



**CLIFTON HALL**  
SCHOOL · EDINBURGH

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# **The Cedar Early Years Centre**

## **Parent Handbook**

**Session 2026/27**

# The Cedar Early Years Centre at Clifton Hall School

— 3-6 years —

*Where confident learners grow through play.*



ROOTS FOR LEARNING AND GROWTH

Play-Based  
Learning

Imagination  
Problem Solving

Early Literacy  
& Numeracy

Language Development  
Mathematical Thinking

Outdoor  
Education

Nature  
Exploration

Curiosity & Creativity

Expression  
Investigation

Social Development

Confidence  
Relationships

## Cedar Early Years Centre Team

Our experienced and dedicated team work closely together to support each child's development across the Early Level, ensuring a consistent and nurturing learning environment.

### **J1 Class Teacher Miss Stephanie Rae**



[stephanie.rae@cliftonhall.org.uk](mailto:stephanie.rae@cliftonhall.org.uk)

### **Lead Cedar Early Years Practitioner Mrs. Nicola Affleck**



[nicola.affleck@cliftonhall.org.uk](mailto:nicola.affleck@cliftonhall.org.uk)

### **Cedar Early Years Practitioners**

#### **Mrs. Susan Kelly**



#### **Mrs. Lindsay Duff**



## **Welcome to Cedar Early Years Centre**

Cedar Early Years Centre brings together our Nursery and J1 provision as a single Early Level experience for children aged 3–6.

Children benefit from a carefully planned balance of play-based learning and structured teaching, with clear progression as they move into J1. The Cedar Early Years Centre remains fully integrated within the Junior School, ensuring children feel part of the wider school community from the outset.



## **Our Approach to Learning (Curriculum)**

At the Cedar Early Years Centre, our curriculum is grounded in the principles and Experiences and Outcomes of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence, spanning the Early Level (ages 3–6).

We take a child-centred, play-based approach to learning which is responsive to children’s interests, needs and stage of development. Through careful observation, interaction and planning, practitioners design meaningful learning experiences that build on children’s natural curiosity and support progression across all areas of the curriculum.

Children are encouraged to explore, question, create and solve problems within a rich and stimulating environment. This approach supports the development of key skills across cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains, laying strong foundations for future learning. We value close partnerships with families and encourage parents to share their child’s interests to help inform and enrich the learning experience.

### **Progression through the Early Level (Nursery to J1)**

Cedar Early Years Centre provides a continuous learning journey from Nursery into J1, ensuring strong progression and continuity within the Early Level.

As children move into J1, there is a clear and purposeful shift in the balance of learning. While play remains a valued approach, children also benefit from increasing opportunities for structured, direct teaching. Daily teaching in

literacy and numeracy ensures that key skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed with clarity, consistency and appropriate challenge.

Alongside this, children continue to learn through purposeful play, enquiry and practical application, allowing them to deepen their understanding, apply new skills in meaningful contexts, and develop independence and confidence as learners.

Learning is carefully planned to ensure depth, progression and academic rigour across all curricular areas, while remaining responsive to children's individual needs and interests.

As highlighted by Education Scotland:

“Curriculum for Excellence (2007) gives prominence to play, particularly across the early level and the transition between ELC and primary school. This transition will likely be smoother for the child if play remains and continues as the main vehicle for their early learning in P1 and beyond. As practitioners across ELC settings and schools we need to work together to plan for progression in learning and for continuity across a child-centred play pedagogy and curriculum.”

## **A Day in the Cedar Early Years Centre**

### **Nursery-aged Children (3-5 years)**

We offer a flexible day for children aged 3–5 within Cedar Early Years Centre. Our provision runs from 8:00am to 5:30pm, with options available to suit individual family needs.

On arrival, children are welcomed by our Cedar staff and supported to self-register before settling into the environment. The start of the day is designed to be calm and purposeful, allowing children to explore, engage in play and follow their interests.

Practitioners observe and interact with children throughout the day, using these interactions to guide learning experiences and support development across all areas of the curriculum.

We discourage bringing toys from home; however, where this supports a child's transition into the setting, a comfort item may be used and stored safely once the child is settled.



