



Gooderstone Church of England Primary Academy

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Godbold

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Monday 10th May 2021

Dear Parents,

Thank you to the 8 families who responded to our Nursery questionnaire sent out a few weeks ago. It was very good to capture your thoughts and feelings on the proposal. On the whole the comments were very positive but there were of course concerns about what the school structure would look like. I would like to try and address those concerns now.

Funding: Schools gain their funding per child in the school building, quite simply the fewer children the less money the school has for staff. Village schools are attractive due to small class sizes but this does mean funds are a lot tighter than in larger schools. Currently our numbers look like this for September: Reception: 5 pupils, Year 1: 9 pupils, Year 2: 3 pupils, Year 3: 5 pupils, Year 4: 8 pupils, Year 5: 7 pupils Year 6: 10 pupils.

School closure: Please be assured that there is no talk of Gooderstone closing. We are a good school with enough pupils to remain open so closure is not a concern. However, we currently sit at 49 pupils across the school (this will be 47 in September) and this is where our concern is. 49/47 pupils is effectively two classes, we do not want Gooderstone to shrink to a two class school and in order to safeguard this from happening we need to increase our numbers.

3 year olds in a class with Reception and Year 1: Nursery aged children and Reception follow the same curriculum and complete the Foundation Stage Profile before moving in to year 1. Year 1 acts as a transition year from EYFS to the National curriculum and children still access continuous provision and learn through hands on experiences. This mix of year groups directly benefits year one as it allows focussed support to challenge and extend those who are ready. It also allows those that aren't ready for more formal learning to continue to complete the Foundation Stage Profile whilst giving opportunities for children in Reception and Nursery to access a more challenging curriculum. The current structure in Owls mixes EYFS and the national curriculum and this works very well for the children, the only change would be removing year 2 and replacing it with nursery age children.

Skylarks: If classes were to remain the same there would be 13 children in Skylarks in September, adding Year 2 would take the class size up to 16. I understand there are concerns around having mixed years however there is no difference between that and having a standard class of 30 children. Ability ranges vary massively and many children are working beyond or far below where they should be. Teachers are trained extensively in differentiating learning to meet the needs of all learners. Year 2 is a far more formal year than year 1 and has a statutory assessment at the end. **Support:** It is not unusual in all schools for Teachers to be on their own at periods during the school week. Miss Blakie is now only on her own on a Tuesday, she has support throughout the week in the form of our HLTA Mrs Rudd.

Nursery times: Would run the same hours as the school day. This means that full days will be on offer to allow working parents a full day's care and ease drop offs for those with siblings. Owls' has full time T.A support and a class teacher which would cover the ratio of a nursery class of 10 pupils. Parents are able to choose the days they would like their children to attend. Some days may have more children attending than others.

Temporary measure: We hope that with the opening up of the age range we will grow the numbers coming into the school. In turn, as previously mentioned, the school will receive more funding to increase staffing numbers. This means that we will be able to use the mobile once more and move to 4 classes with two year groups in each in the future.

I hope that this letter addresses the concerns raised by some of you. I understand change is difficult but whatever we do is always in the best interest of your children and the school. We are blessed with amazing children and staff and we want to ensure that Gooderstone continues to flourish in the future with healthy pupil numbers.

The next steps for us is to apply to the Regional Schools Commission to extend our age range, this approval process can take up to 5 months. We will keep you informed with the latest information, as and when we have it. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any further concerns you may have.

Many Thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Godbold', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Mrs Godbold.