

Parent Handbook + Contents

Hillside Gems



Parent Handbook

A warm hello! This handbook is here to help you understand how Hillside Gems works, what your child will experience with us and how we will work together to support them.

Contents

1. Welcome to Hillside Gems
2. Starting With Us
3. Sessions, Hours & Fees
4. A Day at Hillside
5. Meal & Snack Times
6. Sleep & Rest
7. Your Child's Learning
8. Supporting Your Child
9. Absences
10. Safety, Care & Policies
11. Keeping You Informed
12. Checklist - What to bring & do
13. Parental Consent Form
14. Terms and Conditions : For Parents

1 Welcome

Hillside Gems



1. Welcome to Hillside Gems

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our Hillside Gems community. This handbook is here to provide you with helpful information about our nursery, including what you can expect from us and our daily routines.

Please take some time to go through it, and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. We're looking forward to a wonderful journey with your family and ensuring that your child has a happy and enriching experience with us.

Warm regards,
Susie and Adam Tsui-Lucas
Directors

Who We Are

Hillside Gems is part of **Gemstones Education**, a family-run, teacher-led organisation founded by Adam and Susie.

Gemstones Education brings together all of our projects, driven by our shared passion for children and our expertise in early years education. One of these projects, **Start-School-Ready**, supports families by sharing practical insights into the transition to Reception, helping children and parents approach "big school" with confidence.

At Hillside Gems, our setting is built on a strong belief that early years education should go beyond care. We provide meaningful, high-quality learning experiences that support children's development across all areas, preparing them not just for school, but for life.

Our Vision

We see a future where every child is equipped with the essential skills to transition confidently into school.

Our vision is to lead the field of early years education by prioritising learning above all else, setting new standards that go beyond care to foster holistic development and growth.

Our Mission

At Hillside Gems, our mission is to create a vibrant, nurturing environment where each child receives an exceptional education and feels genuinely valued.

We are dedicated to building a community where staff, children, and families grow together in a spirit of trust and collaboration.

Our Goal

At our nursery, we aim to create a balance between the nurturing environment of the family and the broader educational opportunities provided by school.

Our staff model respectful, nurturing relationships, demonstrating kindness, empathy and cooperation in their interactions with children and each other.

By fostering a warm, family-like atmosphere, we ensure that children feel supported and valued while also benefiting from structured learning and social experiences.

This approach blends personal care with the social learning that school offers, helping children develop important values such as empathy and mutual respect.

By observing and participating in positive relationships, children are better prepared to thrive both at home and in the wider world.

Our Values – The 5 Gems

At Hillside Gems, we believe children thrive in an environment where positive behaviour is modelled, encouraged and celebrated.

Our **5 Gems Values** guide our approach to teaching kindness, responsibility and emotional resilience through play, storytelling and everyday routines.

Emotional Regulation & Positivity

We encourage children to understand and manage their emotions in a healthy way, helping them stay optimistic even when faced with challenges.

Independence & Collaboration

We nurture both independence and the ability to work well with others. Children are supported to make their own choices while also learning the value of teamwork.

Gratitude & Generosity

We teach children to appreciate what they have and express thanks to others. Generosity and a sense of community are actively encouraged.

Kindness & Supportiveness

Our environment is one of warmth and compassion. Children learn to be kind to themselves and others through daily interactions and modelled behaviour.

Community & Responsibility

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and contribute positively to the nursery community, building respect for others and a sense of belonging.

2 Starting With Us

Hillside Gems



2. Starting With Us

We understand that starting nursery is a big step for both children and parents. Our aim is to make this transition as smooth, supportive and positive as possible.

Admissions and Enrolment

At Hillside Gems, we welcome children from **2 to 5 years old**.

Inspired by the Montessori approach, we embrace **mixed-age classrooms**, allowing:

- Younger children to learn from older peers
- Older children to develop leadership and social skills

Your child's happiness, confidence and wellbeing are always at the centre of our decisions.

Settling-In Process

We know how important it is for your child to have a positive start at nursery, as this can shape their attitude towards learning.

We provide a **personalised settling-in plan** tailored to your child and family.

Every family is different, and we will work with you to find an approach that feels right. If one method doesn't work, we will adapt until we find the best fit.

Below are **example** approaches based on our experience:

1 Week Settling Plan

- **Day 1:** 30–60 minutes stay and play with parent
- **Day 2:** 1 hour stay and play with parent
- **Day 3:** Short stay without parent, then parent returns
- **Day 4:** Half day without parent
- **Day 5:** Half day (or longer) without parent

2 Week Settling Plan

- **Days 1–5:** Stay and play with parent gradually stepping back
- **Days 6–7:** Short independent sessions

- **Days 8–10:** Build up to half/full days

3 Week+ Settling Plan

- Gradual transition from full parent involvement to full independence over a longer period

Children who have attended nursery before may settle more quickly. We will always adapt based on your child's needs.

