbor and are available on the school internet. We try to make them informative and notify you of future events and dates.



### ➤ **Parents and Open Evenings**

There are two formal parents' evenings in the Autumn and Summer terms when parents can discuss their children's progress with the teacher. There is also an opportunity in the Spring term for parents to see the children's work.

### ➤ **Knowledge Organisers**

At the start of each new topic in maths and general topic work, a Knowledge Organiser is provided. It outlines the key learning objectives, essential vocabulary, and core concepts for the topic. Designed to support classroom learning and guide home revision and discussion. These organisers are available via Google Classroom for easy access by parents and children.

### ➤ **Annual Reports**

A written report is sent home near the end of the Summer term.

### ➤ **Website**

Our school website [here](#) has a good deal of information that parents will find useful.

Parents are also welcome to talk to teachers about their child at any time during the school year.

**The best time is at the end of the day when more time is available.**

### Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

We have a committed PTA, who organise a wide range of events throughout the school year. These are as much for fun as for fundraising. All parents are automatically members of the Association and we welcome contribution in whatever capacity they have the time and /or talent for.

Whatever the occasion, do come along and enjoy yourself. It is a good way to get to know all the parents and staff that make up the Hillside First School family, whilst at the same time generating much needed funds, which give the school the "extras" that make such a difference to the children's school experience.

In recent years the PTA have helped raise funds for play equipment, Creative Media Suite, Outdoor Learning, reading books, party entertainers and classroom games and equipment.



### Transfer to Middle School

The majority of our children transfer to Emmanuel Middle School. Admissions to middle schools are made through Dorset Council. A small number of children transfer to other local schools including Cranborne Middle and West Moors Middle. We have excellent links with all middle schools and are able to make the transfer a smooth and enjoyable one for all involved.

There are a variety of visits for the children to familiarise them with their new school and to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Hillside First School staff liaise with middle school staff in order that they can get to know the children quickly.

We hope you found this handbook informative.  
Please contact the school if you would like further information.

**We look forward to welcoming you  
to the Hillside First School Family!**



## Hillside First School

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