

Acorn Nursery Class

Handbook

2026 - 2027



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Website: www.gothicmede.org.uk

Introduction

Welcome to Acorn Nursery Class. This is your child's first experience of school and we want to make it as happy as possible. We are a friendly and caring school, committed to giving your child the very best experience of school which we believe will give them a life-long love of learning. Education is a partnership between home and school and we look forward to working with you.

Vision and Ethos

Gothic Mede Academy is a values-based school. We are a happy, nurturing and safe school where we can challenge each other to be our best. All the children are given a variety of opportunities and experiences so that they can develop, ready for their next stage in education and for what they will encounter in life.

You will find children and staff who:

- Live the school's values of Pride, Respect, Responsibility and Compassion
- Are ambitious, motivated and set goals for themselves
- Take pride in what they do
- Are confident and resilient
- Are empowered to believe that they can achieve
- Have a growth mindset
- Care for each other

Intent

At Gothic Mede Academy, we aim to provide a curriculum which:

- Values children's prior life experiences and learning and focuses on the development of children as individuals, raises aspiration and provides them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for the next stages of their education.
- Aims to build strong foundations rooted in academic success as well as moral and spiritual development, so that pupils can be successful learners and go on to be active citizens of society and happy, curious life-long learners.
- It is rich, inspiring and broad and provides the cultural capital we know our pupils need so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for success.
- Embeds the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking.
- Places emphasis on Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication and Language to enable pupils to listen, speak and meet the high expectations for behaviour by working together and being kind.
- Provides enabling environments and warm, skilful adult interactions to support the pupils as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration.
- Aims to develop a love of reading, writing and numbering through a holistic curriculum which maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and offers extended periods of play and sustained thinking based on children's interests and ideas.
- Provides the depth that enables children to master the knowledge and skills essential for each subject.
- Fosters high expectations and challenges in order to build children's perseverance and self-belief.

- Provides children with a wide range of rich, first hand learning experiences to take the curriculum beyond the classroom and develop their love of learning, independence and creative thinking.
- Promotes health and wellbeing and gives children the tools to explore and talk about their emotions preparing them to make a valuable contribution to society.
- Gives children opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
- Prepares children for life in modern Britain and develops an awareness of how they can contribute to their local community.

Key Staff and Acorn Nursery Staff from September

Executive Principal:	Mr Clarke
Head of School:	Mrs Smith
Early Years Leader:	Mrs Lewis
Room Leader:	Mrs Pang
Early Years Practitioners:	Mrs Raybould
Learning Support Assistant & Midday Supervisor	Miss Evans
SENDCo:	Mrs Sugden
Family Support Worker:	Mrs Anderson
Office Manager:	Mrs Deacon
SEND & Admin Assistant	Mrs Glindon
Admin Assistant:	Mrs Onadeko

Nursery Sessions

Children are entitled to a minimum of 15 hours free nursery education from the term after their third birthday. Children can take their 15 hours in one of the following ways:

Option A:	Option B:
Monday 8.50am – 3.20pm	Wednesday 1.20pm – 3.20pm
Tuesday 8.50am – 3.20pm	Thursday 8.50am – 3.20pm
Wednesday 8.50am – 10.50am	Friday 8.50am – 3.20pm

Acorn Class also works in partnership with BEST Nurseries where your child may be taking up more hours on top of their 15 funded hours.

Additional Childcare Sessions

As previously mentioned, we work in partnership with BEST Nurseries who run daytime child care for children aged 4 months – 4 years, as well as a Breakfast Club and an After-School Club for children up to 12 year olds. Please ask in the office of BEST Nursery about additional childcare if you require it.

Term Dates 2026 - 2027

Autumn Term 2026 Monday 7th September - 18th December
(Please see Welcome Letter for settling in arrangements and times for WC 7th September)

Half Term Monday 26th October – Friday 30th October

Spring Term 2026 Tuesday 5th January – Thursday 25th March

Half Term Monday 15th February – Friday 19th February

Summer Term 2026 Monday 12th April – Wednesday 21st July

Half Term Monday 31st May – Friday 4th June

Please note that Acorn Class will be closed on Monday 3rd May (Bank Holiday) and Monday 4th January (Training days).

Please click on this link [BEST Calendar 2026/2027](#) for more details.

