



MRS BLAND'S INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

To inspire a love of learning through creativity and challenge

Welcome to Mrs Bland’s Infant and Nursery School

Foreword: Mrs Catherine Nisbet, Headteacher, says...

I am proud to welcome you to our wonderful infant and nursery school.

A small, friendly school

Even though we are a small school we have a big reputation for putting children first. The children's wellbeing and happiness are at the centre of all that we do, and we pride ourselves on creating a supportive, caring environment that enables every child to thrive as an individual.

High expectations

Our goal is to help the children who attend our school to achieve every success and we aspire to provide an education that is more than just academic. For us, education is about inspiring children to become bold, confident young people with a thirst for knowledge and a creative spark.

Rich and varied

We love to create environments that are engaging and exciting and we aim to offer varied, rich opportunities including weekly outdoor learning where we visit the local woodland. Our love of the outdoors extends to the classroom, where all classes have a covered outdoor area to explore.

Igniting an interest in the world

Our teaching is stimulating and creative, encouraging our children to continue their education outside of school and become lifelong learners. We want to ignite an interest in the world around them, and for that interest to lead to fulfilling and imaginative lives. Learning should be fun!

Pastoral care

Whilst academic achievements are an important part of life at our school, all our children also have the opportunity to also enjoy a wide variety of sporting and musical opportunities. Our music teacher and sports coach ensure that no part of the children's development is behind. The children also enjoy regular educational and enrichment visits.

Parent partnership

Another very important part of our school is you, the parent! As you will see, by reading the three parent and pupil stories within this prospectus, you and your child are very important to us. We champion the link between school and parent and work very hard to involve you in every step of your child's time here...and increase your child's enjoyment of learning

Get in touch

Our prospectus is designed to give you an insight into our school's culture and ethos, but this is just a start. We would be delighted to welcome you to our school so you can experience for yourself what makes it so special. Please call the school office on 0118 9832332 for more information or to arrange a visit.

Working closely with Garland Junior School

We have a close working relationship with Garland Junior School. We ensure that there is a very smooth transition from our Year 2, to Year 3 at Garland Junior School. Catherine Nisbet says, "we have the transition processes that a primary would, for moving up from Year 2, to Year 3. Although we are separate schools, we work as one school for the good of all our pupils."



Mrs Bland’s has been everything Laura and Dan could have asked for

Laura and Dan live in Burghfield with their son Bradden aged seven and daughter Cassidy aged four.



When Laura and Dan were looking for schools, they knew exactly what they wanted - and Mrs Bland's fit the bill. "When we saw some other schools, I found the heads were controlling of what parents could see. In one school I asked to see another classroom because, as a teacher of year 6, I could see what the children were demonstrating for the parents wasn't actually the learning intention of the lesson; I was told no. At Mrs Bland's it was totally different. Mrs Nisbet was so open and said, 'Go wherever you want and come back to me with any questions you have.' She let the school speak for itself and it did," says Laura.

Impressive environment

Laura was so impressed with the visit to Mrs Bland's that she took this back to the school where she works. "I told them this is how we need to show parents around because it works really well," she says.

What Laura and Dan saw when they visited Mrs Bland's was a supportive, inclusive environment where the children took part in lots of dynamic, practical learning activities. "I was also really keen that it was two-form entry because this allows for wider socialising for the children and better collaboration between the staff as there are two teachers per year group," says Laura.

No pressure

Bradden settled in well to Mrs Bland's and has made fantastic progress. "What I love about Mrs Bland's - and this is not true of every school - is that they waited until Bradden was ready to write. They didn't rush him and force him to sit down with a pen and paper, they made sure he had all of his motor skills so when it came to writing and reading he was able to flourish. This made education much more enjoyable for him.

"He went to a Montessori preschool where they didn't push phonics, so he started school not knowing letter sounds yet he's now exceeding in reading. Bland's child-centred approach to learning makes education enjoyable and stops children disliking school because they've been forced into doing something they aren't ready to do."

Outdoor lifestyle

Laura and Dan are particularly keen on how the school values outdoor learning. Laura says, "Each class has its own outdoor area, and it does feel very much that they go where the children's learning wants to go, which helps build curiosity."

The school's topic approach has been fundamental in piquing Bradden's interest. "He gets really involved in topics, there are good cross-curricular links and lots of memorable experiences. For a music topic, they all played the steel drums and they had a visitor who created instruments out of recycled junk so that became their DT project - to make their own. Even in English, he was writing about John Lennon. It all feels linked and relevant," says Laura.

Giving back

Laura joined the PTA shortly after Bradden started school. She says, "I know how helpful PTAs can be in overcoming Government underfunding of schools, and I wanted to help. Last year we raised £10,000. We've put interactive whiteboards in every classroom, put in an outdoor learning shelter and a new library, new PE Equipment. It's been fun to meet new people, too."

