

Danecourt School

Welcome Booklet



Danecourt
School

Contents

Welcome

Danecourt School

Our Curriculum and Approach to Learning

Our Curriculum Tracks

Our Therapeutic Approach

Transition

Safeguarding

Attendance

Transport

Health Care Plans

Medication

Communication

The School Day

Uniform

School Meals

Friends & Associates of Danecourt School (FADS)

Stay Informed

Key Contacts



Welcome to Danecourt School

We are very pleased to welcome you and your child to our school community. Starting a new school is an exciting milestone and, at times can feel a little daunting. Please be assured that our whole school team is here to support you and your child every step of the way during this transition.

This booklet has been designed to provide useful information and help answer some of the questions you may have as you prepare for your child to join us. Before your child officially starts, there will be several opportunities for you to visit the school, ask questions and meet key members of staff, including your child's class teacher.

I am very much looking forward to meeting you soon. In the meantime, I encourage you to explore our website and school video, which offer a wonderful insight into life at Danecourt.

On behalf of the entire team, I extend a warm welcome to you and your family. We are excited to work in partnership with you and to support your child as they learn, grow and thrive in the years ahead.

Cathryn

Cathryn Falconer
Headteacher



Danecourt School

Danecourt School supports children aged 4–11 with special educational needs who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our pupils have a wide range of needs, including autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and severe learning difficulties.

We recognise that every child is unique. Our curriculum is thoughtfully designed and highly personalised to meet individual needs, enabling each child to overcome barriers to learning and make meaningful progress.

Our vision is to provide a stimulating and nurturing learning environment where every child is encouraged to explore, develop and achieve their full potential. Our values underpin everything we do and support our children in becoming **STARS – Self-reliant, Team Players, Aspirational, Resilient and Successful**.



Our Curriculum and Approach to Learning

We believe that every child deserves and should be offered the very best start to their education. Every child should feel empowered to make choices and influence the direction of their own lives.

At Danecourt, our curriculum is rich in opportunities and engaging experiences designed to promote lifelong and meaningful learning. We aim to broaden each child's aspirations, build confidence and independence and help them achieve their full potential. By helping children overcome barriers, we create a safe and supportive environment where they feel confident to take risks, grow and thrive.

School should be an enjoyable and positive experience for children as well as our staff. To support this, we provide a balanced approach that includes classroom learning, movement-based activities and opportunities to learn within the community.

All of our pupils learn in different ways and on this basis our curriculum goes beyond the National Curriculum to include hands-on, practical experiences that inspire curiosity, creativity and enjoyment. Learning is flexible, personalised and carefully planned to build on what each child already knows, what they are interested in as well as what they need next to succeed.

To support this, we use a track model - *Engage, Explore, Discover and Enquire*. This ensures that each child is taught using most appropriate approach to learning, including tailored strategies, methods and learning environments that best meet their individual needs.



Our Curriculum Tracks

Each Track has a Track Lead, all of whom are Assistant Heads, and are as follows:

