

At Lobley Hill Primary School we aim to 'Be the Best We Can Be' through being curious, adventurous and respectful in order to achieve personal excellence.



10 June 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you all enjoyed the half term break and celebrated the platinum jubilee with your family and friends. It's hard to believe that we are in our final half term of the year. It has been a challenging year in many respects, but we are exceptionally proud of all of our children and how they coped with the challenges they have faced returning to school full time. It has been fantastic to have a full school year with our children again with a school full of laughter and learning. We have been thrilled to be able to welcome parents/carers back into school and many of you joined us for parental consultations, school visits, or to join Reception children in forest school. We look forward to seeing many of you at Sports Day later on in the term.

As we start to think about September, we continue to provide quality education and opportunities for all our children by ensuring our mission statement is at the forefront of all we do.

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The following staff changes will take place across school:

- Mrs Warriner (who is currently on maternity leave) will return on a part time basis – 3 days
- Mrs Warren (who is currently on maternity leave) will return on a part time basis – 4 days
- Miss Collins (currently working in Nursery) will leave at the end of the summer term and take up a new post at Caedmon Primary School
- Mr Wilson (currently working in Year 5) will leave at the end of the summer term to work closer to home

We have also had to make some changes to class arrangements for children moving into Year 1 and Year 2 in September 2022 – due to pupil numbers and increasing pressures on our school budget we have decided to introduce mixed aged classes. This means that instead of having two Year 1 classes and two Year 2 classes, we will have 3 classes, each with a mix of Year 1 and Year 2 children. Mixed age classes is something we have had before here at Lobley Hill in Key Stage 2 and it has worked very successfully. The staff we have placed in these mixed classes next year have been carefully chosen to support the children with this transition – through knowing the children very well and having experience working in Year 1 and Year 2. This is not a decision we have taken lightly, it has been made following discussions with Governors, taking advice from the Local Authority and we feel that it is the best option to allow us to continue to provide high quality education for all of our children in key stage one.

Having a mixed age class will enable us to:

- Have a class-based teaching assistant in each class full time

- Provide quality education for all children throughout school
- Provide well-resourced additional help and support for children with special educational needs
- Build our rich and balanced curriculum over a two-year cycle, allowing children to continue to experience a wide range of exciting learning opportunities
- Strategically plan and allocate resources across school to address the needs of all children as individuals and in groups

We appreciate that moving to a mixed age structure in Year 1/2 will pose a lot of questions for many of you – so have included a ‘frequently asked questions’ (FAQ) with this letter. If you have specific questions in regards to your child, please contact a member of our senior leadership team or you are welcome to come and speak to us face to face at a meeting to be held on Wednesday 15th June at 5.00pm when we will be available to answer any questions.

Mrs James (Headteacher) johannajames@lobleyhillprimary.org.uk

Mrs Wood-Williams (Deputy Headteacher EYFS/KS1) LornaWilliams@lobleyhillprimary.org.uk

Our staffing structure is shared in the table below, but you will find out who your child’s class teacher will be when you receive their record of achievement.

Year Group	Teachers	Teaching Assistants
Nur	Miss Cook	Mrs Fisher Mrs Eskikaya
Rec	Miss Martin Mrs Ellis/Mrs Wood-Williams	Miss Watson Mrs Taylor Mrs Ampleford Mrs Patterson
1/2	Miss Glendenning Miss Smith Mrs Warriner/Mrs Gray	Mrs Rutherford Miss Stanners Miss Tate Ms Bambro
3/4	Miss Pattison Miss Collins Mrs Armstrong	Mrs Harris Miss McKenna Miss Lubanska
5	Miss Thubron Miss McCumiskey	Miss Elliott
6	Mrs Warren/Mr Beattie Miss Stephenson	Mrs Reynolds Mrs Shepherdson

Kind regards

Johanna James

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Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions About Mixed Aged Classes

Why is there a need for mixed aged classes?

The government funds schools according to pupil numbers. Our published admission number (PAN) is 60 which creates a 2 form entry school. A fall in our roll, which unfortunately is a national picture at the moment, alongside increasing pressure on our school budget means that school is no longer in a position to financially support a 2 form entry in all year groups. We considered a range of options with our governing body and balanced these against factors such as class size limits with early years and key stage 1 and the challenges of teaching across two key stages and decided the best option was to combine Years 1 and 2 from September 2022 and to continue with mixed classes in Year 3 and 4.

