



Hillside

First School

Part of the Initio Learning Trust

initio
Learning Trust

HANDBOOK

2026-2027



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

Introduction

This handbook is designed for families whose children are due to start at Hillside First School, as well as for families thinking about joining our school community.

It gives you the key information you need about day-to-day life at Hillside and should help make your child's transition as smooth as possible.

On the following pages you will find information about:

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

At Hillside First School, we are proud to serve children aged 4 to 9 in a caring, vibrant and ambitious school community where every child is encouraged to thrive.

We want every pupil to leave us with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need for the future, alongside the values to show kindness, respect and resilience in everything they do.

We welcome children from Reception through to Year 4. Our school offers a friendly, supportive environment where children are known well and encouraged to achieve their best.

Our school is set in spacious grounds on the edge of heathland and forest. We have a large field, hard play areas for a range of games, an outdoor classroom, a Trim Trail and a calm garden space for quieter play and reflection.

Learning at Hillside happens both inside and outside the classroom, and we are proud of the opportunities this gives our children every day.



About Us

Part of Initio Learning Trust

Since January 2019, Hillside First School has been part of Initio Learning Trust, a growing multi-academy trust that serves schools across Dorset. The Trust is committed to providing a broad and balanced education that prepares children well for the future.

School Leadership

Our school is led by:

Mr Dave Graves, Headteacher

Mrs Lauren Palmer, Deputy Headteacher

Mrs Clare Corrie, SENDCo

Together, they lead the school across:

Reception, Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 and 4.

Local School Committee

Our Local School Committee works closely with the school team to support our aims, monitor progress and help us continue to improve. It includes representatives from the local community, parents, staff and local business members.

Our Values

Our core values are **Respect**, **Ambition** and **Perseverance**. These values help shape everything we do and support our children to aim high and do their best.



Admission Arrangements

Children can start at Hillside First School in Reception, known as Little Owls.



Little Owls is for children who will turn five between 1st September and 31st August in the year they start school.

We follow the Local Authority Admissions Policy. Full details are available from the school office or through the Dorset Parents Guide, located [here](#)

HILLSIDE FIRST SCHOOL

Term Dates 2026-27

	Autumn Term 2026	Spring Term 2027	Summer Term 2027
Term starts	Thursday 3 rd September	Tuesday 5 th January	Monday 12 th April
Half term	Monday 26 th October – Friday 30 th October	Monday 15 th Friday 19 th February	Monday 31 st May - Friday 4 th June
Term ends	Friday 18 th December	Wednesday 24 th March	Friday 16 th July

Inset Days	Tuesday 1 st September 2026 Wednesday 2 nd September 2026 Monday 2 nd November 2026 Monday 4 th January 2027 Thursday 25 th March 2027 Monday 19 th July 2027 Tuesday 20 th July 2027 Wednesday 21 st July 2027
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May Day Holiday	Monday 3 rd May 2027
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School Information

School Times

The school day runs as follows:

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

School Travel Plan



We encourage families to walk, cycle or scoot where possible. This helps support healthy habits and reduces traffic around the school.

As a Sustrans Bike-It School, we promote safe and sustainable travel. Children who cycle must wear a helmet and be accompanied by a responsible adult. Bikes can be stored in the bike shed at the front of the school. Scooters and bikes should be pushed while on school site.

Breakfast and After School Clubs

Breakfast Club is run by the Pre-School and is open from 07:45. Children are then taken directly to class.

An after-school club is also available during term time through Hillside Pre-School. Full details are available [here](#).



Pupil Premium

The Government provides extra funding for eligible families to support children's learning and wider school experiences. This funding may be used to help with uniform, trips, travel costs or additional learning support.

Families who qualify may also be entitled to free school meals and additional Pupil Premium support. Applications can be made online [here](#).



Safeguarding Procedures

The safety and wellbeing of every child is our highest priority.

If we have any concerns about a child, we will usually speak to parents and carers first. However, there may be occasions when we need to contact other agencies before doing so, in line with child protection procedures.

Hillside First School is part of Operation Encompass and works in partnership with Dorset Police.

The designated safeguarding leads are:

Mr Dave Graves, Headteacher

Mrs Karen Pain, Class Teacher

All adults employed or volunteering at the school are required to have the appropriate DBS clearance in line with statutory safeguarding procedures.