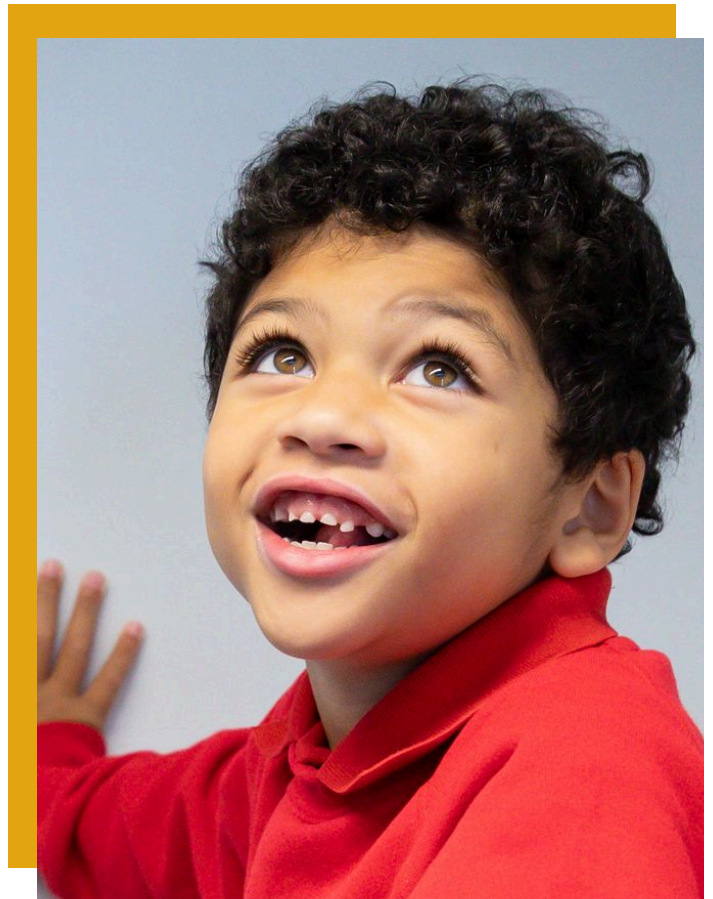
- ***Engage - Megan Tutty***
- ***Explore - Megan King***
- ***Discover - Louise Rimes***
- ***Enquire - Marilyn Warner***

Engage Track:

The Engage Track supports pupils with the most complex needs through highly individualised learning. Children work at their own pace in clearly structured areas, using a total communication approach to develop their preferred way of communicating. We use the SCERTS framework to guide teaching and set meaningful targets. Developing independence through predictable routines is a key focus.

Explore Track:

The Explore Track is designed for pupils who often experience high anxiety and sensory needs, many of whom have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A TEACCH-informed approach provides structure and predictability so pupils feel calm and ready to learn. Sensory and emotional regulation are central, alongside developing verbal communication. Learning is cross-curricular, practical and activity-led.



Discover Track:

Pupils in the Discover Track are developing as language partners and beginning to work towards conversational communication within the SCERTS model. The curriculum focuses on building communication, functional English and maths, and developing independence skills for life beyond Danecourt. Learning is connected to real-world experiences, including community visits and opportunities for pupils to work together and build relationships.

Enquire Track:

The Enquire Track offers a more subject-specific curriculum based around our "8 drivers for learning." Lessons are carefully differentiated and linked to termly themes. Alongside academic progress, pupils develop communication, life skills and independence through trips, enrichment activities and personalised targets. As conversational partners, pupils are encouraged to collaborate, think critically and problem-solve with their peers.

The school is split across three sites, located in Gillingham as well as satellite provisions based at Featherby and Bligh primary schools.

Danecourt@Gillingham is the school's largest site and provides education for approximately 240 of the children attending the school.

Danecourt@Featherby is our Early Years provision for children who are in Reception.

Danecourt@Bligh caters for children within Key Stage 2 who are predominantly in our Enquire curriculum track.



Our Therapeutic Approach

We are extremely proud of our unique and collaborative approach to therapy and are fortunate enough to have a dedicated and skilled therapy team who work across the whole school. Children learn best when therapists, school staff, and parents/carers all work closely together. By embedding therapy throughout your child's daily school experience, we ensure that support is meaningful, consistent and truly part of their learning journey.

The team is led by a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and Behaviour Specialist, Lou Elliott, who is also one of our Assistant Heads. Lou oversees both the deployment of the therapy team as well as key areas of the curriculum. Having therapy leadership at a senior level reflects our commitment to integrating therapy into every element of school life. Our aim is simple: to make therapeutic approaches a natural part of your child's curriculum, rather than something separate or only practised at certain times of day.

Having a diverse team allows us to offer a broad range of therapeutic support to all our students, ensuring their needs are understood and met throughout the school day.

The team includes:

- *Three Speech and Language Therapists*
- *A Paediatric Occupational Therapist*
- *Two Technical Instructors:*

One specialising in Communication

One specialising in Occupational Therapy who leads our hydrotherapy service

Our Therapists and Technical Instructors work in partnership with classroom staff. The model we use at Danecourt means that we do not carry out direct work with children in isolation. Instead, whenever we work with a child, do so alongside a member of their class team. This ensures that the skills and strategies we introduce are carried into everyday and become part of each child's regular routine.