## A Day in J1

While the timetable below outlines the structure of the day, learning in J1 includes a balance of direct teaching and play-based approaches. Play, exploration and practical activities are embedded within learning and teaching sessions.

The Cedar Early Years Centre is open from 8am for J1 pupils

<b>08.30-08.45</b>	Registration (Miss Rae opens the J1 door at 8.30am)
<b>08.45-10.00</b>	Learning and teaching
<b>10.00-10.30</b>	Snack
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	Morning Break (J1-J4 playground)
<b>11.00-12.00</b>	Learning and teaching
<b>12.00-13.00</b>	Lunch and Break (Pit Stop Diner then J1-J4 playground)
<b>13.00-15.10</b>	Learning and teaching
<b>15.10</b>	Pick-up outside Cedar Early Years Centre
<b>15.10-16.15</b>	Optional club provision/Cedar Club
<b>16.15-17.30</b>	Optional Cedar Club

Throughout the week, J1 pupils also benefit from specialist teaching delivered by staff across the school, supporting learning across a range of subject areas.

In addition to daily class-based learning, J1 pupils engage in a broad curriculum, including Health and Wellbeing and interdisciplinary learning. Through these experiences, children develop key skills in collaboration, problem-solving and communication across a range of contexts.



## Wider Learning Experiences

### Outdoor Learning



We offer the children multiple opportunities per week to participate in Forest School sessions. Along with fully qualified staff, the children set off to our base camp in the woods for a morning or afternoon of fun and exploration. With 52 acres of outdoor space, we have ample opportunity to set up our base camp, which is located a short walk from our main school and nursery, in a lovely native broadleaf woodland. The children have a very diverse environment encouraging them to develop a lifelong love for nature through play and exploration, observing seasonal change with opportunities to challenge themselves, take risks and progress their learning and development.

Our overall aims are to create an exciting and stimulating environment where children can regularly learn and develop transferable skills, while building confidence and self-esteem. Fostering a love of the outdoors and promoting woodland conservation.

We have developed a Forest School handbook which contains more information regarding the ethos of Forest School, risk assessments/benefits and detailed policies and procedures. Please ask a member of staff if you would like to look at this document. Alternatively, you can access it on the Cedar Early Years Centre page on Firefly.

### Specialist Teaching

Children in Cedar Early Years Centre benefit from specialist teaching delivered by members of our Senior School staff, enriching the curriculum and supporting progression across key areas of learning.

### Music (Nursery and J1)

Children participate in structured sessions exploring rhythm, song and musical instruments, led by a member of the Clifton Hall School Music Department.

### Modern Foreign Languages (Nursery and J1)

Through stories, songs and rhymes, children begin to develop early language skills with a member of the Modern Languages Department.

### Swimming (Nursery 2 - pre-school and J1)

Children in Nursery 2 (pre-school) and J1 pupils take part in weekly swimming lessons led by qualified instructors from the P.E. Department. At the end of the year, children participate in a swimming gala.

### Science (J1)

J1 pupils have weekly Science lessons with a member of the STEM Department, introducing early scientific enquiry and investigation.

### I.C.T. (J1)

J1 pupils develop early computing skills through weekly ICT sessions, including using a mouse and beginning to use a keyboard.



### Creative and Enrichment Experiences

#### Choir (J1)

Alongside their J2 peers, J1 pupils take part in weekly choir sessions led by a member of the Music Department.

#### 'Funky Friday' (J1)

J1 pupils join J2 and J3 for weekly 'Funky Friday' sessions, selecting from a range of activities such as crafts, construction, storytelling and creative projects. Activities are tailored to children's interests and encourage collaboration across the stages.

### Wider School Life

#### Junior Library (J1)

J1 will have a weekly slot dedicated to the Junior School Library where Miss Rae will share stories with them and they can select their own library books to borrow and take home with them.

## Junior Assembly (J1)

J1 pupils attend weekly Junior School assemblies led by Mrs. Robertson. Children can be awarded a House Mascot in recognition of demonstrating the school motto of working hard and being kind.

At their first Junior School Assembly of the session, J1 children will be allocated to one of our four Houses: Bruce (yellow), Douglas (green), Montrose (red) and Wallace (blue).



