



Welcome to Dorchester Primary School

Information for Parents and Children New to Reception

Academic Year 2024/25



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ABOUT US

At Dorchester Primary School we recognise that children only get one childhood; we want it to be filled with happy memories. Primary school years are a time when children develop healthy habits to protect their long-term physical and mental wellbeing, and a time to build friendships that last a lifetime. We make sure that children here are recognised as individuals, know that they are cared for and understand the valuable contribution they make to our school and the wider community. Our aim is that our children grow to become happy, healthy, confident and well-rounded young people, ready to face the joys and challenges of their future lives.

OUR VALUES

These values underpin all we do at school. We teach children about the importance of these values, both in the way they learn and the way they treat other people.



We use our values to encourage our children to be fantastic citizens and to develop a Growth Mindset – that is to understand that making mistakes is all part of learning and helping them to understand that the more they learn, the more they will be able to learn.



TIPS FOR STARTING SCHOOL

We recognise that the learning process begins long before children start school. Your role as a parent is vital – the way you support your child has a huge impact on their success at school.

As the start of school approaches, there are ways in which you can help to prepare your child to make their entry to school a comfortable and happy time.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Be positive with your child when you talk about starting school; try to 'put away' any anxiety or fears you may have yourself in the presence of your child.
- Get to know some other children and parents who will be starting school at the same time.
- Look through your child's 'Welcome to School' book with them, discussing what it will be like and what they might do when they are at school.
- Encourage them to practise getting dressed themselves, trying on their school uniform and coat. Practise doing up buttons and zips on cardigans and coats; putting coats on is especially useful for those winter outdoor learning sessions.
- Help your child to recognise their name on clothing by looking at the letter shapes. You could play a memory game by encouraging them to put the letters of their name in the correct order.
- Read read, read, read, read – read books, share stories and nursery rhymes, sing songs and action songs together.
- When your child writes their name, encourage them to use lower case letters except for the first letter. Also talk about the sounds of letters as well as the names of each of the letters in their names.
- Talk about the numbers, letters and shapes of things you and your child see in everyday life eg. numbers on doors/gateposts, car number plates, words on signposts etc.

Useful to note:

When children first start school they often do not want to discuss what they have done when they get home. This is quite typical as starting a new routine and being in new situations with new people can be quite physically and mentally exhausting. Your child may want to go to bed earlier than usual during the first few weeks of starting school.

Rather than asking your child the general, 'What did you do at school today?' try these questions to help them to discuss their day – you are much more likely to get a positive response.

- Who did you play with at school today?
- What was the best thing you learnt today?
- What was your class story about today?
- Did your teacher do anything silly today?
- Did anyone get caught picking their nose today?



SETTLING IN

To encourage a smooth transition into Reception we provide a staggered entry programme, which allows the children to adjust gradually to their new surroundings and enables the adults working with them to begin to get to know them better. The transition dates for your child are given in your personalised letter included in your pack.

DATE	ARRANGEMENTS
Friday 28 th June, morning	Stay and Play Session - you and your child come into school in a small group. During this 45-minute session, your child's teacher will get to know you and your child and ensure that your child is comfortable in their new learning environment. This is also an opportunity for you and your child to meet their new teacher, their Learning Support Assistant and some of their new classmates and have lots of fun. Your designated time is given in your personalised letter included in your pack.
Wednesday 3 rd July, morning	Come and Play Session - During this 45 minutes session your child's teacher will get to know your child better and your child will have the opportunity to explore their learning environment independently of you, with some of their new friends. Parents can enjoy refreshments in the hall and a chat with members of the school community whilst the children are in class – so you aren't too far away! Your designated time is in the personalised letter in your pack.
Tuesday 3 rd September and afternoons from Wednesday 4 th - Friday 6 th September	Home visits- Your child's class teacher and learning support assistant will come to visit you and your child at home. This is an opportunity for school staff to get to know your child better, in the place where they feel most comfortable. They will talk to you and your child to find out all about your child's interests and pre-school experiences. Your designated time is in the personalised letter in your pack.
Wednesday 4 th – Friday 6 th September	All children will start school at 8:30am and stay until 12:30pm. This will enable the children to meet all of their classmates and become familiar with the Reception routines. They will also be able to have lunch and develop an understanding of the lunch hall routines.
Monday 9 th September	This will be the children's first full day they will experience a full day in Reception and begin to learn all of the routines. They will start at 8:30am and the day will finish at 3:15pm.