Family feel

Laura shares, "There's a real family feel at Mrs Bland's and they take the time to know each child and help them. It's very caring and supportive. Even though my daughter isn't at the pre-school, they know her name and talk to her about starting next September, so she already feels part of the school community. Mrs Bland's has been everything I could have asked for and wanted for Bradden both educationally and socially."

What the children say:

Bradden says, "I like Mrs Bland's because I have great teachers. I was scared about starting school but everyone was nice and kind. They also have great school dinners!"

"I can't wait to go to Mrs Blands," adds Cassidy.

School day: settling in

School hours

9.00am - 3.25pm

School gates open between 8.40am - 9.00am for drop off.

Acorns and Little Acorns, our nursery classes, have two sessions per day, from 8.45 am until 11.45 am then 12.30 pm until 3.30 pm.

Wraparound clubs

Breakfast club (for YR to Y2)

We run Breakfast Bees, our breakfast club, each morning between 7.30 am and 8.50 am. The cost is £4.50 per session, including a varied breakfast menu.

After-school club (for YR to Y2)

Bland's Bumblebees, our after-school club, runs daily between 3.25 pm and 6 pm. Experienced playworkers offer your child a variety of activities and a hot cooked meal. The cost is £11 per session.

Please see our Nursery booklet for fees for pre-school aged children to attend day care

Uniform

A school uniform gives children a sense of belonging and of taking a pride in their appearance. The children wear a navy blue skirt, pinafore, tailored shorts and trouser or a blue gingham dress depending on the season. A pale blue long-sleeved blouse, shirt or polo shirt and a royal blue cardigan, jumper or sweatshirt with the school logo completes the look for all.

School meals and snacks

Children have the choice of either a hot nutritious school dinner or bringing a healthy packed lunch into school. We are a nut-free school due to several serious nut allergies within the school. Catering firm Dolce has been providing our school dinners since September 2019. Children can order their lunch in

the classroom each morning, or you can do this for them using School Grid.

Free school meals

Every child in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is entitled to a Free School Meal. Nursery children can also stay for lunch for £4.50 per day to cover both lunch and staffing.

Break-time and drinks

Children in Early Years and Key Stage 1 receive free daily fruit as a snack at morning break through the Government's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Scheme. We encourage children to drink water throughout the day.

Milk

All children under five are entitled to a free portion of milk each day at break time. If you wish for your child to receive milk beyond their fifth birthday, contact the school office.



A school uniform gives children a sense of belonging and of taking pride in their appearance.



Izzy and Charlie have so much fun at Mrs Bland's they don't even realise they're learning

Aaron and Jess live in the Burghfield area with children Izzy aged eight, Charlie aged six and baby Thea.



When it came time to hunt for a school for their firstborn Izzy, Aaron and Jess were understandably anxious about making the right decision. "We were a bit nervous about the kids going to school properly," says Aaron. "Izzy and Charlie didn't go to nursery at Mrs Bland's, although Thea will when the time comes. We did the usual thing of looking online at results and Ofsted reports. It was between Mrs Bland's and one other school, but what really clinched the deal was that the Early Years department has a score of outstanding."

Vibrant environment

Aaron and Jess visited multiple schools and also gathered perspectives from their friends. Aaron explains, "We visited Mrs Bland's and loved how Mrs Bland's and Garlands were such bright, colourful learning environments. At other schools, the children were all learning very quietly, looking very disciplined. But at Mrs Bland's it's clear they were learning through play and being active. We felt the schools provided our children with a more fun teaching style where they were learning without realising."

This has really stood out to the parents. "They came home telling us that they didn't do any learning at school, they just had fun. We were saying 'well, did you learn this did you learn that?' and they said yes, but as far as they are concerned they are having fun!" says Aaron.

Worries eased

One worry that stood out in their minds was about the transition from infant to junior school. Now that eldest Izzy has moved on to Garland's they have first-hand experience of how well it can work. "We wondered that if by opting for an infant school it was going to be awkward when it comes to transitioning to junior school. In reality, it isn't a concern. The starting times are worked to enable sequential drop-offs and pickups and it all went smoothly."

Mindset shift

Aaron explains that Izzy has always been a keen learner with an innate desire for academic success, but that son Charlie would be more interested in playing computer games and sports. "During lockdown, he would be the first to want to turn off the zoom call and rush through his work so he could get onto something he'd rather do. The change in his attitude has been astounding. Whatever they're doing has ignited something in him; now he has that drive and he's asking to do his reading instead of the other way around."

