

12th July 2023

Dear Families,

We have some important updates regarding Charleton and how we ensure we continue to provide a strong educational experience for your child. We are writing to inform you that, for a period, Charleton will be moving from three classes to two classes.

What is the rationale behind this? Between 2021-22 to 2025-26 Devon and surrounding regions are suffering a significant drop-in birth rate which is creating a surplus of school places – well over 35% in some cases. The Local Authority have provided us with local birth rates, and they are significantly decreased with numbers as low as 1 or 0. There are currently 51 children in the school, this will drop as low as 40 over the next couple of years, due to birth rate reductions.

Schools are funded by the number of pupils; therefore, the funding will reduce significantly and not support a three-class structure.

Why hasn't being part of a School Trust prevented this? We have sustained three classes for a number of years with pupil numbers less than 60 and it is no longer possible; furthermore, it is an issue for all schools and Trusts in Devon and beyond. Schools are seeing unfunded pay increases (hence industrial action), rises in food costs, increase in costs of resources and increased energy bills. As with households, there is less money coming in.

By reducing the school by a class, it means we can continue to:

- Have a Headteacher who only teaches part of a week.
- Continue to invest in the buildings and quality of environment for your child.
- Provide quality learning resources for the children to enhance the curriculum.
- Continue to invest in books, the children love the school library.
- Sustain the number of Support staff.
- Provide quality school meals.
- Sustain regular maintenance work with site supervisor provision e.g. painting, repairs etc
- Invest in technology and equipment.
- Sustain funding high quality professional development for teachers and LSAs so that you have excellent staff teaching your children.

After careful analysis the leadership teams believed that prioritising provision of an excellent offer was paramount.



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FLOURISHING FUTURES



Will this impact on the quality of teaching that my child receives? Four-year groups in a class does not have a negative impact. Our Trust has the privilege of serving rural areas and having a school in a rural community is vital. West Alvington follows this structure, as does Lamerton C of E Academy. We have an incredible amount of expertise in mixed age teaching and our curriculum has been designed to ensure mixed age classes (which make up most of the classrooms in the Trust schools) enhance learning. We do not teach children as single year groups, rather the teachers use their skill to deliver the national curriculum through expert teaching.

Next year our class teachers will be:

Mrs Carter teaching Nursery, Reception, 1 and 2 – Who will be supported by Mrs Sanders who will lead on the Nursery children's provision.

Miss Alen will be teaching Y3-Y6.

Once we get past 2025-26, birth rates begin to look more encouraging, it is our hope that the local birth rates support the increase back to 3 classes. If numbers increase before that, due to migration into the area or local builds, we will of course increase.

Miss Coombe is a specialist in small school education and leads West Alvington which also is two classes. The teachers work together across the hub and are used to leading subjects and areas in this way. Therefore, there is a not a radical rethink of how the curriculum will be delivered.

We will be investing heavily in the early years and KS1 area of the school. We are creating a large learning unit with free-flow access to the large outdoor area which our children up to Y2 will be able to benefit from, this includes new toilets and opening the entire area, creating a significant amount of space for quality learning. Miss Coombe and the team are excited about this new learning space.

In addition to this, we are thrilled to have secured 67K of funding to upgrade the heating and electrics in the school. Supporting our net-zero targets and brining further energy efficiency.

The new Headteacher has not been appointed yet, how will this impact my child? As you know, Mrs Southard was unable to take up the position, so we are advertising for a new Headteacher which we hope to appoint for January. We therefore need to ensure that the children are not impacted whilst we wait for the new Headteacher to take up post.

Therefore, Miss Alen will be stepping into Senior Teacher role. Both Mrs Carter and Miss Alen know the children, parents, community, and the curriculum offer which ensures consistency for the children. Mrs Garside will be supporting 1 day a week.

Miss Alen and the team will also continue as normal by working with Thurlestone and West Alvington and with Miss Coombe. From a parent perspective you would continue to speak to your child's teacher in the first instance and then Miss Alen if required.

Miss Coombe and I appreciate that changes can bring questions and Miss Coombe will be available to talk to you if you have questions about next year.

Charleton is special because of the strong family feel, even though children may be placed in different classrooms, they are one family - this has always been true for Charleton. Every child knows each other, and they work together in lots of ways. This will not change and the specialness of Charleton will remain special.

We continue to value and invest in outdoor education, wider opportunities and time and space for children to come together to develop skills wider than the planned National Curriculum.

We hope that this letter provides you with the necessary information and rationale for how we have addressed the local birth rates issues whilst ensuring we sustain a strong educational offer for your child.

Tracey Cleverly

Tracey Cleverly

Trust Lead

K Coombe

Katie Coombe

Headteacher