

Cornerstone Church of England (VA) Primary School

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Mr T Clarke Headteacher



*Building our Community with Love, Forgiveness and Hope
Growing an Inspirational Learning Community*

20 May 2021

Question & Answer: Relocation and New Cornerstone plans

1. Is the plan to split existing classes into mixed age classes?

Yes, the plan will be for all children within the two year groups to be split. So, for example, if the needs of local families meant there were too many Year 1 and Year 2 children for the two classes we currently have: Hampshire Education Team would ask us to open a new mixed Year 1 / Year 2 class.

Therefore, all the current children who would be in Year 1 and Year 2 would be mixed and organised into 3 classes. New children would then also be organised into one of those 3 classes. This would be far more inclusive for new children and families, rather than being a separate class on their own. It would also enable 3 teachers to plan the curriculum and lessons together.

2. How will you ensure the quality of teaching is maintained and the needs of all children are provided for?

We will continue with the wide range of monitoring and professional development activities we already undertake.

The Senior Leadership Team, English Leader and Maths Leaders separately undertake termly monitoring (which includes: planning monitoring, Book Looks and Learning Walks). Feedback from these activities are shared and discussed with staff, and inform future CPD.

Every teacher meets with Mr Clarke four times a year for Pupil Achievement Meetings, where the attainment and progress of all children in Reading, writing and maths is scrutinised and discussed. Mr Clarke also undertakes internal moderation prior to these meetings.

Also, because we are reorganising the school's structure into 4 phase groups (Year R; Year 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; Years 5 and 6) each with a Phase Leader: there will be greater opportunities for team planning, assessment and moderation. The Phase Leaders will also be carefully monitoring the quality of teaching and standards within their phase.

We work closely with a local cluster of schools, and hope to restart termly face to face moderation between teachers at these schools.

The governors undertake a wide range of monitoring visits. These include class visits, discussions with pupils and staff and meetings with a range of leaders.

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Mr Clarke produces a termly report for the Full Governing Body on the standards of teaching and learning and children's outcomes.

Every year we receive a monitoring visit from our Hampshire Leadership and Learning Partner who evaluates the work of the school and the standards.

Even in single age classes, there is a wide range of attainment / where children are on their learning journeys. This is why staff's use of assessment is so important to understand where children are on their journey for different aspects of different subjects and to plan and teach accordingly. There will always be a flexible balance of support and challenge for individuals and groups of children along their learning journey.

We have done a great deal of work to develop and embed a balanced approach of:

- regular, deliberate and varied practice to develop mastery of knowledge, skills and understanding
- with, opportunities to extend and challenge through deepening thinking and understanding and wider application of learning

Therefore, although there is a range of attainment in mixed aged classes, it is usually only slightly more than in single age classes.

3. Can you give examples of other schools where there are mixed aged classes?

Some schools in Hampshire have PANs (Pupil Admission Numbers) of 15 or 45, which means that they always have mixed aged classes. Some very small schools in England can have 3, or 4 year groups, in mixed aged classes.

Schools and Hampshire work hard to try and ensure that all classes are full or nearly full to ensure that public finances are spent efficiently and appropriately. Hampshire are given a set budget annually from central government to fund all aspects of education for all children in Hampshire. Each time they ask us to open a new class they have to provide a minimum guaranteed funding for 20 pupils, which just about covers the cost of a teacher.

However, if we were to have 5 new children wanting to start in Year 5, and 5 new children wanting to start in Year 6, they would not be doing their duty with taxpayers' money to provide us with funding for 20 children for a Year 5 class and a further funding for 20 for a Year 6. In essence this would be removing funding for 30 children from the overall budget for all Hampshire schools.

4. In relation to mixed year classes, how will the curriculum work?

As a school we have spent time planning and preparing to ensure curriculum coherence and progression.

