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Interim Headteacher: Mr G Mottram

Chair of Governors: Kevin Moyes



# St Michael's CE Primary School

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**Cultivating Respect, Persevering, and Learning with Courage**

9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Volunteers and Members of the Community,

I hope that you are managing well during these very challenging times. I am personally enjoying the challenge of home school and trying to work at the same time and it is great to see that the school leadership's Coronavirus preparedness plans are working well in ensuring that our pupils continue to receive a good education.

I have now received a resignation from Paul Atkins, which I have accepted. Paul will leave us at the end of April 2020 and I have wished him well. On behalf of the governors, I would like to thank Paul for his commitment to the school, for leading us through a successful Ofsted inspection, and for having the interests of the children at the heart of all he did.

Governors will meet (virtually) for their next meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 where we will discuss next steps with regards to the Headteacher recruitment – ensuring that we are weighing up the need to appoint a substantive Headteacher with the need to provide leadership stability to the school. Mr Mottram, Mrs Sellers and Mrs Leyshon-Brady have all agreed they can stay with us until December 2020 if that would be needed which is great news. We will share more with you on this following our meeting. At this meeting, we will receive a report on the current pupil data, how the remote learning is working and approve our 3-year budget.

As I am sure, you are aware even though we have received some new pupils our school roll is still significantly below our capacity and although we have plans and aspirations that this will significantly increase over the coming years, we need to make decisions now, which will ensure the long-term sustainability of our school. The school leadership team, in consultation with staff, has been reviewing the various options and proposed a new class structure from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, which governors are due to review and approve at their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Even though I was not here at the time, I am acutely aware from my discussions with many of you that the way this was managed last time caused much upset and anxiety and hence I am sharing this with you now.

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Details of the new class structures from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 are as follows (staff names will be released in Term 5):

<b>Class</b>	<b>Pupil Numbers</b>
<b>Nursery</b>	Unknown at this point
<b>Reception</b>	28
<b>Year 1</b>	30
<b>Year2/3</b>	16 in Year 2 12 in year 3
<b>Year3/4</b>	10 in year 3 14 in Year 4
<b>Year 5</b>	29
<b>Year 6</b>	18

Due to the complex considerations, I am afraid we cannot confirm the staff names for each class at this point. Mr Mottram is discussing this with all staff now and we will communicate this to you nearer the time once all agreed. I appreciate that change can be daunting and I am sure you will have questions you would like to ask. I would like to re-assure you that the school leadership will plan this change carefully to ensure minimal impact on children and governors will oversee and monitor this work and the implementation which will include governors talking to parents and pupils to gain feedback on how it is going etc. I have managed a similar change at my other school and it is working very well, my own children have also both been pupils in mixed aged classes and as a parent, I did not see any particular issues for them. There are positive aspects of mixed classes given that the year group a pupil is in does not always reflect the stage they are working at – more information on mixed classes can be found below. Do please read this. Following the meeting on 30th April 2020, Mr Mottram and I will organise virtual meetings with parents who would like to discuss this further so we can answer any of your questions. More information will follow on this.

The school has also been working hard to update and refresh the school website and so please do review the information on here including the [governor webpage](#) which includes governor photos and biographies, previous minutes, governor communications and all key governor documents – this helps to ensure that there is full transparency on the work of governors.

I am also sad to confirm that Alice Boon has now stepped down from her position, as Governor this is because with recent events nationally her hours have become even longer and she need to focus on leading schools in Reading including advising their Governing bodies. As a result, she will not be able to commit the time and focus needed to our school to the board. Governors would like to thank Alice for her hard work over the years she has been with the school and wish her well for the future.

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We all have a common goal to **ensure our school is the very best it can be, that our children are happy, love school, thrive and leave our school as well rounded individuals ready to face the challenges ahead.** As governors, every decision and action we take is driven by the fundamental question **“what is best for the children?”** We are also guided by our school values of **Respect, Perseverance and Courage,** which as role models for the children we must all now live up to and hold each other to account against. We know that it takes a whole community to raise a child and so your help and support remains critical to the success of our school as we continue on our exciting journey together!

If you have any questions about governance, or any questions or comments then please do me directly: [kmoyes3241@st-michaels-pri.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:kmoyes3241@st-michaels-pri.oxon.sch.uk)

As always if you are a parent or carer and have any specific concerns related to your child then you should first discuss these with the class teacher and then if needed the Headteacher. If you are still not satisfied at this point with the outcome, then you can raise it with me and I will ensure it is dealt with fairly and in accordance with the relevant school policies.

Best wishes,



**Kevin Moyes**  
**Chair of Governors**

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## **Mixed age class – Year 2/3 and Year 3/4**

### **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. In most cases, a mixed age class will comprise of pupils from only two year groups. However, it is possible, particularly in smaller schools, where a mixed age class may contain pupils from three or more stages (e.g. EYFS, KS1 & KS2).

### **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 quite dramatically as has been the case for us this year. Financially, classes of fewer than 24 pupils are unsustainable

The annual intake of children (PAN) at St. Michael's is 30 children; with 7 year groups and 7 designated classrooms. This means that children have always been organised into 7 classes. This year, we have only 14 Year 3 children so have made the decision, for the benefit of the children across the whole school, to have 6 classes.

6 Classes allows a number of positive changes to happen within school. Including: being able to employ a more experience member of staff to join our team; to continue to have additional adults within each class, who have been selected to support the individual needs of the classes. We believe maintaining this team will more than adequately provide for all the different needs of the children in this class.

### **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 primary schools means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Most of the staff at St Michael's are experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed age learning and training for staff new to this is already underway. The staff will provide challenge for the more able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in. 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. We have also created links with schools with similar class formats in order to support staff at St Michael's.

### **Why is the situation different in my child's school from that in other schools?**

Different situations pertain in all schools. Many schools in Oxfordshire have less than 100 pupils or between 100 and 150 and may therefore arrange groups in 3 or 4 or 5 classes. Each one of these schools has no choice but to form one or several mixed age classes. In none of these schools is the formation of mixed age classes an issue or a concern, and 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. Being in a class of only 14 children could however have a detrimental effect on a child through the lack of social opportunities.

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**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 the 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 secondary school, new friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life, and feedback we receive from secondary schools implies that our children, having experienced the mixed aged classes throughout KS2, find transition easier than those children who have stayed within the same class throughout their whole primary school experience.

**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. This 'vertical' grouping often nurtures thinking & problem solving skills, vocabulary & social competences. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. The children usually have continued learning with the same teacher (once the cycle is repeated) 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?**

The split this year was based on a combination of ability, behaviour and friendship groups. Some of these factors may have changed over time so we will have a fresh look at this in the summer term.