## Junior Buddies (J1)

J1 pupils are paired with J5 buddies from their House at the start of the year. These relationships continue throughout Junior School, with planned activities to support connection and familiarity with older pupils.

## Communication and Partnerships

### Firefly and the Weekly Bulletin

We believe that good communication between school and home helps to facilitate a strong partnership between parents, staff and governors. Firefly is the school's Parent Portal, where you will be able to see up-to-date information about your child and be kept informed of relevant school information. We publish a weekly bulletin, which is uploaded to Firefly each Friday afternoon.

The Bulletin contains current and up-to-date information about events going on in school, school trips and outings, parents' meetings, menu for the week, and any other information which we think you might wish to know about.

### Learning Journals (Nursery)

We will use the online platform Learning Journals as a way of sharing information between Nursery and home. This can be used to share wider information and also more specific information about your child. This is a two-way platform, and parents are encouraged to contribute regularly.

The General and Parents Noticeboard will be used to share information with the whole Nursery community. Here you will be able to find any relevant information about the Nursery. It will also be a place to find information about what will be happening in the Nursery in the coming weeks.

Your child's Individual Journal will give you specific information on what your child has been doing in the Nursery and more details on their development.

We will regularly share photos of your child's experiences in the Nursery. This is also a great place for you to share information or photographs detailing what your child has been doing at home. No other parents can see the content of your child's Journal, and so this can be used to ask questions or share information confidentially at any time.

### Seesaw (J1)

J1 will use an online communication tool called Seesaw this year. This platform will allow Miss Rae to share feedback on successes and achievements throughout the school day in a timely way. Seesaw also enables you to share achievements from outside of school with Miss Rae by posting videos and photographs privately. Information about your child's account, along with clear instructions on how to access it, will be shared at the start of the academic session.

Miss Rae will also write a weekly 'class blog' on FireFly to update you on what the class has been learning throughout the week. Please note that if your child is not currently at Clifton Hall School, you will gain access to set up your Firefly account the first week of the summer holidays. Please contact the school office if you have any issues with connecting with Firefly.

## **Assessment, Reporting and Parent Partnership**

### Parents' Evenings

All parents will be offered an opportunity to formally discuss their child's progress during the school year, typically in November and March. Additionally, parents are most welcome to discuss their child's progress at other mutually convenient times. Please remember that sometimes it is not appropriate to discuss anything other than very simple issues at drop-off or pick-up times and it can be better to make an appointment. We are happy to communicate with you in the method you feel most comfortable with, whether that be over the phone or face-to-face.

### Reports

Towards the end of the Summer Term, the nursery pre-school children and J1 pupils will receive a Report. This contains a written report on children's development and progress in relation to 'A Curriculum for Excellence'.

### Learning at Home (J1)

J1 pupils are supported to develop early literacy and numeracy skills through carefully planned learning at home.

Weekly reading and phonics activities reinforce classroom learning and support the development of confidence and fluency.

In Term 3, children are introduced to Mathematics homework through an 'Active Maths Choice Wall', allowing families to engage in practical and meaningful mathematical activities together.

### **Additional Support for Learning (J1)**

Teachers who are concerned about a pupil's progress will contact parents and a consultation process will begin with the Junior School Support for Learning teacher.

Pupils in J1 may receive in class support from the SFL teacher in the Cedar Centre or may be extracted from the class to the SFL classroom to focus on core skills that the class teacher has identified they need support with. They may receive 1:1 support or support within a small group.

### **Extended Day and Clubs**

#### **Cedar Club (J1)**

Cedar Club is available for wraparound care from 4.15-5.30pm. Late pick up from The Cedar Centre after 5.30pm will incur a late charge of £20.

#### **After School Clubs (J1)**

There are a variety of after school clubs for pupils from J1 through to J4. The current list, with charges per term, is issued separately. Some of these are run by teaching staff and some are run by instructors who come in from outside school.

Once a pupil is enrolled in a club, it is assumed they will make the commitment to that club for the remainder of the term. Charges are made per term, whether the pupil attends every session or not.

### **Practical Information**

#### **Attendance and Absence**

Should your child be absent for any reason, please ring the school office on 0131 333 1359 before 9:00, if possible. Pupils arriving after 9:00 should first go to the school office to sign in.