Lunchtime Arrangements

For the two days when your child will be in Acorn Class for the full day, they can have a hot school dinner from the school kitchen which costs £2.85 a day. You will be required to register with Bromcom, add money to your account and choose your child's dinner option. Please note that this is required 5 days before the dinner is due to be taken. Once your child has received the dinner the payment will be taken from your account. Alternatively, your child can bring their own packed lunch from home. Your child can swap between school dinners and packed lunch but must commit to the same choice for the two sessions that week. You must also complete a menu stating your child's choices (these will be in the classroom and shared by your child's key worker at the beginning of term). **If you are providing your child with a packed lunch or snacks from home please do not put anything in that contains nuts as we often have children with nut allergies. This includes chocolate spreads and some cereal bars so please check ingredients on the packet.**

The Curriculum in Acorn Class

Our curriculum is based on the "Early Years Foundation Stage", a document that applies to all settings with children from 0 to 5 years old. The guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets out aims and principles which all settings have to follow. There are 17 different Early Learning Goals which most children are expected to have achieved by the end of their Foundation Stage. It is recognised that some children will be working beyond the goals and some will be working towards them. The Goals are divided into 7 areas of learning and development.

There are 3 "**prime**" areas:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal Social and Emotional development

There are 4 “**specific**” areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

We offer a combination of child-initiated play, structured play activities and adult focused teaching sessions. Children have free access to the whole Nursery, including the outside area, throughout the majority of the session where there are resources and activities to develop all areas of learning. Staff carefully observe and support the children during their child-initiated play in order to identify their interests and support them in their next steps for learning. Short, daily, adult focused teaching sessions enable the children to develop their skills in areas such as Phonics and Maths, as well as other areas of learning. With the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn through playing, exploring and being active, and through creative and critical thinking, which takes place both indoors and outside.

Settling In

We begin this process before your child starts in Acorn Class by finding out about your child and getting to know them. All children are allocated a key worker who will be responsible for this, as well as other things. There is a chance for you to meet your child’s key worker during a settling in session in July. As well as giving you and your child a chance to meet their key worker, it will be an opportunity to talk to you about your child’s strengths, areas for development and individual needs. Your child’s key worker will be responsible for helping your child settle into Acorn Class on their first few days and will continue to be responsible for their welfare.

We recognise and understand the anxieties for both parents and children when starting at nursery. Some children will settle in on their first visit and others will take a little longer to get used to a new environment. If your child finds it particularly difficult to settle then the staff may ask parents to stay for some of the session if we feel it would benefit your child.

Your Child’s Progress

In Early Years we use the online learning journal Tapestry to record children’s learning and achievements by uploading photos, videos and observations. Parents are able to log on and view these observations as well as being able to add their own.

You will also have the opportunity to attend parent consultations to meet with your child’s key worker to discuss your child’s progress, celebrate their successes and discuss their next steps for learning. Twice a year we send home a report which summarises attainment and identifies their next steps. If you have concerns about any area of your child’s development please come and talk to us.

Transition into Reception Class

Acorn Class staff work closely with the Reception Class staff to plan a seamless transition for your child when they move up into the main school. The Reception staff visit the children in Acorn Class and also organise visits to the school for the children before they start. Please note that although Acorn Class is part of Gothic Mede Academy, your child will not automatically get a place in the Reception Class. The statutory requirement is that all parents have to apply for a place for their child in Reception Class. This application can be made on the Central Bedfordshire Website between October 2026 and January 2027. You will receive more information about this nearer the time.

Bringing and Collecting Children

To enter Acorn class, there is a gate which can be accessed from the playing field behind Gothic Mede Academy. Morning sessions start at 8.50am and the Wednesday afternoon session starts at 1.20pm. Please note that arriving late can be disruptive to the other children and may also prevent your child from settling so easily. Please collect your child promptly at 3.20pm or 10.50am for the Wednesday morning session. If for any reason you get held up please telephone the school to let us know. If your child is having any additional hours in BEST nurseries either before or after their Acorn sessions, BEST Nursery and Acorn staff will take responsibility for transporting the children between the two settings.

Independence

To help to make your child's Nursery experience easier please encourage them to have some independence and to learn to do some things for themselves. It helps us if children can dress and undress themselves and use the toilet. We realise that children may need assistance with coats etc. and we will always help them when necessary. If your child cannot use the toilet we will discuss this with you before he / she starts.

Clothing

Clothing and footwear need to be practical for play. Please send children in clothes they can manage with some independence and allow them to get to the loo easily (belts, awkward buttons and dungarees can cause problems). Paint, water play, accidents etc. may necessitate a change of clothing. Messy and active play is encouraged, please bear this in mind when choosing clothing for Acorn Class. Please ensure that there are always 1 or 2 changes of clothes in your child's bag. Please return to school any of our clothes your children may have been changed into. Please send a coat, even if you come to school in a car, to enable your child to play outside which we will do in all weathers. Name all removable clothes. Children must not wear any jewellery, other than small stud earrings. We cannot accept responsibility for anything that is lost or broken.

Drinks and Snacks

Your child must bring a named water bottle into the nursery every day. This must only contain plain water and not squash or juice. Milk and water are made available at morning and afternoon snack time, along with a choice of healthy snacks. Information on how to do this will be made available when your child starts in Acorn. Please inform a member of staff if your child has any allergies.

