



The Federation of West Leigh Infant School and Backwell C of E Junior School



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Executive Headteacher: Mr Nick Webster

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West Leigh Infants Class Structure

Dear Parents

I am writing to inform you of the necessity for us to change the class structure at West Leigh Infants from September 2024.

Significantly reducing pupil numbers both nationally and across North Somerset, aligned with rising costs across all areas of school provision, means that our current model of 6 classes at West Leigh Infants is no longer sustainable.

Based on our current and projected pupil numbers, from September 2024, we will be changing this structure to 5 classes. We will maintain 2 Reception classes and will change to 3 mixed-age Year 1 & 2 classes in KS1. The class structure at Backwell Juniors will remain unchanged for the 24-25 academic year.

What is a mixed-age and split-year group class?

A mixed-age class is defined to be a class in which some children are from more than one year group taught in the same 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 are adapted to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The staff across our Federation are experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed-age learning. We already provide challenge for the more able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in. Some curriculum teaching such as phonics will continue in separate year groups. Furthermore, the school plans the educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways that ensure good progression and continuity, whichever year group or class they are in. All teaching objectives that are currently taught will still be covered, just in a slightly different way and there will be no repetition of curriculum coverage for those pupils moving from Y1 to Y2 next year.

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

As mentioned above, this decision has been taken based on current and projected pupil numbers. Many schools locally are making similar decisions and are reducing their intake numbers to reflect the reducing local demographic. Proposed local housing developments are not confirmed and will take several years to progress if and when they are agreed. Our decision is based on local-authority generated projected pupil numbers and will be constantly reviewed based on any potential future house building or change in the local demographic.

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.

Great care is taken in allocating pupils to classes - their social and emotional needs are of paramount importance. As in other circumstances across our Federation, when we mix classes, we will ensure that pupils and parents are given the opportunity to input on friend choices, etc. 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, and school performances).

What are the benefits of 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 competencies. 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 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.

As always, if you have any specific questions relating to this new structure, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Nick Webster
Head Teacher