How you can support your child with settling in to Reception

For some children, parting from their parents can be a worrying time – and this can be equally so for some parents parting from their child. One of our 'top tips' is to create a simple parting routine with your child and practise this with them before you arrive at school so they know what to expect when it is time for you to leave, for example, a cuddle and a reassuring phrase like 'See you at home time'.

We understand that every child is unique and is at a different point in their development. We will gladly discuss what works best to settle your child if they become unduly distressed.

Children who are distressed when they are dropped at school are, most often, completely happy within a minute or so of their parent or carer leaving. Should your child remain distressed for a prolonged period of time after you leave we will, of course, contact you.

THE START AND END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

The Reception gate will open at 8:30am every morning and parents take their children to the classroom door where they are greeted by the class teacher. All children must be in school by 8:45am, when the register is taken. The children will then self-register with the help of staff and settle into an activity of their choice.

At the end of the day, the Reception gate will open at 3:15pm. Parents arriving to collect their children should wait outside their child's classroom until their child is dismissed to them.



You must bring your child to school **on time, every day**. Children who arrive late often find it more difficult to settle into class than their peers and find it upsetting that they might have 'missed out' on things that happened before they arrived. Children can also become concerned if their parents or carers are late to collect them at the end of the day. If there is an emergency when you are unavoidably late please telephone the school office to let them know so that we can reassure your child.



At the end of the day we will not hand over your child to anyone other than the named adult/s you identify in your admission forms. If your child is being picked up by a different adult, you must arrange this with your child's class teacher at drop off; in an emergency you can telephone the school office during the day to let them know about any changes to your normal arrangements. If you wish an older sibling at school to collect your child, you need to confirm this via a signed consent letter.

Caring about Our Community

We ask you to walk, scoot or cycle to school if at all possible. If you do need to drive to school, please park a little way away from Dorchester Road and walk the last stretch. This not only gives the children some exercise, fresh air and a chance to chat to you in the mornings, it also means traffic is less congested outside school, there is less air pollution and so it is safer for our children. We are blessed to have our wonderful Lollipop Lady, Yippy, to help children and families to cross Dorchester Road safely.



Yippy also takes charge of our preloved uniform sales – you can pick up spare uniform cheaply from her rails. They are out every morning if the weather is fine.



THE RECEPTION CURRICULUM

The Reception Curriculum is based on the three prime areas and four specific areas of learning as outlined in the [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021](#), published by the Department for Education (DfE). Whilst this all sounds very technical, the curriculum is designed to give your child an holistic start to their education, by focusing on the whole child.

	Area of Learning	Aspects
Prime Areas of Learning	Communication and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening, attention and understanding • Speaking
	Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Motor Skills • Fine Motor Skills
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Regulation • Managing Self • Building Relationships
Specific Areas of Learning	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension • Word Reading • Writing
	Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Numerical Patterns
	Understanding the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and Present • People, Culture and Communities • The Natural World
	Expressive Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating with Materials • Being Imaginative and Expressive

Play-based learning

Our children learn in lots of different ways throughout the day, all as valuable as each other. Our practice is centred around three key characteristics of effective teaching and learning. We support and encourage children to:

- play and explore by engaging in planned, purposeful play to investigate and experience things for themselves
- engage in active learning by 'having a go' and developing the perseverance and resilience to work through difficulties they experience and to
- create and think critically to develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.



The learning in the curriculum is largely based on the children's interests and key texts which are covered over the course of the year. Their learning links closely with the whole school curriculum and introduces children to the Enquiry Question approach that is used throughout the rest of the school. We keep parent and carers informed about what the children have learned and what they will be learning via our weekly 'Peek of the Week', which is published every Friday. It includes lots of photographs so that you can discuss the learning activities with your child.