Positive relationships with teachers and collaboration throughout the school are central to our approach. The Therapists and Technical Instructors are an integral part of our teaching team and contribute to all aspects of school life including attendance at:

- *Planning meetings*
- *Teacher meetings*
- *Parent consultation meetings*
- *Transition discussions*

By being involved at every level - from whole-school development planning to classroom activities, our therapy team helps shape both educational and therapeutic outcomes for every child.

Therapy Team



Lou Elliott
Therapy Lead



Tas Jesse
**Occupational
Therapist**



Elissa Hughes
**Speech &
Language
Therapist**



Claire Stevens
**Technical
Instructor**



Robyn Moore
**Technical
Instructor**

THE PASTORAL TEAM

The role of our Pastoral Team is to help, support and advise parents who have worries or concerns. The team have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are able to offer support and guidance with things such as:

- *advice and support with your child's behaviour at home or at school*
- *advice and support about your child's punctuality and attendance*
- *concerns you may have relating to your child that you would like support with*
- *you or someone you know who is suffering domestic abus*
- *concerns about any child's welfare*
- *support you to talk to your child's teacher or to the school about any concerns or queries you may have*
- *help you to access information about difficulties you may have*
- *offering group work and 1:1 sessions with children in school*
- *assistance with form filling*

Charlotte Morgan – *Community Ambassador*

In collaboration with local companies and charities, Charlotte helps run initiatives which benefit our parents and children. She supports and signposts parents to any additional support in the community that may be available to them.



Katie Togwell – *Nurture Lead*

Katie is a Drawing and Talking and ELSA practitioner, supporting children who need additional support with emotional regulation, bereavement, social skills, self-esteem or confidence. She works with children on a 1:1 basis, in small groups or a whole class. She also delivers the NSPCC Speak Out Stay Safe program to Year 6 children and Girls and Boys groups to learn about their changing bodies. Katie is also the Slide Away school bereavement contact.



Emma Tuckey – *Social Worker*

As the school-based social worker, Emma's role is to help ensure that every child at Danecourt feels safe, supported, and ready to learn. Emma works closely with staff, parents and external professionals to promote children's wellbeing and ensures that any safeguarding concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately. She also helps families navigate support services, share information and talk through any concerns they have.



Carly Tydeman – *Parent Partnership Lead*

Carly supports families and children with any worries, concerns or challenges they may be experiencing at home as well as school. Parenting a child with additional needs can sometimes feel overwhelming, and there may be times when you just need someone to listen and offer reassurance. Carly will work alongside you offering guidance, practical advice and help in accessing other services where needed. This might include support around routines at home, changes within the family or school attendance.



Transition

We understand that the transition to school or moving to a new school is a big change for many of our children, which is why we put a great deal of care and planning into making their transition as smooth and positive as possible.

Every child is unique and transitions do not look the same for everyone and we always take every child's specific needs, strengths and circumstances into account. If a child requires a different or more personalised transition plan, we will work closely with you and any professionals involved to ensure the process is tailored appropriately. Our priority is to ensure every child feels safe, supported and ready for a successful start.

How we support your child's transition:

Understanding needs:

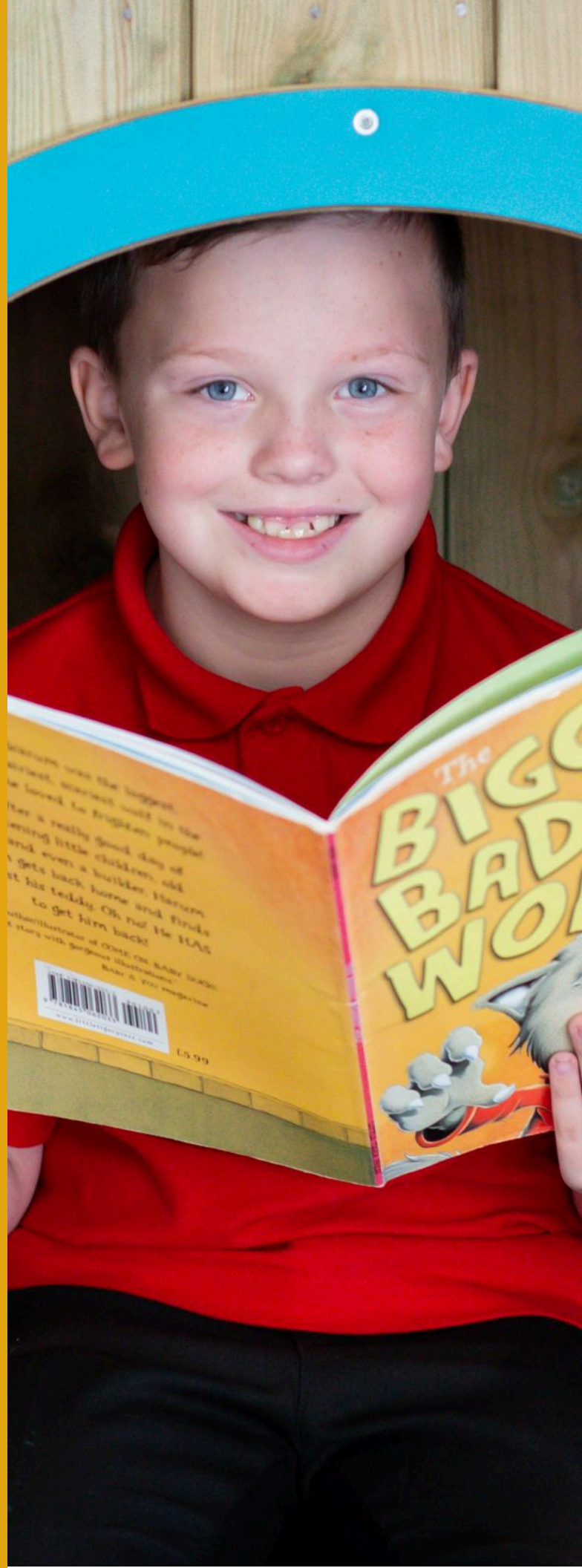
A member of staff will visit your child in their current setting

Familiarisation:

You and your child will be invited to school to meet their teacher and spend some time in the classroom

Support materials:

We will provide visual information about school, our staff and the class environment and a social story about starting school



Gathering information:

A few days before the start of term as part of the final preparation, the class teacher and a member of support staff will visit you and your child at home.

Settling in:

Your child starts school supported by staff and a familiar environment.

Partnership building:

Parents are invited to school to learn more about our curriculum, the track your child is working within and how we support their learning and development.



Initial Visit



School
Introduction



Visual Resources



Home Visit



Curriculum
Overview

Safeguarding

We have a moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people and endeavour to provide a welcoming environment where all children feel safe, respected and valued. We maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and promote a culture of professional curiosity and openness where children and adults are able to talk and know that they are listened to.

To maintain strong safeguarding standards, the following staff members hold responsibility for safeguarding across the school:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - Cathryn Falconer (Headteacher)

Deputy DSLs - Emma Tuckey (Social Worker)
Megan Tutty (Assistant Headteacher)
Louise Rimes (Assistant Headteacher)
Lou Elliott (Assistant Headteacher)
Marilyn Warner (Assistant Headteacher)
Matt Smith (Deputy Headteacher)
Zoe Smith (Deputy Headteacher)

Should you wish to contact one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), please contact the school office on 01634 232589 or via dsl@danecourt-maritime.org



Attendance

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school every day and arrives punctually.

School attendance is a vital part of every child's education and we take it extremely seriously. Regular, punctual attendance ensures that children are fully able to participate in learning, build positive relationships, and make steady progress. Every day in school matters, and strong attendance habits set the foundation for lifelong learning and success.

We are committed to working in partnership with families to support excellent attendance and to address any barriers that may arise, ensuring that every child has the best possible opportunity to thrive.

If your child is unable to attend, please notify the school by 9:00am on the day of absence. Please **do not** pass messages to taxi or transport drivers, as these may not reach the school office.