Work-life balance

As many parents can relate, Jess and Aaron both have busy jobs and juggling family life is made so much easier by Mrs Bland's homework policy. "Another thing we love about Mrs Bland's is they don't have homework. Our friends have been stressed about having to get this done, but we don't have to stress. I have always felt, outside of a secondary environment, if you can't get all your work done in school hours you need to look at your hours. Mrs Bland's has done just that - they start a little earlier and finish a little later than other local schools but they get all their work done at school."

What the children say:

"I miss my teachers at Mrs Bland's, but I've moved with all my friends to Garlands, so we still have the same squad. Mrs Bland's was the best school with the best teachers and the school discos were amazing," reflects Izzy.

"I got star of the week because I stood up in front of the class to tell them about space, and I feel like everybody liked finding out about space too. I met my best friends at school and now they are coming for my first sleepover in January," says Charlie.

Inspiring and creative curriculum: foundations for success

Exciting and full of opportunities

We offer a rich and varied curriculum, and we aim to inspire in our children a love of all subjects including sport, music, visual art and dramatic art. We aim to be as creative as possible in our approach and we follow a topic approach to learning. These topics are designed to be exciting, relevant and full of opportunities to inspire the children to find out more.

Lessons for all styles of learning

We know that children learn in many different ways and when planning our lessons, we take into account different learning styles wherever possible to build children's confidence. In partnership with parents, we develop children's learning skills through following their interests and allowing children the freedom to investigate the world around them.

Literacy

We aim to encourage and develop a lifelong love of reading and books in all our young learners. Alongside teaching children to read with synthetic phonics, we encourage all children to enjoy books for pleasure. From reception, children have a fortnightly school library visit and continue to take home reading books to share with their parents alongside their Oxford Reading Tree Scheme book.

Outdoor learning

Our outdoor learning opportunities help develop self-esteem and confidence through hands-on learning experiences that allow children to make choices and evaluate risks. The ethos of outdoor learning is for children to take some control and responsibility for their own welfare.

Getting muddy!

Many children have fewer opportunities than ever before to run around outdoors, get wet, get muddy and be free. Our outdoor learning policy supports the full curriculum in an outdoors environment where children will learn from doing. We encourage children to work alone and in groups to problem solve, learn from mistakes and build independence and resilience as well as a respect for nature.

Mental health and wellbeing

We believe that mental health and wellbeing are very important. We want to equip the children with strategies to give them resilience during the ups and downs of everyday life.

At Mrs Bland's an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) provides specialist support following extra training and can support the children in areas including emotions, self-esteem, anxiety, anger management, friendship and social skills, loss and bereavement. Our dedicated 'ELSA room' helps children to feel safe, secure and free to express their feelings openly. Children can be referred through the class teacher or by parents.



We encourage children to work alone and in groups to problem solve, learn from mistakes and build independence and resilience as well as a respect for nature.



Enriched curriculum: trips and visitors, P.E and clubs

Trips

Examples of our trips include:

- Oxford Castle.
- Theatre trips to The Hexagon, Reading.
- OUMNH - Natural History Museum.
- Thatcham Discovery Centre.
- Mudeford Beach.
- The Matthew and Sealife Centre.

Local visits too!

Children often participate in local visits too. Recently these have included visits to Rushall Farm as well as local libraries, churches, schools and other community settings, like a bus trip to Prospect Park.

Visitors

As well as enriching experiences out of school, we welcome many visitors into our school throughout the year to provide exciting, dynamic learning experiences for the children. These include a toy workshop led by West Berkshire museum, Sir Linkalot, Millets Falconry, Quirks Animal Roadshow, hands-on science shows by Explorer Dome, and music workshops by Junkman.

P.E.

We follow the National Curriculum for PE with each child encouraged to participate in at least two hours of physical activity each week.

Sports coach

Sport has a high profile here and we have a qualified sports coach to help children build their skills. Children at Mrs Bland's are encouraged to be active, healthy and confident in body and mind.

Clubs

We have a range of after-school clubs for children in Years 1 and 2, and Reception children are offered clubs after the Summer Term. Clubs include:

- Football.
- Multiskills.
- Street Dance.
- Science Club
- Cooking Club
- Art Club
- Summer Extravaganza (one week during summer holidays)
- Gardening Club

As well as enriching experiences out of school, we welcome many visitors into our school throughout the year to provide exciting, dynamic learning experiences for the children.

Admissions arrangements

Nursery applications

We have a thriving nursery provision for Little Acorns (2-3-year-olds) and Acorns (3-4-year-olds). Nursery places can be funded in many different ways or combinations, including:

- Free entitlement to Early Learning and Childcare for 2-year-olds
- Universal 15 hours funding for 3 and 4-year-olds
- 30 hours funded childcare for 3 and 4-year-olds
- Self-funded for part or entire placement

All funding eligibility will be checked with the local authority before a place can be offered. Please visit our website where forms and guidance notes can be found on our nursery applications page.