Our Safeguarding Team



Dave Graves
Safeguarding Lead



Emma Gahan
Deputy Safeguarding Lead



Lauren Palmer
Deputy Safeguarding Lead



James McKenzie
Safeguarding Lead
Local School Committee

The Curriculum

Our Approach

At Hillside First School, we want children to become respectful, resilient and compassionate individuals who are ready to succeed in a changing world.

Our curriculum is carefully planned to build knowledge, skills and understanding over time. We aim to make learning exciting, meaningful and connected, while also responding to the needs and interests of our pupils.

Early Years

Reception is a crucial year for building the foundations for reading, writing and number.

Children take part in a broad and balanced curriculum, with a strong focus in the autumn term on personal, social, physical and communication development.



We use a range of playful activities such as Dough Disco, Funky Fingers, Storycise and Squiggle and Wiggle to strengthen children's muscles and prepare them for writing.

We also use the Heartsmart programme and Boris the Robot to support wellbeing and emotional understanding.

Children learn through phonics, stories, number work, adult-led activities and independent exploration. As the year progresses, they are encouraged to become more confident and independent learners.

Key Stage 1 and 2

Across Years 1 to 4, children are taught a broad curriculum that values every subject.

Learning may be delivered through topics or as separate subjects, depending on what best supports the learning. English, mathematics and other basic skills are regularly applied across the curriculum.

We have high expectations for all children and provide rich opportunities that help them make strong progress across all subjects.

Assessment

Assessment helps teachers understand what children know, what they can do and what they need next.

Children work towards clear targets broken into small steps so that they can recognise progress and celebrate success.

We take part in statutory assessments, including:

- Early Years Foundation Stage assessments
- Year 1 Phonics Screening Check
- Key Stage 1 assessments
- Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

These assessments help to inform teacher judgement and support next steps in learning.



Religious, Spiritual and Moral Education

Hillside First School is part of a diverse community and is not linked to any specific religion.

We follow a Trust-wide Religious Education syllabus that explores a range of faiths and beliefs. Assemblies also give children opportunities to think about important moral issues through stories, discussion and reflection.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from Religious Education and collective worship.

Home Learning for the Academic Year 2026-27

Home learning is designed to strengthen the partnership between home and school.

It is intended to:

- support reading and number skills,
- reinforce classroom learning,
- and extend learning through additional activities.

Reading remains a priority and we encourage children to read daily for pleasure and practice. Reception children also receive extra phonics support.

Weekly tasks are set every Friday and may include reading, maths activities and topic revision. Knowledge organisers are shared to help families understand key learning and vocabulary.

Home learning is available through Google Classroom, with login details and support information provided for families.

Trips and Residential Visits

Trips and visits help children bring their learning to life and make lasting memories.

We make good use of our location near forest and heathland, and also work closely with local churches and the Verwood Heritage Centre. Previous visits have included Priest's House Museum, Blashford Nature Reserve, Russell-Cotes Museum and Marwell Zoo.

We ask for voluntary contributions to help fund visits, and some trips may rely on parental support.



Local Visits

When your child starts school, you will be asked to give permission for local walking trips. For all other visits, we will send a letter with full details and ask for consent.

Children are insured for school visits.



Year 4 Residential

Year 4 children have the opportunity to attend a residential visit to Hooke Court for three days and two nights. This is an exciting experience with a range of hands-on educational activities.

All trips are carefully planned with safety in mind and risk assessments are completed in advance.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We offer a range of clubs to give children the chance to try new activities, develop new skills and enjoy time with friends.

Clubs may include:

Football, Multi-Skills, Science, Dance, Gardening, Creative Club, Rocksteady Music and Computing.

Some clubs are run by external coaches and may be fee-paying. Clubs usually take place at lunchtime or after school.



Attendance

Regular attendance is essential. It helps children learn well, build friendships and make the most of school life.

As parents and carers, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child attends regularly.

We cannot authorise absence except in exceptional circumstances. If your child is absent, please contact the school before 09:30. If attendance falls below 95%, we may contact you to discuss this further.

If your child needs to leave during the school day for an appointment, please inform the office and sign them out as needed. Where possible, appointments should be arranged outside school hours.