Visitor Lanyards & Safety

For the safety of all children:

- **Red Lanyard:** Visitors without a DBS check
- **Green Lanyard:** Visitors with a valid DBS check

All parents and visitors must wear a lanyard while on site.

Key Worker System

We understand that children thrive when they feel safe, secure and connected.

Each child is assigned:

A Key Worker

Who is responsible for:

- Building a strong relationship with your child
- Supporting their learning and development
- Monitoring emotional wellbeing
- Communicating with parents

A Deputy Key Worker

Who provides:

- Continuity when the main Key Worker is unavailable
- Additional support and understanding of your child

Benefits of This Approach

- Stronger relationships
- Consistent care
- Better communication
- Emotional security

- More thoughtful planning and support

We believe this system helps children feel a strong sense of belonging and confidence.

Clothing and Personal Belongings

Clothing Guidance

Nursery is a place for **active, messy, hands-on learning**, so please dress your child in clothes that are:

- Comfortable
- Practical
- Not too precious

Footwear

- Trainers or plimsolls for indoor use
- Wellies for outdoor play
- No flip-flops or backless shoes

See checklist (no.13) for details.

Supporting Toilet Training

We work closely with parents during toilet training by:

- Following your approach
 - Encouraging consistency between home and nursery
 - Supporting children calmly and positively
 - Communicating daily progress
-

3 Sessions, Hours, Fees

Hillside Gems



3. Sessions, Hours & Fees

We aim to offer a structure that supports both high-quality learning and the practical needs of families across our different sites.

Opening Hours by Site

Little Waltham Site

- **Core hours:** 9:00am – 3:00pm
 - **Early Riser (optional):** 8:30am – 9:00am
 - **Closed:** Thursdays
-

The Barn (Forest School Site)

- **Wednesday:** 9:00am – 1:00pm
- **Thursday:** 9:00am – 1:00pm

This site focuses on outdoor learning and Forest School experiences for Pre-School aged children.

Terling Site

- **Monday:** 8:30am – 3:30pm
 - **Tuesday (Forest School):** 9:00am – 2:00pm
 - **Wednesday:** 8:30am – 3:30pm
 - **Thursday:** 9:00am – 1:00pm
 - **Friday:** 8:30am – 3:30pm
-

Term Time

All sites operate **term-time only**, following the Essex Early Years funded timetable.

Structure of the Day

Our session times are carefully planned to balance:

- Focused learning
- Free exploration
- Outdoor experiences
- Rest and routine

This ensures children are able to engage deeply without becoming overwhelmed.

Fees & Funded Places

Funded Early Education Entitlement (Government funding)

- We offer government-funded early education places for eligible children including both **15 and 30 hour entitlements**
- Parents can check their entitlement via the government website <https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/childcare-early-years-education/>
- Funded hours are fully covered and can be accessed within our core session times
- We provide optional extras (at a small cost) such as meals, snacks, consumables (like sun cream) and enriching activities for the children. These are completely optional and families are always welcome to provide their own if they prefer
- Government funding is designed to cover childcare provision and does not include additional services, meals, or extended hours

Funded hours are applied in line with Essex County Council guidance and will be clearly shown on your invoice. **We will always explain clearly how your funding has been applied.**

Privately funded childcare

For any additional hours required or for non-funded children, we charge a flat hourly rate of:

- **£6.60 per hour**

This applies across all age groups. Families are welcome to book additional sessions or hours where spaces are available

Supplementary Charges

Consumables

We request a voluntary consumables contribution of 10p per hour attended to help cover items such as sun cream and snacks. These are not funded through government entitlements and are not included within the private fee. This small contribution helps us

maintain a high-quality provision while keeping fees sustainable and transparent for all families.

Hot food

- At **Little Waltham**, hot meals are available (optional) and charged at £2.55 per meal. These will be detailed on invoices.
- At **The Barn and Terling**, currently children are required to bring a packed lunch

We aim to keep our fees clear and transparent, so you always feel confident about how your child's sessions are accounted for.

Fee Structure

Our fee structure reflects the high-quality care and education we provide:

- Fees are **paid in advance for each half-term**
 - Invoices are clear and transparent
 - All billing follows **Essex County Council requirements**
-

Payment Methods

We accept:

- **Bank transfer**

Payment details will be included on your invoice.

Late Payment Policy

Payments must be made by the due date.