ACCESSING THE CURRICULUM

Our children access the curriculum through a range of play-based activities. These are carefully balanced between activities with are adult-led and those that are initiated by the children themselves. We follow the children's interests whenever possible, as we know children acquire knowledge and skills more readily when the topic or subject matter interests them.

Children receive high-quality focused phonics and mathematics sessions every day, which we refer to as 'carpet sessions'. They will have opportunities to practise the skills they have learned in the activities we plan for them during independent or supported child initiated learning, which we refer to as 'play and learn' sessions. During these sessions, children choose from a range of planned activities in the indoor or outdoor areas, or develop their own self-initiated activities.

A typical day in our Reception Classes

	Activities
Arrival	Entry to Classroom Self Registration Early Morning Activities
Morning	Carpet Session - Phonics Play and Learn including Fruit Snack Carpet Session - Maths
11:30	Lunch
Afternoon	Carpet Session – Circle Time Free Flow Story Time
3:15	Home



Support with Learning

Children with a Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) will receive additional support. This will be designed to meet specific learning targets in an Individual Support Plan (ISP), which will be discussed and shared with parents/carers. Class teachers or our Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo), Mrs Hindocha, will contact parents to discuss this as required.



Children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and are at the early stages of acquiring English as a second or additional language will receive support to develop their acquisition of English. The class teachers and EAL Leader will ensure that appropriate additional support is provided as required.

ASSESSING LEARNING IN RECEPTION

Assessment of children's learning is an essential part of Early Years' practice. High quality assessment allows us to move children's learning on at the pace that is right for each individual child. Children are assessed against the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). This covers the seven distinct areas of learning. Each area of learning consists of a range of goals, known as the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that children should meet by the end of their Reception Year.

Throughout the year, we will collect a range of evidence about your child's learning to demonstrate their progress towards the ELGs. This will include observations of the children in action, photographs, videos, things children have made, written or created, records of things they say, and things the children have done at home which we may glean from conversations with them or with parents. This information is collected in a 'Wow Book' which we will invite you to come and view at intervals throughout the year.

We know that children learn best when there is a strong partnership between home and school and when parents and staff share their knowledge about a child, so we encourage parents to actively contribute to their child's 'Wow Book' by completing 'Wow Moments' and 'I Can' Stars, outlining any significant developments they make at home.



Statutory Baseline Assessment

The [Reception Baseline Assessment \(RBA\)](#) is a statutory assessment for Reception children which takes place within the first six weeks of your child starting school. It is a short, task-based assessment of your child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills when they begin school. The children will not be aware that they are doing an assessment; there is no 'pass mark' and they do not need to prepare.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

We value the input of our parents and carers and seek to work together, in partnership with you, to meet your child's needs more effectively and provide them with the highest quality education and care. This will ensure that during their time with us, in Reception and beyond, they are safe, happy and successful.

Each morning, Reception staff will be available for you to pass on quick messages or ask questions. If you need to discuss a personal matter or speak to us at length, you can make an appointment to see us at a more conducive time. You can also email your class teacher via our school office on office@dorchesterprimary.com.

Family Learning Workshops

You will be provided with dates for family learning events. These sessions are aimed at helping you, as parents and carers, to understand the teaching strategies we use in school. These same strategies can then be used at home to create a home learning environment which supports and continues the work of the school.

Parent Consultations

These are held over two evenings during the autumn term and during the spring term. You will be notified of the dates and they will be included in our online calendar. You will be asked to select a 10 minute time slot that is convenient to you to meet with your child's class teacher.

These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss your child's learning and progress with their class teacher, and find out about their next steps.

End of Year Report

At the end of the summer term you will receive a written report which will give details of your child's progress and attainment across the Reception year.

Homework

It is important that you read with your child every day, before and after they start school as reading is the key to unlocking all their learning. This forms the main part of children's homework in Reception although there will be other activities sent home during the year. Please support your child in completing all the homework activities that are set for them by making sure they have a quiet, clear space to work and they understand what they need to do. Some of the homework set will be designed to be done alongside parents – please make sure you make time for this when your child is not too tired and will get the most out of the activity.



How you can help us?

