



Kingswear Primary School,
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Dear Parents/ carers

Thank you to those of you who have asked questions and who were able to attend the meeting last night about the changes in the class structure at Kingswear for next year. This e-mail is intended to highlight some of the questions raised for those who were not able to attend and hopefully set out clearly where the school will develop moving forward. If anything has been missed out or there are questions which you still have please do arrange to see myself or Ms Simnett or simply e-mail them to parent@kingswearprimary.org.uk and we will add them to these questions and answers below.

Will the school be closing? No not at this point, Kingswear's situation leaves it particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in pupil numbers and it has in the past had to reduce down to two classes because of this. The school has a budget set next year and for the subsequent two years which show the school as being financially healthy and sustainable. This is of course completely dependent on the pupil numbers. It is very difficult to forecast numbers moving forward as the number of pupils within the school's catchment area is very low and we draw many from out of the area. We of course want to maintain and increase pupil numbers, the biggest factor of which is you as parents supporting the school.

How will staff be supported to meet the needs of pupils in such a wide range of ages in the class?

Teaching pupils of a range of ages is challenging but will be done through careful planning by the class teachers to ensure each child has the differentiated curriculum they need. Our teachers at Kingswear work very closely with colleagues across a number of other schools to enable them to share ideas and support one another. This helps with planning for a variety of ages and abilities.

How many adults will there be in each class?

In the details of the letter below it shows the organisation of the class teachers, we map the provision for the pupils and deploy the adults accordingly this will roughly equate to three adults in each class with the class teacher and two support staff. As well as myself, Ms Simnett and Mr Sullivan this will equate to a very low pupil to adult ratio which enables us to continue to support pupils in the caring and nurturing environment they are used to.

This has been communicated very poorly, how will the school ensure that communication is better and more effective in the future?

Having listened to the feedback on this matter there has been poor communication around the changes for which I apologise. We will review how this happens in the future and ask you as parents what the best way is moving forward. Initially we will be putting communications such as this out via e-mail and onto the school website to avoid paper letters becoming lost in school bags. Please can you make sure the school

has the most up to date e-mail address for you so you can be reassured they will get to you. Looking forward to the next year and beyond we will be looking at effective ways of communicating what the children are learning in the curriculum for their classes too.

How are these changes going to be communicated to the children?

Over the coming half term we will be working with the children to gather their thoughts and opinions about the best way to organise the school; this will feed into the development of the school vision and values which we will be seeking your opinions on. We will look to hold further question and answer sessions around these plans and hope the children will be able to present their ideas for the organisation of the school to you as well. The dates for these will follow.

We joined the multi-academy trust to benefit from it, it seems like this is not the case and the school is suffering?

The school benefits hugely from being part of a multi-academy trust with the support networks in place and the shared services. All schools are facing financial cuts and therefore needing to make difficult decisions as explained earlier and in the initial letter; this is exacerbated at Kingswear because of the small numbers of pupils but it certainly is not an isolated case. I am seeking to arrange a date when the CEO and Director of the trust would be available to answer questions about the Multi Academy Trust as a whole. We will let you know a date in due course.

What can we do as parents to support the school?

The biggest advocates a school can have is its parent community, you provide the voice beyond the school gate. Kingswear is a good school which is nurturing and supportive in its approach, there are wonderful teachers and support staff who go above and beyond to support all the pupils in their care providing them the great foundations they need to move on to secondary school. If these positive messages get out the school will thrive. On the other hand negative elements on social media can be extremely detrimental to a school, we have no control over this but we would urge everyone to think carefully when posting/ reading or sharing negative comments as it is ultimately the education of the children at Kingswear which is at stake. There are avenues for expressing concerns through the parent e-mail and talking to staff and we urge you to use this.

As mentioned in the outset if you have any additional questions please do e-mail them in to parent@kingswearprimary.org.uk or alternatively please arrange a meeting through the school office or staff at the beginning or the end of the day. We all want Kingswear to be a success and look forward to working with you to ensure this is the case.