Infant School Applications

All applications for a school place need to be made via the school admissions team at West Berkshire Council. Please visit www.westberks.gov.uk/primaryadmissions to learn more about the process and for an application form. We kindly request that you also complete an expression of interest form, so we have adequate details of your child in time for their start at Mrs Bland's. You can access this on our own website admissions page.

Transition to Garland Junior School

We maintain a very close relationship with Garland Junior School. With careful planning and consideration, we ensure the same natural transition from the Key Stage 1 curriculum to Key Stage 2 as you would find in any primary school where both key stages are catered for in a single setting.

During Year 2, activities are planned to promote this smooth transition to Year 3 at Garland Junior School. A timetable of dates and activities will be made available at the time. Applications for a place at Garland Junior School in Year 3 will become available in the Autumn term of Year 2. You must complete the application process to secure a place for your child.

Our Values, Ethos and Vision

Everyone at Mrs Bland's Nursery and Infant School is committed to inspiring a love of learning through creativity and challenge.

Our community will:

- Inspire in children a passion and desire for learning
- Identify and celebrate each child's strengths, abilities and interests
- Provide a broad, stimulating and challenging curriculum delivered through consistently high standards of teaching
- Challenge and encourage our children to flourish and achieve as individuals, preparing them for their role as caring and responsible citizens in modern Britain

• Our children will:

- Be eager to come to school
- Develop confidence and resilience to become independent learners
- Realise their full potential and be proud of their achievements
- Learn together with tolerance and respect

To achieve this we will:

- Maintain a creative, stimulating and challenging curriculum
- Improve the quality of the school environment-reflecting our commitment to excellence and the effective use of resources and space
- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics- particularly regarding the more able pupils and specific groups
- Have consistently high standards of teaching
- Make sure all leaders have an impact on pupil achievement
- Work together to improve the progress and attainment of pupils known to be eligible for the Pupil premium Grant

Festina says all children are treated as individuals at Mrs Bland's - even triplets!



Festina and Matthew are parents to Skye aged 13, Shae aged 11 and triplets Angel, Autumn and Ava aged four.

Festina and Matthew's boys both joined the Willink School when they started their secondary education. The Willink and Mrs Bland's share a site, so when it came time to start their girls at nursery, Festina and Matthew applied to Mrs Bland's. "They loved it so much that we actually moved from Reading to the Burghfield area to be closer," says Festina.

Settling in

The girls started in January this year, and had challenges that can be common with multiples who are born with ready-made playmates: They weren't really used to playing with other people. This had been compounded by growing up during a pandemic. "They are used to playing amongst themselves. Even at baby groups, they would always just stick together so it was alien for them to go into a room full of other children," explains Festina.

Understanding

The nursery staff really understood the importance for the girls to achieve independence and diversity in their play experiences. They were also sensitive about achieving balance through helping the girls explore who they are as individuals whilst maintaining their sense of identity as a unit of triplets. "The nursery allowed them to stay in their little bubble and would introduce them to other games and activities. Gradually they would take them off in little groups without the others to see how they interact with other children.

"They look the same but they have completely different personalities. The staff have noticed what traits they have. Angel loves singing and all the nursery rhymes. Ava loves storytime so she's the first one on the carpet. Autumn loves drawing. The nursery recognised their loves and interests and used them to help the triplets separate to build their independence and confidence," continues Festina.

Progress

At first, there were tears and reluctance to go to nursery but once the girls settled, they've never looked back. Festina says, "Now during half term, I get complaints about not going to nursery!"

In the beginning, when one was poorly they would call and ask me if I would collect one or all three. They get separation anxiety if one of them is missing, so we started off getting all three but the work the staff have put in now means we can just get the poorly one and the other two are fine."

Reaping the rewards at home

The nurturing environment at Mrs Bland's has helped the girls to learn so many skills that have been a godsend at home. Festina explains, "Things can be a little manic as you can imagine, but whereas dinner time was crazy at home now everybody sits down at the table and eats their food. They are used to sitting with other children all eating with knives and forks and that's made an impact at home.

"The nursery really focuses on building independence and now the girls can get their own coats and shoes on, and take them off, hang them up, put them away. I'm still running after the boys telling them to pick up after themselves but my four-year-olds can manage it."

A bright future at Mrs Bland's

Festina explains that she really wants the girls to continue on to Mrs Bland's Infant School in September once they are ready for school. "They are so nurturing. I didn't know anything of them beforehand but from what I've seen, they treat every child as an individual. It's easy for triplets to be lumped together as a unit but they do treat them individually and recognise their needs."



MRS BLAND'S
INFANT & NURSERY
SCHOOL

Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery School

Jordan's Lane, Burghfield Common, Reading, RG7 3LP

Tel: 0118 9832332

Website: www.mrsblandsinfants.co.uk