All absence should be reported **daily** directly to the school office via email or telephone:

Tel: 01634 232589 - Option 1

Email: attendance@danecourt-maritime.org



Transport

Most of the children who attend Danecourt travel via school transport provided by the local authority. The transport contract is arranged directly between parents/carers and the SEN Department at Medway Council. Once transport has been agreed, it may take up to 21 days for this to be put in place. As such, please ensure that you submit your application immediately after you receive confirmation of your child's place.

Transport applications should be completed online through Medway Council. When applying, please make sure you indicate which Danecourt site your child will be attending.

After transport has been set up, any changes—such as a change of address or other amendments, must be made directly with SEN Transport.



Health Care Plans

As part of the admissions process, every child is required to have a Health Care Plan. This important document helps us understand your child's medical needs and ensures we can support them safely and effectively throughout the school day. Although Health Care Plans are reviewed annually, it is essential that parents and carers inform the school immediately of any changes to their child's health and / or medication.

Medication

Staff are able to administer medication that is required during the school day. However, parents must complete a consent form, which is available on the school website. All medication sent into school must be in its original packaging with the prescription label clearly visible. Staff are not permitted to administer any medication without this.

Communication

Strong communication between home and school is essential in supporting every child's experience, development and well-being. This is particularly important for children who face communication challenges, as working together openly helps us remove barriers and ensure the best possible outcomes.

If you ever have a concern or question, please contact us as soon as possible. While your child's class teacher is usually your primary point of contact for day-to-day matters, we understand they may not always be immediately available. If you are unable to reach the teacher directly, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. Our administrative staff are fully equipped to assist you and will ensure you are directed to the most appropriate person to address your query efficiently.



Telephone Calls:

All incoming calls are answered by our main office team. Office staff will not interrupt teaching unless it is an emergency. Messages will be taken and passed on to the appropriate member of staff.

Should we need to contact you urgently e.g. to advise you of an injury or an accident, we will always call the first named emergency contact. If we cannot make contact, we will continue down the list of authorised contacts and leave messages or make repeat calls where needed. Please ensure that you keep your contact details up to date and advise the office as soon as possible if these details change.

Emails:

We will always do our best to respond to you promptly and in many cases this will be on the same day. Teachers have responsibilities throughout the school day and beyond; including teaching, planning, as well as additional responsibilities. As such, they have few or no opportunities to check emails throughout the day.

Staff are not expected to check or respond to emails outside of their working hours, although some may choose to work flexibly. Families are also not expected to read or reply to emails outside times that work for them.

Where a concern is sensitive, complex or requires discussion, email may not be the most suitable method of communication. In these cases, staff will offer a telephone call, online meeting or face-to-face meeting to ensure the matter can be fully discussed.

Class Dojo:

Class Dojo is one of our key communication platforms. It allows us to share photos, videos, announcements and celebrations, as well as direct messages between home and school, whole-class and whole-school updates will be shared through Class and School Stories.

As with email, staff are not expected to check or reply to messages outside their working hours, though many will respond flexibly. Class Dojo should not be used for lengthy or sensitive discussions about your child's progress or well-being.

My Child at School (MCAS):

Some communication, such as letters and newsletters, will be sent through the MCAS app. This enables us to share information quickly and in a paperless format. If you need help accessing or using MCAS, please speak to the School Office, who will be happy to support you.

The School Day

Below are the times of a typical school day. However, break and lunch times may vary or change depending on the key stage.

- **08:45 - School gates open**
- **09:00 - Start of the school day**
- **10:45 - Playtime**
- **12:00 - 13:00 - Lunchtime**
- **15:00 - End of the school day**

While the structure of the school day may vary depending on each child's individual needs and curriculum track, the start and finish times remain the same for all pupils.

If you are dropping off or collecting your child outside of the normal times, please report to the school office.



Uniform

All pupils wear school uniform as we believe that wearing a uniform helps pupils to feel part of a community. Wearing the school uniform also serves as a vital visual cue that distinguishes school time from home time, acting as a prompt that helps children settle into a structured daily routine. We have also ensured that the uniform design remains practical for the school environment and is relatively inexpensive to source.