For example, let's consider Years 3 and 4. During next school year (2021-2022) both classes will experience the Lower Key Stage 2 English National Curriculum (which has the same objectives for Years 3 and 4). They will also all follow the school's current Year 4 curriculum in all the Foundation subjects (not English and Maths), parts of which link to our Lower Key Stage 2 English curriculum. In maths where the Year 3 and Year 4 curriculums have different objectives there will be more variety, but staff will plan carefully that all children are working on the same aspect of maths (e.g., multiplication or 3D shapes) but with varied objectives.

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The following school year 2022-2023, the Years 3 and 4 classes will experience the Lower Key Stage 2 English National Curriculum and Year 3 Foundation Subjects. This will ensure there is not a repetition of learning for the children. The maths planning will continue as in 2021-2022.

We recognise the child development differences may be wider in a mixed Year 1 / Year 2 class, however as mentioned above there is always a range of attainment, interests and skills in a class of children, whether single or mixed age groups. Our role as staff is always to continue to balance the needs of children with the needs of the National Curriculum in order to ensure the most positive learning experiences and long-term progress as possible.

We will be following this Curriculum model whether the classes are single or mixed age groups, which will minimise any disruption when class structures have to change at any time in the future. As mentioned in the letter this provides staff with greater opportunities for collaborative planning and teaching.

5. How will the classes be determined?

The teachers who have worked with the children for the previous year will consider a range of factors. These will include ensuring that all children have at least one other child that they know well and we have seen them playing with as friends during the year. We will also ensure a balance of boys and girls, and range of prior attainment. We will also consider enabling children who have struggled to get on with each other over a long period of time to have a year or years in separate classes. Because of the way we predict we are likely to grow, the children will always have a group (approximately a third in the first instance) of their current class with them in their new class. Each year we will share with the children and yourselves which class they will be in at the same time as we let you know who will be their class teacher. We will also continue to have a 'New Teacher' afternoon in July so the children can meet their new teacher.

6. Will this happen from September 2021?

This will be a difficult question to give a definitive answer to each year, as it is dependent on the number of families requesting places for their children, and this number can change each week. As stated in the original letter we will always inform families of the plans before the end of each summer term, when we let families know which class their child will be in and who their teacher will be.

Currently (as of 20 May 2021) we have not been asked by Hampshire's Education Team to open any new classes which would require mixed age classes from September 2021. We have however been asked to open a second Year R class from September 2021.

The School's Leadership Team and the Governing Body have made it clear to Hampshire's Education Team that they do not wish to be in a position of opening new classes during the middle of the school year. However, with the uncertainties which come from predicting house occupation, number of local places, Hampshire have been unable to guarantee that they won't be requesting this at some point in the future.

7. Is there any update on the path situation from Dumas Drive?

We have received assurances that this work will take place before the school open on the new site in September 2021. Originally, we were informed the work would take place in May 2021, but have recently received the update that it will take place in July 2021. Please be aware that this is not a

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situation we have any direct influence on, but we continue to raise the question on behalf of the school community.

8. Transitioning to the new school is going to be a big step for the majority of the children, and especially for those that don't deal with change very well.

We recognise that the relocation will be a big change for the children. This is why in our Pupil Voice Groups this half-term we have shared and discussed plans and the layout of the new building and site. We have also taken the children on a virtual tour through a Minecraft model version of the school.

We have shared photos, videos and an interactive map on our website for families to become more familiar with the new building / site.

We also plan to produce a video 'Social Story', as we did for when the children returned after the first Lockdown. We plan to share this towards the end of August, as we obviously need to film inside the new building when it has been set up with all the furniture.

We will also be making sure that the children's new classrooms are clearly signposted for them during the first week, and take them on tours of the building and site during the first week.

9. Will there be Breakfast and After School clubs available?

Time Out will continue to provide their current service for families from 7.30am to 6pm on the new site from September 2021

10. What will happen to the children's learning during the last 2 weeks of this term?

The children will still be having lessons and will be continuing their learning during the last two weeks. However, staff will balance this with spending some of the time packing and organising resources, which they would also be doing in usual school years if they were changing classrooms: and also, with the usual range of end of year celebratory activities.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Clarke
Headteacher

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