- If you are experiencing financial difficulties, please speak to us as early as possible so we can support you
 - Late payments can incur a late fee (charged at £5 per day, every day, after the due date)
-

4 A Day At Hillside

Hillside Gems



4. A Day at Hillside

At Hillside Gems, our daily routine is designed to provide a balance of structure and flexibility, ensuring that children's needs are always at the heart of what we do.

Timetables may be adjusted by our team to best suit the children each day, so this is an example of how a typical day might look.

Group workshops, 1:1 Skills Workshops and Physical Development Programme activities are planned weekly and are adaptable to the children's patterns and needs.

A Typical Day

9:00am – 9:15am | Drop-off Time

A calm and welcoming start to the day where children arrive, settle in and parents can share any important information with staff.

9:30am – 9:45am | Morning Circle Time

A gentle start with:

- Stories
- Songs
- Group conversations

This helps children feel connected and ready for the day ahead.

9:45am – 11:45am | Free Play, Garden Time & Snack

Children explore activities that spark their curiosity through:

- Indoor play
- Outdoor learning
- Child-led exploration
- Snack time within play (Rolling Snack)

This is a key part of the day where most learning takes place.

11:45am – 12:00pm | Midday Circle Time

A short regrouping time to:

- Reflect
 - Reconnect
 - Transition calmly into lunch
-

12:00pm – 12:45pm | Lunch Time

A social and relaxed mealtime where children:

- Eat together
 - Develop independence
 - Build social skills
-

12:45pm – 1:00pm | Story & Quiet Time

A calm wind-down period with:

- Storytelling
 - Rest
 - Quiet reflection
-

1:00pm – 3:00pm | Free Play & Workshops

Children continue their learning through:

- Outdoor play
 - Exploration
 - Group workshops
 - 1:1 skills sessions
-

3:00pm – 3:30pm | Reflection & Home Time

A calm end to the day with:

- Circle time
 - Reflection on the day
 - Preparing for home
-

How Learning Happens Throughout the Day

Learning at Hillside Gems does not happen in fixed “lesson times.” Instead, it is woven throughout the day through:

- Play-based experiences
- Conversations with adults
- Social interactions
- Exploration and curiosity
- Carefully planned environments

Our team observes, supports and extends children’s learning in the moment, ensuring every experience is meaningful.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor play is a key part of every day.

Children have regular access to:

- Fresh air
- Physical activity
- Nature-based learning

At The Barn and Forest School sessions, this is a central part of the curriculum.

Flexibility and Individual Needs

We understand that every child is different.

Our routine is:

- Adaptable
- Responsive
- Child-led where appropriate

We adjust the day to support:

- Energy levels
 - Interests
 - Emotional needs
-

5 Meals & Snack times

Hillside Gems



5. Meals & Snack Times

At Hillside Gems, food and drink are an important part of the day. We view both meal times and snack times as valuable opportunities for learning, social development and building independence.

Children are supported to develop positive relationships with food in a calm, social and structured environment.

Meal Times

Meal times are a key part of our daily routine and are approached as shared, social experiences.

Children come together to eat, creating opportunities for:

- Conversation and language development
- Social interaction and turn-taking
- Building a sense of community

Before eating, children follow a consistent routine of:

- Washing hands with soap
 - Sitting together around the table
 - Reflect on their food and taking a moment to show gratitude
-

Independence at Meal Times

For children aged 2 and above, we actively promote independence.

Children are supported to:

- Feed themselves (avoiding spoon-feeding unless part of an agreed support plan)
- Manage their food and belongings
- Positively practise clearing their space once they have finished eating

This helps to develop:

- Confidence
 - Coordination
 - Responsibility
-

Lunch Arrangements

- At **Little Waltham**, optional hot meals are currently provided
- At **Terling and The Barn**, children are expected to bring a packed lunch

We provide a **Packed Lunch Guidance and Policy** to support families in offering healthy, balanced meal options.

Snack Times

Snack time is carefully planned to support children's wellbeing, independence and ongoing learning throughout the day.

Rolling Snack (Terling & Little Waltham)

At **Terling and Little Waltham**, we operate a **rolling snack system**.

This means:

- Children can access snack within a set time period
- They choose when they are ready to eat
- Play and learning are not unnecessarily interrupted

This approach supports children to:

- Listen to their own hunger cues
- Develop independence
- Manage their own routines

At The Barn and on Forest School days, snack times are more allocated due to the condensed timetable that mirrors the school day. During good weather, snack times may take place outside as part of the outdoor classroom, extending learning through nature, independence and shared experiences.

What We Provide

Children are offered a healthy selection of:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- A carbohydrate option (such as breadsticks, crackers or pitta)

All fruit and vegetables are prepared in line with **government guidance for early years nutrition**, including safe cutting practices.