How will two year groups be taught alongside each other in one classroom?

All children develop at different rates and this is the case within a class of children the same age – all classes in school have a wide range of abilities, maturity and needs regardless of the age of the children. Teachers will plan and deliver work appropriate to the developmental stage at which the children are working ensuring that their individual needs are catered for. Groupings within class are already flexible allowing children of differing abilities to be access differentiated work and tasks according to their individual strengths and needs. Challenge is offered for those who need it and further support for those who require it.

How will teachers plan ensuring coverage of both year group curriculums?

For our foundation subjects, e.g., Geography and History, curriculum content isn't split into year groups – there is an end of key stage expectation therefore enabling us to develop a two-year cycle ensuring content is not repeated unless it needs to be built upon. For English and Maths, the majority of the curriculum will be taught in separate year groups to enable coverage of the different objectives. Our Maths and English subject leaders will publish a video on our website over the next few weeks with additional information.

How will we ensure the highest academic expectations for all children?

Achieving the highest academic outcomes for our children has always been a priority for us and this will not change. A mixed age classroom means that children will have greater flexibility to learn with children of their own developmental stage. Children who find aspects of the curriculum challenging will continue to be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes and those who are working above the expected standard will be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them on to explore new concepts and have further opportunities to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills.

How will we ensure that children cope socially and emotionally with the changes in their current class structures?

Having had mixed aged classes at Lobley Hill has given us the experience and confidence to know that children thrive in these classes. They learn to form wider friendships, relate to broader groups of children and become very confident individuals working in an environment where they are confident to seek support from their peers and older peers. We will monitor individual children very carefully for any signs that they are finding the change difficult to cope with and implement strategies from our Thrive programme linked to friendships and coping with change for all children in the first instance to support the move into their new classes. Additional transition activities will be in place for children in these year groups to enable them to get to know their new classmates before the summer holidays.

How will we create the new class structures ensuring all children still remain within friendship groups?

We will consider a number of factors when creating the new classes such as pre-existing friendship groups and social groups, current attainment of the children together with social and emotional concerns. We feel this will give the children an opportunity to not only develop new friendships and social groups but build confidence and resilience too. Current class teachers and teaching assistants will be heavily involved in creating the new classes as they know the children best.

How will mixed age classes support my child's transition from EYFS to KS1?

Our curriculum in Year 1/2 will ensure Reception children have a smooth transition into Key Stage One. As you know, children in Reception learn through child-initiated learning opportunities and adult led group times. This approach continues into Year 1/2 where their day will combine child-initiated learning; small group led by an adult; whole class teaching and one to one support. This approach has been successful for previous year groups transitioning into KS1 and is supportive of child development needs for Year 2 age children.

How will you manage statutory testing (SATs and Phonics Screening) across both year groups?

Children in both years 1 and 2 are subject to statutory testing, with year 1 children undertaking the Phonics Screening Check and year 2 children undertaking SATs. We are committed to achieving the best possible standards for our children without teaching to a test or for a test. Year 1 children will be prepared for phonics screening in the same way as they would be every year with high quality phonics teaching enabling the children to confidently decode when the time comes for the assessment. Likewise, year 2 children will be taught the year 2 curriculum and exposed to SATs preparation throughout the year as part of their usual classroom practice.

Will my child be held back in anyway in a mixed age class?

Definitely not! The different ways in which teaching and learning is structured and organised in primary schools means that it can be tailored to meet the needs and attainment levels of the children within the class, regardless of their age. Our teaching staff are very experienced at meeting the needs

of the children, providing challenge for those who need it and support for those who require more help.

Why is this situation different in my child's school that that in other schools?

Many primary schools in Gateshead have mixed age classes and there is no evidence to suggest that it has any detrimental effect on the education of the children in the class. The situation in schools is constantly changing and decisions (sometimes difficult ones) have to be made based on the current situation.

What are the benefits to this arrangements?

Children benefit in many ways in mixed age classes – from having the opportunity to become an 'expert' for the younger children and a positive role model for them to aspire to, to having the opportunity to develop new friendship and social groups – widening their social circle, building confidence, co-operation and resilience. It nurtures thinking and problem solving skills, vocabulary and social competences. Children can become more likely to co-operate than compete often generating a family of learners who are there to support each other, therefore raising individual self esteem.