Holidays During Term Time

Family holidays are not considered exceptional circumstances and term-time leave may result in a penalty notice.

Exceptional circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis and must be requested in writing to the Headteacher.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

We are committed to inclusion and to supporting children with additional needs well.

We aim to make sure the support each child receives matches their individual needs as closely as possible. Class teachers work closely with our SENDCo to help identify needs and put appropriate support in place.

We value the knowledge parents and carers have about their child and always aim to work in partnership with families. We also work with outside agencies where needed, including health, education and social care professionals.

We continually review accessibility and ensure that access arrangements are considered when planning lessons, activities and trips.

Dorset Family Information Service

The Dorset Family Information Service offers advice, guidance and support for families, carers and young people. It can provide information about childcare, activities, holiday clubs, support for children with additional needs and financial help.

Equal Opportunities

We are committed to providing the highest quality education for all children, regardless of background, race, ethnicity, special educational need or disability.

We believe our school should reflect the diversity of the wider community and that this diversity enriches the experience of everyone in our school.

School Uniform

We ask all children to wear school uniform.

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 skorts are not suitable.*

Coat: warm, waterproof coat for playtimes and lunchtime.

** Items with the school logo are only available from [Bartlett's Schoolwear](#) in Wimborne.*

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

Children should not wear jewellery or nail polish to school. Small stud earrings may be worn, but these must be covered for PE. Key Stage 2 children may wear a small, discreet watch without a camera function.

Shoulder-length hair should ideally be tied back, especially for PE.

Food, Money and Personal Belongings

School Meals

Hot school meals are available for all children who stay for lunch and can be ordered online through Chartwells.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals, but families should still check whether they qualify for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium support.



Packed Lunches

Packed lunches should be brought in a named watertight container. Please do not send fizzy drinks or glass containers. Water is available at lunchtime, and children should bring a named water bottle which is taken home daily to be washed and refilled.

Snack

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children are provided with fruit or vegetables each day. Children in Years 3 and 4 should bring a healthy snack, such as fruit or vegetables.



Cool Milk

Milk can be ordered through CoolMilk [here](#). Children under five are entitled to free milk.

Money and Personal Possessions in School

Children should not bring money to school unless specifically requested. Mobile phones, electronic devices and toys are not allowed.

Health & Wellbeing

We have trained ELSAs in school who can support children with emotional wellbeing through a range of interventions, including nurture groups.



Illness

Please keep your child at home if they are too unwell to attend school. If they have had vomiting or diarrhoea, they should remain at home for two school days after the last episode.

First Aid



Staff are trained in first aid, and a qualified first aider will always be present on school trips.

If a child needs first aid, the incident will be recorded and a note will be sent home. Parents will always be informed about any head injury; however, minor it may seem.

Medicine

If your child needs prescribed medicine during the school day, please contact the school office to complete the necessary paperwork.

We only administer antibiotics at school if they are prescribed four times a day.

Asthma Inhalers

Parents/carers must ensure that named inhalers are in school at all times. These are usually kept in the child's classroom, and the relevant paperwork must be completed with the school office.

Communication to Parents/Carers

We believe strong communication between home and school helps every child to succeed. We get to know children well by building strong relationships with them and with their families. We will keep you updated about your child's learning and school life.

Parents are welcome to help in school and on trips, although all adults must have DBS clearance. We also invite families to assemblies, performances and celebrations of children's work.

We communicate through:

- Arbor, our main communication and payment system
- Newsletters
- Parents' evenings and open events
- Knowledge organisers
- Annual written reports
- The school website



Parents are always welcome to speak to teachers during the year. The end of the day is usually the best time for a conversation.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Our PTA organises a wide range of events throughout the year, bringing families together while also raising funds for the school.

All parents are automatically members and we welcome support in whatever way families are able to give it.

The PTA has helped fund play equipment, outdoor learning, books, classroom resources and other extras that make a big difference to school life.



Transfer to Middle School

Most of our children move on to Emmanuel Middle School, with others attending schools such as Cranborne Middle or West Moors Middle.

We work closely with middle schools to make the transition as smooth as possible. Children take part in visits and activities to help them get to know their new school, and our staff liaise with middle school colleagues to support this process.

Closing Message

We hope you find this handbook helpful and informative.

Please do contact the school if you would like any further information.

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



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