You can view the guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition>

Snack Time as a Learning Opportunity

Snack time is also part of our curriculum.

Children are supported to:

- Count and understand quantities (e.g. number of pieces)
- Make choices
- Take responsibility for their food
- Practise independence and self-care

These experiences support early:

- Maths skills
 - Communication
 - Personal development
-

Snack Contributions

To ensure children always have the opportunity to refuel:

- Snacks are provided by the nursery
- Snacks are **not covered by government funding**

We therefore welcome **voluntary contributions** from families to support the provision of healthy snack options.

Drinks and Hydration

Children have access to drinking water throughout the day.

- Water bottles are provided by the nursery
- Each bottle is clearly labelled for individual children
- Bottles are cleaned and sterilised regularly

Children are encouraged to drink water regularly to stay hydrated.

6. Sleep & Rest



6. Sleep & Rest

At Hillside Gems, we understand that rest is an important part of a child's wellbeing and development. As all children in our setting are aged 2 and above, sleep needs vary, and we take a flexible, child-led approach.

Our Approach to Sleep

We recognise that not all children require a nap. However, if a child does need to rest, we will respond to their individual needs.

- Children who no longer nap are supported with quiet rest opportunities
- Children who need sleep are supported in a calm and responsive way

Flexible Sleep Arrangements

Across all sites, we:

- Use available space flexibly
- Prepare areas in advance for children who regularly nap
- Respond to children's needs as they arise

For children with known sleep routines, staff will:

- Plan ahead
- Arrange the environment to support a scheduled rest time

For children who become tired unexpectedly:

- A rest space will be created as needed
- The area will be safely sectioned off
- The environment will be adjusted to support sleep

Consideration for the Environment

When creating a sleep space, we carefully consider:

- Safety of the area
- Exposure to heat or drafts
- Noise levels within the room

Comfort and Familiarity

We ask parents to provide:

- Bedding
- Comforters
- Any familiar items your child uses for sleep

As we do not have the facility to launder bedding on site, items should be taken home regularly for washing.

Working in Partnership with Parents

We will:

- Discuss your child's sleep needs with you
- Follow agreed routines where possible
- Share updates about your child's rest during the day

Please refer to our **Sleep & Rest Policy (C4)** for full details

7. Your Child's Learning

Hillside Gems



7. Your Child's Learning

At Hillside Gems, we go beyond traditional childcare—we provide a rich, story-centred educational experience that nurtures curiosity, creativity and a love for learning.

Our curriculum is guided by the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** framework, ensuring your child receives a well-rounded start to their learning journey.

Our Approach to Learning

Story-Centred Learning & Circle Time Stories

Stories are at the heart of everything we do.

Carefully chosen books:

- Spark imagination
- Expand vocabulary
- Introduce new concepts

We also use our own **Circle Time Stories**, written to reflect real-life social and emotional experiences children encounter.

These stories help children:

- Navigate sharing and turn-taking
- Express feelings
- Resolve conflicts
- Build confidence in communication

Through these sessions, we develop:

- Emotional intelligence
 - Rich language skills
 - Deeper thinking
-

The Montessori Approach

Inspired by Montessori principles, we create a learning environment that supports:

- Independence

- Hands-on exploration
- Mixed-age learning

Children are encouraged to:

- Follow their interests
- Choose activities
- Develop life skills at their own pace

Our role as adults is to guide gently, rather than direct.

The Power of Play

Play is central to how children learn.

Our **Free Play approach** allows children to:

- Explore
- Create
- Problem-solve
- Express themselves

Our team carefully prepares the environment so children can lead their own learning, while adults step in to:

- Support
 - Extend thinking
 - Guide when needed
-

Group & 1:1 Skills Workshops

Alongside free play, we offer:

- **Group Workshops**
- **1:1 Skills Sessions**

These focus on:

- Practical life skills
- Communication
- Early maths
- Enrichment opportunities

This ensures each child receives personalised opportunities to grow in confidence and ability.

Communication Support: Makaton & Visual Cues

We use **Makaton and visual timetables** to support all children.

Makaton

- Combines speech with signs and symbols
- Supports language development
- Reduces frustration
- Encourages expression

Visual Timetables

- Help children understand the structure of the day
- Support transitions
- Build independence
- Create a sense of security

These tools are especially supportive for:

- Early language development
 - Children with additional needs
 - Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
-

How Our Values Support Learning (EYFS)

Our **5 Gems Values** are woven through all areas of learning and development.