Stay Up To Date

Please make sure you read the weekly newsletter, the Peek of the Week and any other information sent to parents and carers via School Gateway, our communications app. Return forms promptly. Keep your diary up to date so your child doesn't miss out on school events. Schools are busy places with lots going on so it is good to keep on top of it.

Join your Class WhatsApp Group

We have a volunteer in each class to organise a class WhatsApp group. These can be used as reminders for special events/Non Uniform Days etc. They can also be used for communication between parents about, for example, lost property. Whilst these are run by parents and are outside the remit of the school, we ask that you reflect our school values when using the group, and are respectful and responsible. Remember that if you are concerned about anything you should speak to your child's class teacher rather than post in a Whatsapp Group or on social media – then we can address your concerns in a timely and measured manner.

Bring us your Recycled Materials

We love junk modelling in Early Years. We welcome items such as clean milk bottle tops, yoghurt pots, cardboard rolls from kitchen roll, small cereal boxes, egg boxes, small cardboard trays, cardboard packaging sleeves and newspaper. We also love dressing up clothes – including safe 'real' things that you don't want any more like adult handbags, hats, shirts etc. If in doubt, ask us before you chuck it out!

Parent Volunteers

We welcome parent help throughout the year – either to support with changing reading books or with particular activities such as sewing, woodwork etc, or to help on school trips. We will send you more information about this once all the children have settled into school as we have found that having parents in the classroom in the early weeks can be upsetting for some children.

Respect Our Learning Areas

Our outdoor area is a learning area, just as the classrooms are. Please do not allow younger siblings to play in the outdoor area while you wait for your Reception child. Your support with this is much appreciated.

School Fund

We ask parents to pay a voluntary contribution of £10 per term to the school, paid annually or termly. We use this money to allow us to provide extra learning opportunities for the children such as visitors to the school and also to subsidise the cost of school trips. The big advantage in donating in this way is that we can claim Gift Aid on these contributions for those who are eligible, meaning that we can get more for your money.



FOOD AND DRINK AT SCHOOL

Lunchtimes

A school meal is provided, free of charge, by our caterers, Olive Dining. Our meals are always nutritionally balanced and we offer a choice of meals each day, including a vegetarian option, a baguette option, a jacket potato option and a salad bar. There is also a choice of desert which includes fruit, yogurt/jelly as well as the main options. We can cater for all dietary requirements whether for religious, allergy or lifestyle reasons.



Reception lunchtime begins at 11:45am; this is earlier than other children in school as it allows the children a quiet space in the hall to eat their lunch. They will be accompanied to the lunch hall by Reception staff who, along with our kitchen staff, will make sure that the dietary needs of the children are followed.

Snacks

A piece of fruit is provided free of charge each day. This is usually one of apples, bananas, pears and 'easy-peel' satsumas, although when they are in season we are sometimes sent sugar snap peas, tomatoes and strawberries. If your child can be a bit fussy about what they eat you may wish to provide a piece of fruit you know they will eat. This needs to be provided in a named container and be ready for your child to eat (peeled, cut up etc. if they won't be able to manage it themselves otherwise).

The children may have fruit from self service snack areas in their classroom throughout the day.

Water

It is important that children drink plenty of water throughout the day to keep hydrated and healthy. The children should bring a named Dorchester School water bottle with them every day – these are available to buy from the school office; their first one will be given to them at the 'Come and Play' Session on the 13th July. These can be refilled in school as needed but need to be taken home each afternoon for washing.

As a healthy school, children may only bring plain water in their water bottle. This is the healthiest option for them and if everybody only has water the children soon become used to drinking it, even if they are used to other drinks at home.



ILLNESS AND INJURIES

Medical Needs and Allergies

It is vital that we have up-to-date information about your child's medical needs or allergies. You are asked to provide this information on your admissions forms, but if anything changes please inform the school office immediately.

Illness

If your child is unwell and cannot come to school please phone or email the school office so we can record their absence properly in the school register.

Should your child suffer from sickness or diarrhoea, please inform the school office via telephone and keep your child at home for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness or diarrhoea. This is in line with NHS guidance to limit the spread of infection.

