



Thrybergh Primary School

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Dear Parents,

It has been a busy year at Thrybergh Primary and we are taking positive steps on our school improvement journey. We are determined to provide the best possible education for the children of Thrybergh in a warm, caring and friendly atmosphere in which our children can thrive and achieve.

We will have a school which is cared for, respected and valued by the whole community where we shall endeavour to:

- ✓ Provide a safe, happy and stimulating learning environment that caters to the needs of all children.
- ✓ Provide an engaging, broad and rich curriculum that challenges learners to achieve and reach their potential.
- ✓ Encourage pupils to develop lively, inquisitive minds and to become independent, lifelong learners.
- ✓ We aim for every child to find their voice both metaphorically and literally.

We have some new staffing and class arrangements for the school from September 2019. We would like to keep the staffing structure as stable as possible for our children, we have decided to introduce mixed aged classes from September.

This change will allow us to:

- ✓ Provide a quality education for all children throughout the school with minimal disruption caused by staff changes.
- ✓ Give children the opportunity to mix socially with a wider group of friends to help build a strong whole school ethos.
- ✓ Provide well-resourced additional help and support to children with special educational needs, or who have social, emotional or behavioural issues.
- ✓ Build our rich balanced curriculum over two-year cycles, allowing children to experience more irresistible learning opportunities.
- ✓ Allow us to support our children in their learning and their outcomes.

Many schools in Rotherham have mixed classes, we are not breaking the mould and there are good supports and structures in place for schools that are planning and assessing in mixed age classes.

From September the class structure will be:

Foundation stage – Mrs Levesley, Mrs Green, Mrs Wilbourne and Mrs Pickering

Year 1/2 – Miss Bentley (KS1 Leader), Miss Parkin, Mrs Kelsall

Year 3/4 – Miss Whitehouse, Mrs Thomas and Mrs Slater

Year 4/5 - Mrs Denyer, Mrs Razaq and Miss Pearson and Mrs Slater

Year 5/6 - Mrs Britton, Miss Pearson, Mrs Edmondson (Assistant Headteacher) and Mrs Dibbo

All teachers will be working together to ensure we have a progressive curriculum.

Miss Parkin will be leaving to go on maternity leave at the end of October and Mrs Edmondson will also be going on maternity leave from January.

We appreciate this is a change for many people and so we have included more details with this letter.

Kind Regards,
Mrs Parry-McDermott
Headteacher



Frequently Asked Questions about mixed age classes

WHY ARE YOU MIXING DIFFERENT YEAR GROUPS?

The government funds schools according to pupil numbers. Our published admission number (PAN) is 30 which creates a 1 form entry school. A fall in our roll, alongside ongoing pressure on school budgets has meant that the school is no longer in a position to financially support a 6 class structure. We have considered a range of options and have balanced these against factors such as infant class size limits and the challenges of teaching across Key Stages. Following research, and after taking advice from the Trust, having discussions with colleagues in other schools and undertaking a number of meetings. We feel that the best option to allow the school to continue on its improvement journey is to combine Years 1 and 2 within KS1 and to combine classes within KS2 from September 2019.

HOW WILL TWO YEAR GROUPS BE TAUGHT ALONGSIDE EACH OTHER IN ONE CLASSROOM?

All children develop at different rates. It isn't automatic that the oldest child in a class will achieve better than the youngest child. Children will be taught to their individual academic needs and not simply to their age. All classes in the school have a large range of maturity and attainment. Teachers will choose work appropriate to the standard a child is working at, ensuring that all needs are catered for. In the majority of lessons, the children will start the session together on the carpet with the teacher targeting questions at individuals or groups of children at an appropriate level. We refer to this as 'flexible grouping.' Children will then be provided with appropriate tasks to consolidate or practise what they have been taught, with the teacher and / or teaching assistant working with children who require additional assistance or who need to be challenged to explore concepts in greater depth or learn something new. On occasion, groups of children may be removed from whole class teaching in order to facilitate this.

HOW WILL TEACHERS PLAN, ENSURING COVERAGE OF BOTH THE YEAR GROUP CURRICULUMS, AND PREVENTING REPETITION OF CONTENT?

With the exception of Maths, English and Science, the curriculum content isn't split into separate year group content, rather, there is an expectation for the end of the key stage. Subject Leaders at Thrybergh are developing a progression of skills for children to work through in each year group. Curriculum areas such as History and Geography will be taught on a two-year cycle, ensuring that content is not repeated unless it needs to be built upon. In the case of Maths and English, the two curricula are completely aligned, with the majority of objectives being matched with a similar but slightly trickier objectives for the older year group if appropriate. Ensuring coverage of national curriculum objectives for both year groups in the same classroom will therefore be easily facilitated by normal classroom practice. We stream the whole school for our English curriculum through teaching SfA.

HOW WILL WE ENSURE THE HIGHEST ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL CHILDREN?

Both national and local data for performance of children at the end of KS1 and 2 suggests that being placed in a mixed age classes has no negative impact on children's academic achievements. This is supported by educational research, with some studies suggesting that children often perform better when placed in classes with a bigger age range. A mixed age classroom means that the children will have greater flexibility to learn with children of their own standard. Children who find aspects of the curriculum more challenging will be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes. Children working above the expected standard will be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them on to explore new concepts. As part of our curriculum, learning will continue to be focussed on explaining reasoning and problem solving both of which extend children's understanding without them having to access a separate curriculum. Rich texts will be carefully chosen ensuring that they are easy to learn but contain the relevant sentence structures and vocabulary to stretch children at the appropriate level.

HOW WILL WE ENSURE THAT CHILDREN COPE SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY WITH CHANGES IN THEIR CURRENT CLASS STRUCTURES?

Our previous experience of mixed age teaching shows us that children thrive in a mixed age class. Children learn to form wider friendships and relate to broader groups of children, creating a classroom atmosphere where children are enjoined to help others and seek support from their older peers rather than simply relying on adult support.

HOW WILL WE ENSURE THAT YEAR 1 CHILDREN COPE WITH THE TRANSITION INTO A MORE FORMAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT?

The EYFS and Year 1/2 teachers have been working closely together to ensure that EYFS children are well prepared for the formalities of a KS1 classroom. The transition from Foundation Stage Two to Year 1 will be managed particularly carefully for those pupils who have not achieved a good level of development by the end of Foundation Stage.

HOW WILL WE CREATE THE NEW CLASSES?

We will consider a number of factors when creating classes for next year. In order to ensure equity of provision for all children, we will be creating a mixed Y1/2 class in KS1 and 3 mixed KS2 classes. In doing this we will consider pre-existing friendship groups, the current attainment of children and any other social or emotional concerns. Where possible, family members will not be placed together. This will be done in close liaison with class teachers, who have a strong understanding of how different groups of children work together.