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Emotional Regulation & Positivity
- Kindness & Supportiveness
- Community & Responsibility

Children learn to:

- Manage emotions
 - Build relationships
 - Develop confidence
-

2. Communication and Language

- Independence & Collaboration
- Kindness & Supportiveness

We encourage:

- Conversation
- Listening
- Storytelling

- Expressing ideas
-

3. Physical Development

- Independence & Collaboration
- Community & Responsibility

Children develop:

- Physical confidence
 - Coordination
 - Awareness of their bodies
-

4. Literacy

- Gratitude & Generosity
- Kindness & Supportiveness

Through stories and language, children build:

- Early reading skills
 - Vocabulary
 - Understanding of meaning
-

5. Mathematics

- Community & Responsibility

We explore maths through:

- Real-life situations
 - Sharing
 - Patterns
 - Problem-solving
-

6. Understanding the World

- Gratitude & Generosity
- Community & Responsibility

Children develop:

- Curiosity
- Respect for others
- Awareness of the world around them

7. Expressive Arts and Design

- Gratitude & Generosity
- Independence & Collaboration

Children express themselves through:

- Art
 - Music
 - Role play
 - Creativity
-

How We Share Your Child's Learning

We believe it is important for parents to understand how and what their child is learning.

We share this through:

- Daily informal conversations at drop-off and pick-up
 - Tapestry updates with observations and photos
 - Termly parent meetings
 - Ongoing communication with your child's Key Worker
-

Want to Know More?

If you would like more detail about how our curriculum works in practice, you can request our **'Guiding Principles' document**, which explains our approach in depth.

8 Supporting Your Child



8. Supporting Your Child

At Hillside Gems, we believe children thrive when home and nursery work closely together.

We aim to build strong, trusting relationships with families so we can support each child consistently, both emotionally and practically.

Supporting Behaviour

Our approach to behaviour is based on **guidance, not punishment**.

We use our **5 Gems Values** to help children develop emotional understanding, self-regulation and positive relationships.

How We Support Behaviour

We:

- Use calm, clear language
- Model positive behaviour
- Set consistent expectations
- Help children understand their emotions
- Support children to make better choices

We do not use punishment or time-out. Instead, we focus on teaching children what to do.

Our Techniques to Supporting Behaviour

We use **emotion coaching** to help children name their feelings, understand why they feel that way, and learn how to respond appropriately

(e.g. "I can see you're feeling frustrated because you wanted that toy. Let's find a way to solve this.")

We use **positive reinforcement** by noticing and praising positive behaviour, encouraging children to repeat helpful actions.

When behaviour becomes challenging, we use **redirection**, gently guiding children towards more appropriate choices and offering alternatives

(e.g. "We don't throw blocks, but you can roll this ball or build with them instead.")

We also help children understand the **consequences of their actions in a safe and supportive way**

(e.g. if a toy is thrown, it may be put away; if water is spilled, the child is supported to help clean it up)

Clear routines and expectations are used to create a sense of security

(e.g. children learn to tidy up before moving on to a new activity, or sit together during group times)

Clear support for conflict resolution to help children build positive relationships

(e.g. children are supported to express their feelings, listen to others, and find solutions together so that everyone feels heard and supported)

Group Support Through Circle Time

We regularly use **Circle Time** to:

- Discuss social situations
- Build emotional awareness
- Develop communication skills

These sessions support:

- Patience
 - Resilience
 - Managing strong emotions
-

Working in Partnership with Parents

We work closely with parents to ensure a consistent approach between home and nursery. If needed, we will share strategies and work together to support your child.

For more details, please refer to our **Behaviour and Relationships Policy (B2)**

Supporting Toilet Training

We understand that toilet training is an important stage and can look different for every child.

We work closely with families by:

- Following your approach and routines
- Supporting consistency between home and nursery
- Encouraging children in a calm, positive way
- Communicating daily progress

We recommend providing multiple sets of spare clothes during this stage.

Supporting Independence

We encourage children to become confident and independent in their daily routines.

This includes:

- Dressing themselves
- Managing toileting
- Making choices in play
- Taking responsibility for their belongings

Independence is built gradually, with support and encouragement from staff.

Working in Partnership with Parents

We believe strong partnerships lead to the best outcomes for children.

We work with parents by:

- Sharing regular updates
- Discussing progress and any concerns
- Agreeing consistent approaches (e.g. behaviour, routines)
- Being open and approachable

If you ever have questions or concerns, we encourage you to speak to us—early conversations make a big difference.

Supporting All Children

We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where every child is supported to thrive.

If your child has, or may have, additional needs:

- We will work closely with you to understand their needs
- We follow the **Assess – Plan – Do – Review** approach
- We may seek support from external professionals where needed

Early support can make a significant difference, and we are here to work alongside you.