#### **Health and Medical Information**

If a child feels unwell or has an accident, they will be sent to Matron by a member of staff. If they are too ill to remain at school or if hospital treatment is necessary, Matron will contact you directly to make suitable arrangements. This is why it is so important to have an emergency contact number.

If your child needs to take medicine during the school day, they should bring a letter from you stating when your child needs to take it. Medicine must be left with Matron and should be in the pharmacy labelled box.

#### **Food and Nutrition**

It is the school's policy to provide a well-balanced diet for pupils. Before going outside for break the pupils are provided with a snack and have the option of having milk or water.

The pupils will have a three-course lunch, which consists of soup, a choice of main courses and a pudding or fresh fruit. All food is made in the school's kitchen by Inspire's catering staff. We can cater for food allergies if these are brought to our attention in the confidential 'Medical Questionnaire'. Diets

which are a requirement of religion or belief are also catered for.

Menus by rotation can be found via your FireFly dashboard.

J1 will enjoy their lunch in the Pit Stop Diner and Nursery children will enjoy their lunch in the Cedar Early Years Centre.

After lunch the Nursery children are supervised and instructed in brushing their teeth. The toothbrushing programme follows the National Standards for toothbrushing, details of which can be found on the 'Parent Noticeboard' on Teams. Parents may opt out of this if they wish.

### Uniform

All uniform is available to buy from school blazer at [www.schoolblazer.com](http://www.schoolblazer.com) or from the School Uniform Shop via [uniform@cliftonhall.org.uk](mailto:uniform@cliftonhall.org.uk).

### Nursery

It is preferred that the children dress in the Clifton Hall School tracksuit with velcro fastening shoes, or shoes that your child can put on and take off independently are recommended. Please provide slip-on or Velcro gym shoes for PE lessons.



### J1

J1 should wear their Clifton Hall jogging suit and white polo shirt on the three days that they have PE or Swimming (tbc).



On the days that J1 does not have PE or Swimming, they should wear the following uniform:

Boys- White shirt with a collar, school tie, full length charcoal trousers (or charcoal shorts and blue socks on warmer days), school jumper with crest, grey socks and black school shoes.



Girls- White shirt with reverse collar, school kilt or school tartan pinafore, school cardigan with crest, navy tights (or white socks on warmer days) and black school shoes.



### Outdoor Clothing (Nursery and J1)

Children will be outside in all weather conditions, so pupils must bring waterproof trousers/dungarees, a waterproof jacket and wellington boots (ideally neoprene lined) with them every day.

Pupils can keep their outdoor clothing in the Cedar Centre for daily use. If children choose to wear their jackets home, please remember to bring them back daily. We strongly encourage parents to ensure all items are clearly named, including shoes.



In colder months a hat, gloves and snoods are encouraged. Please ensure all items are clearly named. Please note that electric handwarmers are not permitted.

In warmer months, sunhat and suncream are encouraged. **Please ensure all items are clearly named.**

### School Bag (J1)

Each child needs to have a Book Bag (red or blue). This should be named on the outside as well as having an easily identifiable tag such as a ribbon or keyring. The Book Bags are available from Schoolblazer, the uniform supplier.



### Spare Clothes (Nursery and J1)

A full spare set of clothes – We do have some spare clothing in the Cedar Centre for occasional accidents but is **essential** that a spare set of clothes in a small bag is always left on your child's peg. A Clifton Hall School drawstring bag or rucksack as stated on the uniform list is ideal. Please wash and return any spare clothes belonging to the Cedar Centre as soon as possible.

### Events and Wider School Life

During the year there are a range of events, which we welcome and encourage parents to attend. These include The Nativity, Highland Games, Grandparents' Coffee Morning, Family Forest afternoon, Swimming Gala and Sports' Day.



### **Care Inspectorate and Regulatory Information**

The Care Inspectorate (Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland) inspects, regulates and supports improvement in care services across Scotland.

A copy of our most recent inspection report can be accessed via the Care Inspectorate website.

If you wish to contact the Care Inspectorate, their national telephone number is: 0345 600 9527.