Library

Children will have the opportunity to visit the school library on a weekly basis to choose a book to take home for the week. Book bags are available to buy from our uniform shop [Total Clothing](#)

Toys

Children should not bring toys or games from home into the Nursery as they may be lost or broken. If children bring in toys, parents must be prepared to take them home again!

Smoking

For health and safety reasons smoking and vaping is not allowed anywhere in Nursery or on school grounds.

Prams and Pushchairs

These present a fire risk if they are brought into the classroom. Please leave them outside.

Mobile Phones

Please do not use your mobile phone while in Nursery. If there is a special event that parents are invited to we request that you only take photos of your own child. Taking photos is not allowed on other occasions.

Accidents and Incidents

If your child has an accident at Nursery, you will be notified via Smartlog and emailed a form outlining the details of the incident and the first aid that was given. In the event of a serious bump to the head, you will be informed immediately by telephone. Your child will be monitored and, in most cases, will be able to continue with their day as normal. In the event of an accident causing concern, you will be asked to collect your child and a visit to your GP recommended. [NHS head injury & concussion information](#) Should your child have an accident that requires further medical support, you will be contacted immediately and any necessary action taken. In extreme cases, this could involve calling for the support of paramedics.

Illnesses

From time to time, children may become unwell whilst at Nursery. If this should happen, we will inform you immediately and agree on a course of action. We follow the guidance for schools and nurseries issued by the Health Protection Agency. Children may not attend nursery whilst infectious and, in the event of sickness and diarrhoea, may not be admitted for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness or diarrhoea. If your child cannot attend Nursery due to illness, please ring the school office on 01462 732002, email GMA-Office@bestacademies.org.uk or enter via the Bromcom app before your child's session to inform us.

Medicines

Medicine can only be given in school if it has been prescribed by a doctor but only if it needs to be administered 4 times a day. Please hand any medication into the office where you will be asked to complete a consent form. Children should not normally be at school when they start a course of antibiotics.

If your child has Asthma, you will need to complete an Asthma Medication Form which are available from the School Office. If your child is likely to need asthma treatment while at Nursery, please ensure that your child has their inhaler and spacer at Nursery at all time. **All medication must be in its original packaging with the child's name on the prescription label. This must be brought to the school office where you will be required to complete a permission to administer medication form. Please do not put medication in your child's bag, thank you.** It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the inhaler is kept within the expiry date.

Information for Parents

We aim to give parents as much information about the Nursery as possible. We send out regular newsletters which highlight what the children have been learning in Acorn Class, as well as informing parents of any other important information. We may also send out emails with general reminders. You can find further news and information such as diary dates on our school website.

<https://www.gothicmede.org.uk/>

Copies of our policies and procedures can be found on the school website. Alternatively, we will be happy to provide you with a hardcopy if required.

Behaviour

Rules are kept to a minimum and children are encouraged to behave in a way which will ensure the Nursery runs in a calm and controlled way. Each child is treated individually and problems are usually dealt with using the minimum amount of fuss. Children learn how to respect each other and the equipment in Nursery. If we have any concerns about your child's behaviour, we will talk to you and try to work together to help him/her.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

Working so closely with your child from a young age and from making detailed observations and assessments, we are well placed to observe a child who may need additional support in one or more areas. This may be delayed speech and language development, behaviour, emotional or physical needs. Any member of staff who has a concern regarding your child's development will raise this with Mrs Sugden who is our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO), who will then discuss this with you. Between you, the SENDCO and your child's teacher, a course of action will be agreed. If following this course of action, it is felt it may be necessary to seek further advice and assistance from outside professionals, we will obtain your consent to do so. We work closely with other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists and the Early Years Support Team to provide the

appropriate support for these children. Please speak to the class teacher if you are concerned about an aspect of your child's development.

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding the children in our care is of paramount importance to us. More detailed information can be found in our safeguarding children policies, procedures and guidelines. However, we would like to draw your attention to our responsibilities within this. All children have the right to grow up in a safe, secure and nurturing environment. They should feel comfortable that their individual needs will be met and not live in fear of harm or neglect. In the event that we have concerns regarding your child, we will act upon them. Any staff member who has a concern will raise it with the designated Safeguarding Lead in school. Wherever possible, the concern will then be discussed with you. From this discussion, a decision will be made as to whether further action should be taken. Where it is decided further action is necessary, this may be to seek advice or make a referral to social services, the designated social worker or, if appropriate, the police. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, the degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child. All staff in the Nursery are aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding children and receive regular training in safeguarding children policies and procedures. To ensure that our staff are suitable to care for your child, they all undergo disclosure and barring service checks prior to being allowed unsupervised access to the children.