9. Absences

Hillside Gems



9. Absences

At Hillside Gems, regular attendance is important to support your child's learning, development and sense of belonging. It also forms part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Informing Us of an Absence

If your child will be absent for any reason (e.g. illness, holiday or appointments), please inform us as early as possible on the day.

You can do this by:

- Phoning the nursery
- Sending a message via Tapestry or email

Please include:

- Your child's full name
 - The reason for absence
 - Expected return date (if known)
-

If We Do Not Hear From You

If your child is absent and we have not been informed by **10:00am**, we will contact you.

This is part of our safeguarding procedures to ensure every child is safe and accounted for.

Planned Absences

For planned absences (such as holidays or appointments), please inform us in advance so we can update our registers accordingly.

Illness and Returning to Nursery

If your child has been unwell, please follow recommended exclusion periods before returning to nursery to help prevent the spread of infection.

- **Diarrhoea and vomiting:** 48 hours after last episode

- **Fever:** 24 hours fever-free without medication
- **Chickenpox:** Minimum 5 days and spots scabbed

Updated exclusion advice is found on the UK Health Security Agency website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/children-and-young-people-settings-tools-and-resources>

Further guidance can be found in our **Infection Control & Illness Policy (C5)**.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Attendance is closely monitored as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Any unexplained or repeated absences may be followed up with parents to ensure the child's wellbeing.

Absences Policy

Our procedures for managing absences and ensuring children are safe are set out in our **Absences & Missing Children Policy (A7)**.

This policy outlines:

- How we respond to unexplained absences
- Steps taken if a child is missing from the setting
- Our safeguarding responsibilities and escalation procedures

A full copy of this policy is available on www.hillside-gems.co.uk - under policies

10. Safety, Care & Policies



10. Safety, Care & Policies

At Hillside Gems, your child's safety, health and wellbeing are our highest priorities.

We follow clear procedures and national guidance to ensure every child is safe, supported and cared for at all times.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting children from harm and ensuring their wellbeing.

This includes:

- Protecting children from abuse and neglect
- Providing a safe and secure environment
- Supporting emotional and physical wellbeing
- Helping children develop confidence and resilience

How We Keep Children Safe

We ensure:

- All staff are trained in safeguarding
- All staff are enhanced DBS checked
- Safe recruitment procedures are followed
- High staff-to-child ratios are maintained
- Secure premises with controlled access
- Clear drop-off and collection procedures
- Regular risk assessments

We also gently teach children about:

- Personal safety
- Boundaries
- Speaking up if something feels wrong

If We Have a Concern

If we are concerned about a child's welfare, we will follow safeguarding procedures and government guidance.

This may involve:

- Speaking with parents

- Contacting external safeguarding agencies where necessary

If you have a concern, please speak to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or your Nursery Manager.

Health, Illness & Medication

Your child's health is very important to us, and we follow clear procedures to keep everyone safe.

Medication at Nursery

We will only administer medication that:

- Has been prescribed by a doctor
- Is clearly labelled with your child's name, dosage and date

We do not routinely give medication such as Calpol or antihistamines unless:

- It has been prescribed
- A clear reason is provided
- Your child is being monitored

Important Procedures

- Parents must complete a **Medication Form**
- Medication must be handed directly to staff
- Medication is stored safely
- Administration is recorded and witnessed
- Parents sign the record at collection

Children must remain at home for the **first 24 hours of a new medication**.

If Your Child Becomes Unwell

If your child becomes unwell during the day:

- A staff member will assess and comfort them
- We will contact you
- You may be asked to collect your child

We will always prioritise your child's wellbeing.

Exclusion Periods

To prevent the spread of illness:

- **Diarrhoea and vomiting:** 48 hours after last episode
 - **Fever:** 24 hours fever-free without medication
 - **Chickenpox:** Minimum 5 days and spots scabbed
 - **Other illnesses:** Follow GP advice
-

Emergency Situations

If urgent medical care is needed:

- We will call **999**
 - Inform you immediately
 - Follow emergency contact procedures
-

Collection and Authorised Adults

To keep children safe:

- Only authorised adults may collect your child
- Parents must complete an **Authorised Collectors Form**

If someone new is collecting:

- Inform us in advance
- Provide a password
- ID may be checked

We will not release a child without proper authorisation.

Late Collection

If you are running late:

- Please contact us as soon as possible
 - Persistent lateness may result in a charge
-

Cameras on Site

At some of our settings, security cameras or doorbell cameras may be installed by the building owners (for example, a church or community hall). These systems are not operated or accessed by Hillside Gems. During nursery hours, any such cameras are covered or disabled where possible to ensure that no images or recordings of children, families or staff are captured. We are committed to maintaining children's privacy and will always take appropriate steps to ensure that external surveillance does not impact the safety, dignity or confidentiality of our community.

