



**Wedmore First School Academy**

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13<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am aware that the decision to merge the two Year 3 classes was a significant one and has naturally prompted questions. I am writing to provide further information about this change which will hopefully answer many of these questions, this should also give context around the considerations.

The main reason why the classes will become one is that at some point, we need to move to a five class school (Reception up to Year 4) with our pre-school. This is so that we can have single classes per year group without mixed ages. In the meantime, as a Headteacher, I have to work within the budget. Having six classes not five isn't sustainable financially. Since July, the number of children in Year 3 dropped from 38 to 36, by Christmas we expect to have 35 children in the class. In Key Stage 2, Government guidelines state that classes can exceed 30 children – in Owl class, we now have 31. Many small schools locally have classes of this size.

In terms of adult support, the Year 3 class will have Miss Low and Mrs Thorne as well as Miss Pope teaching until Christmas. An advert will go out this week for a job share for the two days Mrs Thorne works, as well as for a full time teaching assistant. This is in addition to the support that is in place for an individual child in the year group – Mrs Samuels and Mrs Huggins currently support this child in and out of the classroom. As experienced members of staff, they also support other children in the year group when this particular child is settled, this is so that we can continue to build independence levels. Merging the classes this term means that children can process one change at a time – firstly, operating as one class, and in the new year, saying goodbye to Miss Pope and Mrs Thorne.

I have worked with Year 3 teachers to consider the transition period and beyond. This week, children will work as one class and also move back into their previous 2 classes to help navigate this change. We have agreed that we will focus on listening to the children's feedback – some things will work, others won't. As well as a worry box and "Can I talk?" cards, we'll be inviting the children to talk to us so that we can help where needed. Miss Pope, Miss Low and Mrs Thorne have developed trusting relationships with the children, we will encourage them to let us know if they have any worries or need help. We know that some children find it difficult to speak up and would appreciate your support here - please let us know if you know your child is struggling with something but hasn't let us know. Beyond this week, the Fox classroom will be utilised for groupwork so that the classroom environment has times throughout the day

where it is less busy for those children who need it. We have arranged furniture in both rooms to facilitate this.

I fully appreciate there will be concerns about how a large class will impact on the outcomes of the children. My priority, as it always has been, is to provide a high quality education for all children. Being in a class of over 30 does not mean that standards will slip. Factors which we know positively impact on educational attainment include quality teaching, high expectations of staff and good relationships between teachers, parents and children. I am confident that, as a school, we focus on these important elements so that all children can fulfil their potential.

Finally, I would like to add that I visited the Year 3 class this morning and spoke to children about how they felt things were going on their first day of being one class. Many said they had felt worried the night before but reported that they were feeling happier now that they had given it a try. Some children said they hadn't been worried and had enjoyed their learning, one child had felt excited about the prospect. Navigating changes can build resilience, this is a value we promote as a school.

There may still be further questions or concerns. If this is the case, please let me know. I understand the scale of this change and hope that that the information I have shared reassures you that this is a carefully considered decision.

Thank you to those parents who have provided feedback and to those who have expressed their support. There have been some really helpful suggestions shared, I'll be looking at these with the Year 3 team to ensure we manage this change in the best way possible.



Mrs Shelley Kent

Headteacher

