



22 June 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

At Stannington First School, we make a decision in the Summer term of each academic year as to one of the following options:

- Leave all the classes and teaching staff as they are and transfer children to the next year group
- Leave the classes as they are, move teaching staff to a different year group and transfer children to the next year group
- Rearrange the classes and staffing prior to children transferring up to the next year group

From September 2018, we have decided to reorganise our class structure and the new structure will be as follows:

<b>Class</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Support</b>
Nursery	Miss Crispin	Mrs A Brown (Mrs B)
Reception	Mrs Davis	Ms Strachan & Ms Westgarth
Year 1	Mrs Bolam & Mrs Wakeling <i>(Mrs Bolam will be returning from maternity leave prior to the start of the new academic year. Mrs Wakeling will return in the Spring term 2019. Until Mrs Wakeling returns, Mrs Bolam will work alongside Mrs Redman in Year 1)</i>	Mrs H Brown
Years 2 and 3	Miss Leybourne	Mrs Clayton
Years 3 and 4	Mr Tunesi	Mrs Clayton
Breakfast/After School Club	Mrs Hancock & Mrs Butters	

As part of this restructure, Mrs Horsburgh will be taking voluntary redundancy and leaving at the end of the academic year. She has been an asset to the school for 9 fantastic years and we are sure you will join us in wishing her the very best of luck. Mrs Hancock is also taking voluntary redundancy from her Teaching Assistant post but will continue in her breakfast and after school club roles.

#### **Rationale for reorganisation**

Without reorganisation, from September 2018, our Year 3 and 4 class would have 40 pupils. We do not feel that this is the best class organisation to benefit our pupils educationally. A re-organisation to make two classes; mixed Years 2/3 and mixed Years 3/4 will reduce this class size and ensure all of our pupils have the best learning opportunities.

This is a strategic organisational issue for the school, informed by the professional judgement of the headteacher, staff and governing body. It is not considered an issue for wider consultation as in these circumstances there is no universal agreement from parents.

Prior to September 2018, we are also developing our school curriculum. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 staff will continue to work closely and they will plan their activities around the same theme, carefully differentiated to ensure all our pupils make good progress.

Years 2, 3 and 4 will also work closely together and again, activities will be planned around the same theme but differentiated to match the needs of our pupils. Children in Year 3 will be given plenty of opportunities to maintain contact with their peers and work together. All of the Year 3 and 4 children will continue to go swimming on Friday afternoons.

As part of the reorganisation, some classes will also change classroom:

Nursery will re-locate into the main building, into our current Year 1 classroom. There will be new infant toilet cubicles and a new, enclosed outdoor play area installed prior to the start of the new academic year. In addition, the fencing to the front of the school will be replaced.

Reception will remain in the same classroom. Having both our Early Years classes in the same building will ensure that they can work closely together, sharing resources and staff.

Year 1 will relocate to the cedar classroom – currently year 2

Year 2/3 will relocate to the existing nursery, which will ensure they have plenty of space. This building will be decorated prior to the start of the new academic year and we have new tables and chairs to match those in our current 3/4 classroom. We have already installed a new interactive whiteboard/projector in this building.

Year 3/4 will remain in the same classroom.

<b>For the academic year 2018-2019 the Year 3 class will be divided as follows:</b>	
<b>Year 2/3 class</b>	<i><b>Year 3 children with birthdays between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August</b></i>
<b>Year 3/4 class</b>	<i><b>Year 3 children with birthdays between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 28<sup>th</sup> February</b></i>

### **Mixed age classes and split year groups – information for parents**

#### **What is a mixed age and split year group class?**

A mixed age class is defined to be a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group of the primary school.

#### **Why are mixed age and split year group classes formed?**

Mixed age classes are formed in most schools partly because of the way in which the pupil roll is configured in any given year (i.e. – the numbers of pupils in each year group). It is not uncommon for this situation to change from year to year; as the sizes of year groups can vary as has been the case at Stannington First School. The annual intake of children or Published Admissions Number (PAN) at Stannington First School is 20 children and with 5 year groups (excluding nursery) and with 4 designated classrooms, this means that children are organised into 4 classes. One factor that influences these class sizes is that EYFS and KS1 children should only be registered and taught in groups of 30 or less children. Physical classroom space is also a consideration.

#### **Will my child be held back if she/he is placed in a mixed-age or split year group class?**

No.

The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in our First School means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The Staff at Stannington First School are very experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of our pupils. They provide challenge for the more able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in this is required whether the pupils are in a mixed class or not.

Much work in our school is already undertaken in small groups that contain children from 1 or 2 year groups or those of similar existing achievement levels. Furthermore, the school plans the educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways which ensure good progression and continuity, whichever year group or class they are in.

#### **Why is the situation different in Stannington First School from that in other Morpeth schools?**

Different situations pertain in all schools. Other schools in the Morpeth area have less than 100 pupils or between 100 and 150 and may therefore arrange groups in 3, 4 or 5 classes.

Each of these schools will generally form one or several mixed age classes. In none of these schools is the formation of mixed age classes an issue or a concern. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect whatsoever on the education of children in that class.

#### **I am concerned that forming a mixed age or split year group class may mean that my child's friendship grouping is being broken up.**

Although care is taken in allocating pupils to classes, their social needs are not ignored, in general terms it is likely to be good for children to experience classes with different classmates so that their circle of friends and acquaintances can be extended beyond the traditional age boundaries.

Where new classes are formed, opportunities are created beyond our standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes (such as at lunchtimes, playtimes, special activities, trips, school performances). When children transfer to Middle School, new friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life, and this situation is generally welcomed by many children.

**What are the benefits to the arrangements?**

Children benefit in many ways from the opportunity to become an 'expert' for the younger children and a positive role model which the younger children often aspire to. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. The children may have continued learning with the same teacher and this provides an opportunity for the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of a child's needs and strengths and is therefore in a stronger position to better support the child's learning.

In turn, the child knows their teacher well, understands the expectations they have and can build upon a level of trust that encourages them to 'have a go' or try something new.

**If a mixed age or split year group class is formed, how are decisions taken about which children should be allocated to which class?**

Experience has shown at Stannington First that we must take a number of influences into consideration and make a professional judgment based on this.

Split year groups are considered very carefully, depending on each cohort of children. These include (and are in no particular order of preference):

- social learning group
- emotional development
- readiness to learn
- stage of learning
- gender and age (balance of class and year group)
- additional needs

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the headteacher and class teachers when making a decision.

Parents are informed about the new organisation and opportunities are made available for any family wishing to discuss their child's learning. However, it is the headteacher who makes the final allocation based on their professional judgement of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.

If you have any questions about the reorganisation, I will be available during both parent consultation evenings next week, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June and Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Palmer  
Headteacher