Concerns and Complaints

We are committed to resolving concerns quickly and fairly.

Step 1: Informal Concern

Speak to:

- Your child's Key Worker, or
- The Nursery Manager

Most concerns can be resolved quickly this way.

Step 2: Formal Complaint

If needed:

1. Put your complaint in writing
2. We will acknowledge it within **3 working days**
3. A full response will be provided within **28 days**

All complaints are handled confidentially.

Further Action

If you remain dissatisfied, you may contact **Ofsted**.

Policies

We have a full set of policies available on our website: www.hillside-gems.co.uk.

Policy Pack:

- A) Safeguarding and Child Protection
 - B) Learning and Development
 - C) Health, Safety and Care
 - D) Operational Safety
 - E) Staff and Workplace
-

11. Keeping You Informed

Hillside Gems



11. Keeping You Informed

At Hillside Gems, we believe strong communication between nursery and home is essential.

We aim to keep you well-informed, involved and confident in your child's experience and development.

Understanding Your Child's Learning

We want parents to feel confident in understanding how their child is learning.

We support this by:

- Explaining learning through daily conversations
- Sharing observations on Tapestry
- Discussing development during parent meetings

We are always happy to explain how activities link to the EYFS and your child's progress.

Daily Communication

We provide regular, informal updates about your child through:

- Conversations at drop-off and pick-up
- Quick updates from your child's Key Worker
- Sharing important information about your child's day

These informal moments are often the most valuable way to stay connected.

Tapestry (Online Learning Journal)

We use **Tapestry** to share your child's learning journey.

Through the app, you will receive:

- Photos of your child's activities
- Observations of learning and development
- Updates linked to the EYFS

You can also:

- Message the nursery team
- Share updates from home

Please note:

Staff may not respond immediately during the day, as their priority is working with the children.

Parent Meetings

We offer regular opportunities to discuss your child's development in more detail.

- **Termly meetings** (approximately every 4 months)
- Time to discuss progress, next steps, and any concerns

We also encourage ongoing conversations outside of these meetings.

Newsletters and Updates

We send termly newsletters to keep you informed about:

- Nursery events
- Learning themes
- Important updates
- Requests for support or contributions

Please ensure we have your current email address so you don't miss anything.

Parent Workshops

Throughout the year, we offer opportunities for parents to attend workshops and sessions.

These may include:

- Preparing for big school (school readiness)
- Behaviour and emotional development
- Communication and language
- Supporting learning at home

These sessions are designed to help you feel confident supporting your child beyond the nursery setting.

Group Communication (Parent Community)

We may invite parents to join a **WhatsApp group** to support communication between families.

- This is for parent-to-parent communication
- Nursery management are not part of this group

It provides an informal way to:

- Share reminders
 - Ask questions
 - Build a sense of community
-

Your Feedback Matters

Your feedback is extremely important to us.

We encourage you to:

- Share suggestions
- Raise questions
- Let us know what is working well

This helps us continue to improve and provide the best possible experience for your child.

12. Checklist

Hillside Gems



12. Checklist - What to Bring & What to Do

1. Personal Items for Your Child

Change of Clothes

Several complete outfits, including socks and underwear (labelled with your child's name)

Comfort Item

A favourite blanket, soft toy or similar item to support your child's transition

Nappies & Wipes (*if required*)

A sufficient supply for the day

Toiletries

Nappy cream, sun cream (during the right season), or any other personal care items (clearly labelled)

Bedding (if needed)

A small blanket or comfort item for rest time

(Please note: families are responsible for washing bedding regularly)

2. Clothing & Outdoor Wear

Weather-Appropriate Clothing

Coat, hat, gloves, and rainwear suitable for outdoor play

Wellies / Spare Shoes

For outdoor use and messy play

Comfortable Everyday Clothes

Clothes suitable for active play and getting messy

3. Food & Drink

Packed Lunch (*if required*)

A healthy, balanced lunch in line with our Packed Lunch Guidance (Policy C9)

Lunch Box

Clearly labelled

(Water bottles are provided by the nursery)

4. Labelling

All items clearly labelled with:

- Permanent marker and/or waterproof labels

Please label:

- Clothing
- Shoes and wellies
- Lunch box
- Bags and personal items

Labels can wear off over time, so please check regularly.

5. Preparing Your Child

- Talk positively about nursery
 - Explain what will happen during the day
 - Reassure your child about drop-off and collection
 - Share any routines or comforts with staff
-

Starting nursery is a big step. Taking time to prepare your child and keeping routines consistent will help them feel safe, confident and ready to settle.

13. Parental Consent Form

Hillside Gems



Parental Consent Form

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Carer Name: _____ Date: _____

Please tick all that apply. You can update your preferences at any time.