Many thanks
Paul Girardot



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2019/20 Class organisation

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you will be all too aware, from news reports over a number of years now, schools funding had been reducing in real terms because of a number of factors. At Kingswear school with our relatively small number of pupils and this leaves us particularly vulnerable to financial cuts. Next year the school will have moved from 3 classes to 2, with the Pre-school/ Nursery for pupils aged 2-4 being located at Dartmouth Academy. We are completely committed to maintaining the high standards of education at Kingswear and the frequently asked questions below should help answer any concerns you may have. We have been lucky with our staffing arrangements as Miss Risby our SENCo will be starting maternity leave in October and Ms Simnett will be taking on the role as SENCO from September, this means that despite not being a class teacher at Kingswear she will still be heavily involved with the school. Mrs Wyatt and Ms Seabrook will be the fulltime class teachers for both classes. The rest of the staffing for the school will remain the same.

The class structure for 19/20 will be as follows:

Class Name	Year groups	Class teacher/s
Dolphins	Year 4/5/6	Mrs Wyatt
Orcas	Year R/1/2/3	Miss Seabrook

We are all looking forward to the year ahead and are happy to answer any questions you may have beyond those explained below.

Best wishes
Paul Girardot
Head Teacher - Kingswear

Frequently asked questions



Mixed age classes

Parents often have questions about mixed age classes. We believe that there are great advantages in having this organisation and we hope this guide will answer them. Teaching a mixture of ages, year groups and abilities in one class is very common. All local education authorities in England have schools operating mixed-age classes and according to the DfE, the number of schools taking this approach is rising.

Why do schools have mixed age classes?

This is simply the result of school size. There are 7 year groups that children have to go through in primary school and there need to be 27-30 children in each class to make the school financially viable. The government funds schools according to pupil numbers. This effectively means that only schools with 210, 420 or 630 pupils will have single age classes. Kingswear has on average 7 pupils in each year group; this equals approx. 49 pupils and therefore mixed age group classes and a two class structure are unavoidable.

How can you teach multiple year groups in the same classroom?

All children develop in maturity at different rates. It isn't automatic that the youngest child will be the least mature and the oldest child the most mature. We teach children to their individual needs (maturity and ability) not their age. All classes have a large range of abilities; teachers are used to dealing with different abilities. They never teach the same level of work to every child. They make sure that each child has the correct level of work irrespective of age. Two year groups merely extend this range a little. We teach children at THEIR level not at an age related level. For example in a lesson on grammar and punctuation all the children will learn to be able to use a comma in a list; most will be able to use a comma to separate clauses and some will use a semi colon. Or in addition all the children will learn to add two numbers together; most will use 2 digit numbers, some will use 3 digit numbers. This is called differentiation and is something that teachers learn during their training because differentiation is needed in every lesson, even in a single age group class. The children may all start the lesson together however the teacher will be asking questions for children at all abilities. Not a single minute of learning time can be wasted for anyone regardless of their ability.

Don't the children end up repeating things?

No. They will of course return to particular aspects of the curriculum repeatedly such as fractions or shape but these are visited multiple times during the year anyway. Topic areas such as Tudors or People who help us are used on a cycle that is at least over three years. If a child studies the Victorians one year, they won't do it again the next.

Do mixed age classes require more careful planning by teachers?

Teachers plan a rolling programme which ensures that children learn new topics each year. The curriculum is also arranged across the same periods of time so it is simpler to have the mixed age classes rather than straight age classes. A further advantage is that teachers work in teams across schools in the trust to plan so they are better placed to update and refresh plans each year rather than just rolling out old plans year after year.

Do the children suffer academically?

None of our data or national data suggests there is any negative impact on children due to mixed age classes. At individual school level this is borne out by LA and Ofsted inspection. A mixed age classroom means that children have greater flexibility to learn with children of their own abilities. They can either be challenged if more capable or avoid the stigma of "failure" if they fall slightly behind other year-group peer. Studies have shown that children can develop academically and socially through interacting with older and younger children. One important fact to have

emerged is that children benefit greatly from the opportunity to become an 'expert' for younger children to learn from. Younger children look to the older ones to teach them, and older children view the younger ones as in need of teaching and support. Educationalists have argued that this can nurture thinking skills, problem solving skills, vocabulary and other social competencies.

Do children suffer emotionally?

Quite the reverse. We see children learn to form wider friendships and to relate to broader groups of other children. It also allows the younger children to experience being one of the older children in a class. The mixed age group environment creates an atmosphere where children learn to help and be helped by other children, because they interact consistently with children whose age and abilities are varied. Children gain an appreciation for their achievement and the accomplishments of others, and are naturally challenged by the achievements of others. Mixed age group classes reflect life outside of school as a child and adult more realistically; we are friends with someone because we like them and want to spend time with them, not because they are the same age as us.