Injuries

Schools are busy places and inevitably children can suffer, usually minor, injuries during their school day. We have trained first aiders in school who we can call upon if needed. If your child suffers a minor injury we will let you know when you collect your child.

For more serious injuries we will contact you on one of the contact numbers you have provided to inform you about what has happened. We will advise you as to whether we think your child is well enough to stay at school or whether they should be collected and taken for medical advice.

If we deem an injury or illness to require urgent medical attention we will call paramedics immediately. If a parent or carer cannot get to us in time a member of staff who is known to the child will accompany them to hospital and wait with them until a parent or carer arrives. You are asked to give your permission for this on the Admissions Form.

It is important that you provide the school with up-to-date contact information. If your contact details change please inform the office immediately.



MEDICATION

If your child requires prescribed medicines whilst at school, or needs regular painkillers, you must complete a consent form, available from the school office, to provide details of dosage/timings etc. An adult must bring medication into the school office; children must not bring medicines of any kind into school.

First Aid kits are carried on any occasion when the class is off-site, such as on school trips. Medication such as asthma inhalers or Epi-pens will be taken from the school office on trips and visits and will be returned to the office on the child's return to school. Such medication may also be moved to different areas of the school site as required – eg. taken to the field during PE lessons. At other times medication will be stored in the office in a secure medicine cabinet. Please ensure all medication is clearly labelled with the child's name and written instructions about its use.

Staff are trained to recognise when a child may require use of their asthma inhaler and we will always ask the child first before administering the required dose. We also advise that, if your child has asthma, you discuss with them what they need to do to let an adult know when they might require their inhaler.

Children with serious medical conditions may need an individual care plan which will be discussed and set up in consultation with parents and medical professionals when needed.





WILLOW CLUB WRAP AROUND CARE



We provide a Breakfast and After School Club to support working parents. Breakfast Club opens at 7:30am and runs until school begins. We provide a choice of healthy breakfast cereals, yoghurts, fruit and wholemeal toast for children to select from for their breakfast. You can also send your child to the club after 8:00am if they do not require breakfast, for a lower fee.

After School Club runs from the end of the school day until 6:30pm. Children are provided with a substantial snack and will engage in a range of activities including indoor and outdoor play.

Places at these clubs can be booked via the school website.

TRIPS

During the course of the year in Reception, children will have the opportunity to attend various trips to consolidate their learning of the different topics they cover.

We ask parents to volunteer to join us on trips, lending support to ensure that all children make the most of the learning opportunity. We usually need to ask parents to make a voluntary contribution to the cost of school trips to ensure we are able to run them, although we will subsidise these costs using the School Fund where possible.

Some of the trips we have historically run for reception children include walks in the local area and visits to Bocketts Farm.

You will, of course, be informed about trips in advance along with information about any voluntary contributions requested. If insufficient voluntary contributions are received for a trip we may need to cancel it if we cannot find an alternative way of meeting the cost of the trip.



POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOUR

At Dorchester Primary School we have high expectations for children's attitude and conduct.

Our values of Respect, Responsibility, Self-Belief, Curiosity, Creativity, Perseverance and Belonging provide the standards by which all members of the school community interact with each other, and provide the framework that supports the children in following our school rules of being Ready, Respectful and Safe.



To promote our school's values we use a positive behaviour management system, which is underpinned by a recognition that learning how to get along with others is just as an important part of school life as academic learning; this is supported by a strong focus on social and emotional wellbeing.

At Dorchester Primary School children learn about their emotions and the strategies they will require to manage them. We follow the principles of a programme known as Zones of Regulation, which aims to support children's understanding of the range of emotions they may experience and so know that it is OK to experience all emotions, but it is important to learn how to manage them effectively.

All children will, from time to time, make poor choices in terms of behaviour. We will always work with the child to help them to understand the impact that their negative behaviour has on others. If a child shows a pattern of poor behaviour choices we will engage with you to support the child in understanding what they need to do to enjoy a more positive experience at school.



ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Good attendance and punctuality in Reception are very important as they establish good habits that will enable your child to succeed throughout their time at school.