1. Local Outings and Trips

I give permission for my child to take part in local outings, including walks to parks, community areas and nature-based activities.

2. Sun Cream Application

I give permission for staff to apply sun cream to my child during the day.

3. First Aid

I give permission for trained staff to administer first aid to my child if required.

4. Emergency Medical Treatment

I understand that, in the event of an emergency, staff will:

- Seek urgent medical treatment
 - Contact emergency services
 - Act in my child's best interests
-

5. Photographs for Learning (Tapestry)

I understand that photographs of my child to be taken and used for learning observations and shared with me via Tapestry.

6. Use of Online Systems (Tapestry & Communication Tools)

I agree to:

- Use nursery systems appropriately
 - Keep login details secure
 - Not share content without permission
-

7. Group Photographs

I understand that my child may appear in group photographs as part of normal nursery activities.

8. Photographs for Displays Within Nursery

I give permission for my child's photo to be used in internal displays within the nursery.

9. Photographs for Website / Social Media / Promotional Use

I give permission for my child's image to be used in:

- Nursery website
 - Social media
 - Marketing materials (Images will not include personal identifying information.)
-

10. Data Protection and Privacy

At Hillside Gems, we take your child's personal information seriously and handle all data in line with **UK GDPR and data protection laws**.

We collect and store information to:

- Support your child's care, learning and development
- Communicate effectively with families
- Meet safeguarding and legal requirements

This may include:

- Personal details (name, date of birth, contact information)
- Medical and dietary information
- Learning records and observations
- Photographs (where consent is given)

We ensure that:

- Information is stored securely (digitally and physically)
- Only authorised staff have access
- Data is only shared when necessary (e.g. safeguarding, health professionals, local authority)
- Information is retained only for as long as legally required

You have the right to:

- Access your child's information
- Request corrections
- Withdraw consent where applicable

Full details can be found in our **Data Protection Policy**, available on request.

I understand how my child's data will be used and stored

Parent/Carer Signature

Name/s: _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

14. Terms and Conditions : For Parents

Hillside Gems



14. Terms and Conditions : For Parents

3. Fees and Payments

- Invoices will be sent out for the upcoming half term. Fees are payable in advance by the 1st day of the half term.
- To ensure the smooth running of the nursery, fees need to be paid in full, even if your child is unwell, on holiday, or if the nursery is closed due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Late payments may result in additional charges. Charges are £5 for every late day. Please speak to us if you are experiencing financial difficulties so that we can support you.

4. Notice Period and Leaving the Nursery

- If you decide to withdraw your child, we kindly ask for a minimum of 4 weeks written notice.

5. Illness and Absences

- To keep everyone safe and well, children with contagious illnesses need to stay at home until they have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours.
- Please inform us if your child will be absent due to illness.

6. Safeguarding and Security

- The safety and wellbeing of every child are our highest priority, and we follow strict safeguarding procedures.
- Children will only be released to authorised individuals listed on the registration form.
- Please inform us in advance of any changes to collection arrangements.
- To create a calm and focused learning environment, we kindly ask that mobile phones are not used inside child learning areas.
- Smoking or vaping is not permitted on site or in the public area.

7. Parent Conduct

We believe that a strong, respectful partnership between parents and staff makes a significant difference to a child's experience at nursery. To help us maintain a happy and supportive environment:

- If you ever have any concerns, we encourage you to speak directly with a member of our team so we can work together to find a solution.
- We ask that all communication with staff and other parents remains kind and respectful, helping to foster a warm and welcoming community.
- If any issues arise, we kindly request that they are discussed with nursery staff rather than with other parents, so that we can help resolve matters in a positive and constructive way.

8. Use of Photos and Social Media

- We love celebrating the special moments children experience at nursery and may occasionally take photographs for internal displays, newsletters and social media (such as our website or private nursery groups).
- We will always seek parental consent before using any photos externally.
- Out of respect for all families, we kindly ask that parents do not share photos or videos taken at nursery events on social media unless they have received permission from those involved.

9. Policies and Procedures

- We follow all statutory regulations and best practice guidelines to ensure the highest standards of care and education.
- Our full range of policies is available on our website www.hillside-gems.co.uk

10. Personal Belongings

- We do our best to keep personal belongings safe, but we cannot take responsibility for any lost or damaged items.
- We recommend labelling all of your child's belongings to help prevent them from going missing.

11. Updates to Terms and Conditions

- From time to time, we may need to update these Terms and Conditions. We will always keep you informed of any changes in advance.

By joining Hillside Gems, you agree to these Terms and Conditions, and we look forward to working together to create a wonderful and enriching journey for your child!