The uniform consists of:

- Grey / black skirt or pinafore dresses
- Grey / black shorts or trousers
- Red polo shirts
- Red jumpers, school sweatshirts or cardigans
- Black school shoes or trainers
- White or grey socks or tights
- Summer dresses - red and white check

P.E. and swimming:

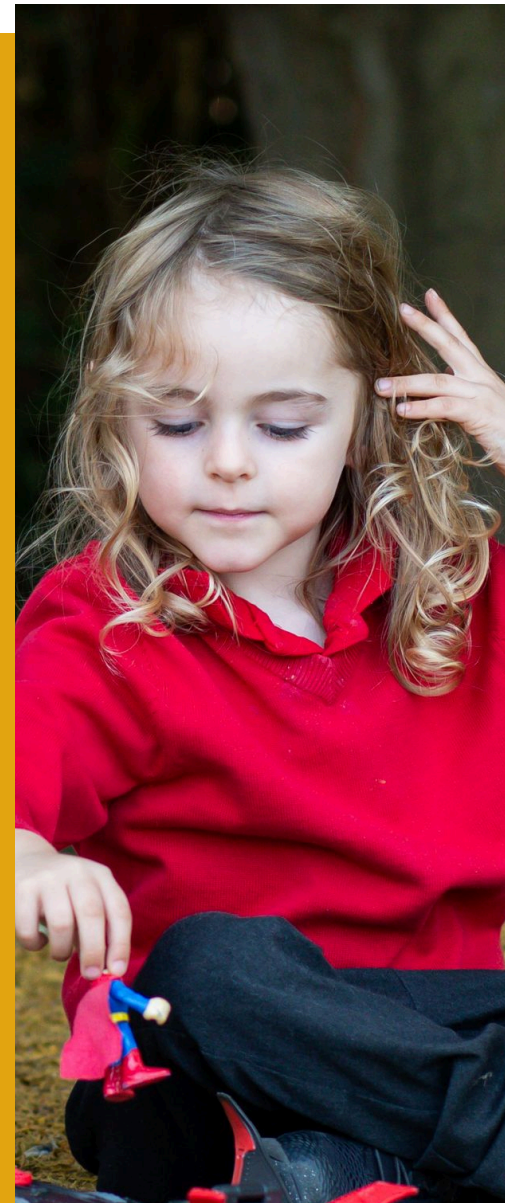
- Red T-shirt/polo shirt
- Black shorts
- Socks
- Plimsolls/trainers
- Swimming costume / shorts
- Towel

No jewellery except watches and stud earrings.

Please make sure that all jewellery is clearly marked with their name. You can imagine the difficult job of sorting out twelve red jumpers at the end of the day not named!

Jumpers, polo shirts, fleeces, caps, book bags and PE bags with the Danecourt school logo can be purchased from Uniformbase in Chatham.

uniformbase



School Meals

The school dinners at Danecourt are provided by The Contract Dining Company. The price of a school meal which consists of a main meal and dessert is currently £2.58 per day. This will increase very slightly from September 2026. This will not apply to children who have been granted a free hot meal or packed lunch under the Government's Universal Infant Free School Meals initiative. Check to see if you qualify [here](#).

We are a cash-free school, so monies can be paid online using the School Food United app. If you have any problems accessing your account or need support to activate your account, please contact the School Office. Please ensure you pay for the meals in advance as we follow our debt collecting policy.

Below is an example of a typical week's menu:

WEEK 1

Allergy information available on request

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Main				
Veggie Wholemeal Pizza (v)	Texan Baked BBQ Chicken with Rice	Roast of the Day with Roast Potatoes and Gravy	Beef Bolognese with Pasta	Fish of the Day and Chips
Vegetarian				
Lentil, Roasted Tomato and Pesto Pasta (v)	Halloumi Burger with Salad (v)	Vegan Quorn Fillet with Roast Potatoes and Gravy (v)	Chinese Vegetable Noodles with Edamame (v)	Cheese and Bean Slice with Chips (v)
3rd Options				
Jacket Potato with Baked Beans, Cheese, Tuna Mayo or Coleslaw	Jacket Potato with Baked Beans, Cheese, Tuna Mayo or Coleslaw	Jacket Potato with Baked Beans, Cheese, Tuna Mayo or Coleslaw	Jacket Potato with Baked Beans, Cheese, Tuna Mayo or Coleslaw	Jacket Potato with Baked Beans, Cheese, Tuna Mayo or Coleslaw
Vegetables				
Broccoli, Green Beans	Sweetcorn, Peas	Carrots, Cabbage	Mixed Vegetables	Peas, Baked Beans
Dessert				
Fruit Flapjack	Peach Crumble with Custard	Marble Berry Cake	Fruit Jelly	Shortbread
Fruit/Yoghurt	Fruit/Yoghurt	Fruit/Yoghurt	Fruit/Yoghurt	Fruit/Yoghurt

Fresh seasonal salad and bread available daily. Fresh fruit and yoghurt available daily as an alternative to the dessert of the day.

18th Apr, 9th May, 30th May, 20th Jun, 11th Jul, 5th Sep, 26th Sep, 17th Oct

FOODSMART FOR BODY & BLOOD

soil association

ASSURED

ASSURED

AiP

Fresh seasonal salad and bread available daily. Fresh fruit and yoghurt are available daily as an alternative to the dessert of the day.

The catering team know the children at Danecourt extremely well and are able to cater for their wide range of needs as well as special dietary requirements. If your child has any special dietary requirements e.g. gluten free or dairy intolerant, please complete the form below and return it to the School Office.

[Food Safety Management Form](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)



FRIENDS & ASSOCIATES OF **Danecourt** School

FADS are a friendly group of parents, carers, family members and friends who spend a few hours every term meeting to discuss fundraising events to raise money to support the school. This is also a great opportunity to meet other parents and carers who have children at our school.

FADS do an amazing job and the school is incredibly grateful for what they do to raise money for larger projects as well as running annual events. They are always grateful for any donations people are able to provide, which enables us to enhance the lives of children attending Danecourt and give them opportunities they so richly deserve.

They are always looking for new members, so if you are interested in getting involved please come along to one of the coffee mornings – you might be surprised how much fun you have!

If you would like to make a donation, these can be made directly to FADS. Please contact them directly via their e-mail address for more details – fads@danecourt-maritime.org



Stay Informed

Our Website



Please check our website regularly for:

Useful information

Term dates

Newsletters

Contact details

Class pages

Latest news

And much more!

www.danecourtschool.com

And don't forget to follow us on social media!



@DanecourtSchool



@danecourtprimary

Our Office Team

Emma Holt - Office Manager

Jess Morris - Admin Assistant

Tia Singh - Admin Assistant

Rachael Smith – Admin Assistant (Admissions)

Nicola Little - Staff Welfare & Attendance Officer

Sue Burgess – EHCP Co-ordinator

Tel: 01634 232589

Email: info@danecourt-maritime.org

Key Contacts

Senior Leadership Team



Cathryn Falconer
Headteacher

c.falconer@danecourt-maritime.org



Matt Smith
Deputy Headteacher

m.smith@danecourt-maritime.org



Zoe Smith
Deputy Headteacher

z.smith@danecourt-maritime.org



Megan Tutty
Assistant Headteacher -
Engage Track

m.tutty@danecourt-maritime.org



Megan King
Assistant Headteacher -
Explore Track

m.king@danecourt-maritime.org



Louise Rimes
Assistant Headteacher -
DiscoverTrack

l.rimes@danecourt-maritime.org



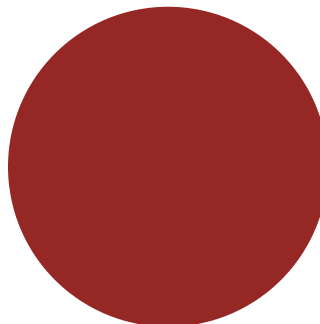
Marilyn Warner
Assistant Headteacher -
EnquireTrack

m.warner@danecourt-maritime.org



Lou Elliott
Assistant Headteacher -
Therapy Lead

l.elliott@danecourt-maritime.org



Emma Holt
Office Manager

e.holt@danecourt-maritime.org