Attendance

If your child is absent due to illness please call or email the school office by 9:00am to report the absence. We aim for the highest rates of attendance at school as we know that regular school attendance really makes a difference to children's education. Requests for holidays during term time will not be granted. Please refer to our Attendance Policy for further information.

Punctuality

It is distressing for children to arrive at school late. Their friends have already said hello to each other and have started getting on with their learning activities; it can feel difficult for a child who arrives late to fit in.

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) supports the school to work with any families who experience difficulty in securing their child's attendance and punctuality at school. We also have a Home School Link Worker who will work with the EWO to offer support to these families.





COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

At Dorchester Primary School we strive to ensure a calm and supportive environment in which all members of our school community engage respectfully with each other.

We believe that all staff, parents and children are entitled to a safe and protective environment in which to work and learn. As such we expect all adults to:

- set a good example to children at all times, showing them how to get along with all members of the school and wider community
- speak to each other and all members of the school community in a respectful, calm, non-aggressive manner, upholding the core values of the school

Any behaviour that will cause harassment, alarm or distress to anyone on the school site is contrary to the aims of our school. Therefore, any threatening behaviour, physical attacks, abusive or insulting language to staff, governors, parents, carers and other users of the school premises will not be tolerated and may result in the withdrawal of permission to be on the school premises.

We want what is best for your child and your family – we are all working to the same end. If you have a concern or a complaint, please come and talk to us. We will listen carefully to your concerns and discuss next steps with you so that your concerns are addressed effectively. We have a detailed Complaints Procedure that you can follow if necessary but we will always endeavour to sort out any problems quickly through open channels of communication.

If you do have any concerns you should contact:

1st: Your child's class teacher

2nd: The EYFS Lead – Mrs Glover

3rd: The Deputy Head, Mrs Hall, or the Headteacher, Mrs Bell. You can speak to the school office to arrange an appointment.



SCHOOL UNIFORM

Our children are ambassadors for our school and we expect them to wear their uniform smartly and with pride. Our logo uniform items are available to purchase from Schoolwear Inc. Non-logo items may also be purchased there or from alternative retailers. When the weather is fine there is a Pre-Loved Uniform Sale held outside school each morning, where items of uniform can be purchased at very reasonable prices.

Footwear should be simple enough for your child to manage independently. To ensure children's safety we ask that children wear shoes with a Velcro fastening until they can tie laces or fasten buckles themselves. Children are not allowed to wear 'ballet pump' style shoes with no Velcro/laces or straps.

Children must have a school book bag. Please check this bag daily as they will be used for storing reading books and homework books as well as any letters or notes for you. It is useful if children have a Bottle Buddi – this hangs on the outside of their book bag to store their water bottle and prevents any leaks from damaging their school books.

Children in Reception do not need PE kit, but they should bring a named change of clothes to be kept in school in case of accidents or messy incidents. Most parents use our pre-loved uniform sales to provide this. On days when children have Forest School they require a pair of wellington boots. Most families leave a pair of wellies at school for the year so that the children can engage in Forest School/water play etc. All belongings such as clothing, footwear, bags and water bottles must be clearly labelled with your child's name. Please sew in labels, use iron-on labels or use a laundry marker for clothing and a permanent marker on other items.

For the safety of all children, jewellery may not be worn at school. This includes earrings so if you wish to get your child's ears pierced while they are at primary school please ensure it is at the beginning of the summer holiday so that earrings can be removed by the time they return to school in September.

Long hair needs to be tied back using appropriate hair ties in school colours (black, grey, purple, white). Large bows and multi-coloured hair accessories are not appropriate with school uniform.

Please ensure that your child is always dressed appropriately for the weather. Our daily routine in Reception allows for sustained periods when children may choose to be outdoors, whatever the weather, in sun, rain or snow. In sunny weather all children need to have sun cream applied before they arrive to school and they need to wear a sun hat or cap to protect them from the sun.

Our full uniform list is available [on our school website](#).



Dorchester Primary School
Dorchester Road
Worcester Park
Surrey
KT4 8PG

0208 330 1144
office@dorchesterprimary.com