

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

Due to pupil numbers and increasing pressures on our school budget we will continue to have mixed aged classes in Year 3/4. This means that instead of having two Year 3 classes and two Year 4 classes, we will have 3 classes, each with a mix of Year 3 and Year 4 children. This is something that has been very successful this year and the children in Year 3/4 have thrived and made excellent progress both socially, emotionally and academically. The staffing will remain the same to ensure to a consistent approach and that the curriculum is delivered by staff who are familiar with working in mixed age classes.

The children currently in year 2 will be separated into 3 groups – these groups will be carefully considered by the staff currently working in year 2 – these staff know the children best and know who works well together and who socialises well together. Each of the three groups will ensure there is a mix of ability, gender and social groups. These groups will then join the three groups of current year 3 children to form the new 3/4 year classes for September 2022.

Our current year 3 children have had a very successful year and thrived in their mixed age class – they have grown in confidence (socially and emotionally) and their progress has been a pleasure to watch over the year. We are confident that they will welcome the new year 3 children and form new friendships throughout the Autumn term.

Having a mixed age class will enable us to:

- 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 3/4 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 on Wednesday 15th June at 5.30pm 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

Mr Beattie (Deputy Headteacher KS2) Andrewbeattie@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

Johanna James
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 3 and 4 from September 2021. This is to be continued from September 2022.

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 standard 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, the curricula with the two year groups are completely aligned with the majority of objectives being matched with similar objectives but greater challenge for the older year group. For Maths, the children will revert to their single year groups as the objectives in Maths can be taught more effectively, allowing greater consolidation in Year 3 and opportunity to teacher further, more complex strategies in Year 4. 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 standard. 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 class mates 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.

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.

Do mixed age classes have fewer pupils in them?

This may be the case in small settings or where the needs of the children dictate this, however the maximum size of any infant (KS1) class is 30, while in KS2 there is more flexibility around this.

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.