

THE ACORN SCHOOL

ETHOS



At The Acorn School, we seek to educate the whole child, nurturing not only the intellect but also imagination, feeling, practical ability, physical confidence and inner life.

Childhood and the individual

We recognise childhood as a unique and valuable stage of life. Each child is given time and space to develop in their own way and according to their own nature, within a community in which they are known, valued and cared for. We believe that education should offer both breadth and depth, supporting the development of confident, curious, compassionate and resilient human beings.

Community, relationship and belonging

Community is at the heart of an Acorn education. Our small school allows children to be truly known. For each child's journey through the first eight years at The Acorn School, the Class Teacher provides an important thread of continuity, coming to know each child deeply. As children move into the Upper School, this relationship develops through the Class Sponsor and a wider range of specialist teachers, supporting increasing independence while maintaining guidance and care.

As an all-through school, older and younger children know one another by name. Younger children look up to their older peers, catching glimpses of who they themselves might become, while older pupils grow into the responsibility of being role models for those coming behind them. Through shared experiences, celebration and daily life together, children learn what it means to live, work and take responsibility within a community.

Learning through head, heart and hands

Our education engages head, heart and hands. Intellectual learning is woven together with movement, artistic and practical work, craft and direct experience. We understand learning as an embodied process: through doing, children develop concentration, coordination, perseverance and the ability to work with resistance. Crafts such as woodworking, metalwork, pottery, sewing and knitting are not simply means of producing an end product, but are a vital part of education, laying foundations for later learning – developing fine and gross motor skills, spatial awareness, sequencing, patience and an ability to work with increasing complexity. In knitting, for example, children encounter pattern, rhythm and structure, providing early experiences that underpin later mathematical understanding.

Outdoor education

Time outdoors is an integral part of school life. The natural world offers experiences that cannot be replicated within the classroom. Through outdoor education, children learn to assess situations, work together, take appropriate risks, persevere when things are difficult and discover capacities in themselves that they may not otherwise have known. Encounters with weather, landscape and physical challenge build confidence, resilience and a sense of what is possible. The outdoor environment invites children to adapt themselves to what they encounter, fostering resourcefulness, practical ability and a deepening relationship with the natural world.

Knowing and caring for the world

Children play in nature, observe the changing seasons and care for plants and places. Through a phenomenological approach to learning, careful observation and direct experience precede explanation and abstraction. Stories, poems and language accompany these experiences, encouraging children to attend closely to the qualities, rhythms and phenomena of the world around them.

In this way, education becomes a process of growth towards balance, resilience and wholeness. Children are encouraged to notice, question and wonder, developing both scientific understanding and a sense of care and responsibility for the living world.

Growing towards independence

As children move into adolescence, their education changes with them. The Upper School is not where an Acorn education changes direction, but where the threads come together. Young people are increasingly invited to question, explore ideas, make connections and form their own judgements. They are encouraged to meet challenge with courage, to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their learning, their choices and their contribution to the community.

Ready for what comes next

Our aim is that young people leave The Acorn School with recognised qualifications and future opportunities, but also with a deep self-knowledge, a love of learning, and the freedom and confidence to live lives that are truly their own. We hope that they go out into the world as people who know themselves, care for others, think clearly, work with purpose and bring something of their own into whatever life may ask.

"Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives."

— RUDOLF STEINER