



2nd July 2024

Dear Parents,

Following the decision to place children in years three and four into two classes from September, the following FAQs may answer some of the questions you have.

These FAQs will clarify the decision-making process, reassure you that measures are in place to support every child, and demonstrate how we intend to mitigate any potential consequences for the children to ensure they continue to learn in a nurturing and prosperous environment.

Q: What's the background?

Since 2021, year three admissions have been steadily falling and this reduces the amount of funding the school receives.

2018- 93 pupils (current Y8)

2019- 95 pupils (current Y7)

2020- 87 pupils (current Y6)

2021- 90 pupils (current Y5)

2022- 79 pupils (current Y4)

2023- 70 pupils (current Y3)

2024- 68 pupils (current Y2, 60 from FIS, 8 from other infant schools)

In addition, due to lack of housing and falling birth rates, the local authority anticipate an 18% surplus of school places in the New Forest, so this pattern is set to continue for a few years to come.

Q: What's the impact?

As a result, admitting fewer children has significantly impacted the junior school budget and to continue as we are would place the school into a six-figure deficit by 2025/2026.

When a school goes into, or proposes to go into deficit, the Headteacher and the Governing body must have plans in place to recover losses- failure to do so could result in the school losing control over its finances and the ability to tailor funding for the specific needs of Foxhills Children.

It is therefore no longer economically viable to place children into three small classes in years three and four.

Q: Why has the decision been made to place children in years three and four into two classes?

To ensure decisions are made with local knowledge of our community, and to recover a six-figure deficit, considerable changes are necessary. Therefore, the decision has been made to place Year Four (September 2024) into two classes of 35, Year Three (September 2024) into two classes of 34. This allows Foxhills to significantly reduce the budget deficit and retain control of school finances.

When making this decision, we considered that our current year two and year three children are used to being in two classes and were in classes of 30 and 31 (at Foxhills infants School). It has only been in the last year that they have been educated in smaller class sizes which provides a level of reassurance that this class size is familiar to them

Q: Have other options been considered?

We have considered the option of mixed year groups and combining years three and four, so that we can keep class sizes below 30, but concluded this would not be possible because:

- The federation is in place to secure continuity. We cannot have mono age classes in KS1 and mixed in KS2
- It may deter parents from choosing Foxhills because, even above 30, mono age classes are more favourable
- Mixed classes would not enable the juniors to fully implement our curriculum with fidelity to our vision and aims (we have mapped our curriculum year by year to ensure knowledge can build sequentially and overtime and to combine year groups would compromise this).

Furthermore, having three small class sizes across two year groups would have resulted in redundancies because we would not have been able to pay support staff salaries. We do feel our teaching assistants play a crucial role in support teaching and learning and, in discussions with teachers, their preference was to retain TA support rather than teach a smaller class. In respect of Years Three and Four, by having larger class sizes, we have been able to deploy more adults into these year groups and this has ensured job retention as well as being positive for the children.

Q: What does it mean to have a published admissions number (PAN) cap?

In Year Three, we have a determined admissions number of 90. To make a change to this, it is necessary to apply to the office of the schools adjudicator- a third party who will review the rationale behind this decision and make a final variation. Once in place, this means that the PAN will be capped at 68 and we will not admit any more children, as advised by the local authority.

For Year Four, the local authority are the body who apply a PAN cap. In September, this will be applied for 68 children meaning we cannot admit any further children.

In September, the possibility of a PAN reduction (to 60) will be discussed with the local authority but this is a different process and one that takes time.

Q: How have the classes been organised, considering children's needs

All children (across Reception to Year six) have been mixed for the next academic year based on our understanding of their needs, abilities, strengths and friendships. We want every child to thrive and know that the class demographic is an important attributing factor.

We are aware of children who require additional support- emotionally, socially and academically- and our new approaches to curriculum delivery, teaching and learning and the deployment of additional adults will ensure all children's needs are known, understood and met, even in a larger class size.

Q: Will larger classes be manageable?

In the past, we have had junior classes of up to 33 and this has worked well. Having classes over 30 is not unusual in KS2 as there is not a legal limit (unlike the 30 PAN restriction in infant classes).

Making any class size work is reliant on excellent teaching and learning based on accurate assessment for learning and work matched to children's understanding. Even the smallest of classes can fail if a teacher is unable to meet children's needs.

To ensure teachers and teaching assistants can support all children From September, leaders will be working closely with them to ensure that all children's academic needs are met through quality first teaching: teaching in response to a clear understanding of what children need now and next so they will not be disadvantaged by being in a larger class: they will still have learning matched to need to ensure they can make progress.

Also, I have appointed an additional assistant head for September: Miss Katie Kynaston (to replace Mrs Kay) so teachers will be supported with planning and lesson delivery. Our school improvement focus for September is improving and securing consistently effective teaching and learning.

For children who require pre-teaching or over learning, so they can keep up, the use of the third adult (we have deployed additional staff) will ensure all are appropriately supported to fully access our curriculum.

For children who are learning at greater depth, the design of tasks will ensure they are suitably challenged to apply their knowledge in different ways and across different contexts as this will deepen their understanding.

All teachers will plan learning responsively, based on daily assessment for learning. These principles apply regardless of class size as they are the best way to ensure that learning is appropriately pitched and matches children’s pedagogical content understanding. Even in a class of 35, the teacher will be engaging in this process and children will still receive learning tasks that are right for them. Time will be given to teachers to ensure they can do this and, from September, in recognition of increased class sizes, we have reduced directed time commitments to enable teachers to prioritise teaching and learning with leadership support.

Q: Who will be the Teachers and Teaching assistants?

In all four classes we will have full time qualified teachers with a full- time teaching assistant (FTE with a job share). We will also have additional teaching assistants in every class. I am confident we have sufficient staffing.

Our staffing complement will be:

Year Groups	Teachers	Teaching Assistants	Additional special educational needs and emotional support
Year 3	Mrs Helen Normington and Mr Tom Battersby	Mrs. Emma Mills (full time) Mrs. Georgina Wilcox (mornings)	Miss Jade L’Cointe
Year 3	Mrs Beth Price	Mrs Louise Pugh (mornings) Mrs Julie Coombes (Mon-Wed) Mrs Kadriye Francis (Wed-Fri)	
Year 4	Miss Natalie Hogbourne	Mrs Gemma Pollard (full time) Mrs Rachel Barnett (Full time)	Mrs Rachel Barnett/ Mrs Gemma Pollard (alternate mornings)
Year 4	Miss Annabelle Spain	Miss Chloe Medley (full time) Mrs Beth Hubbard (mornings)	

In order to ensure that adults are deployed effectively and are best used to support children, leaders will be closely working with Years Three and Four through the pupil progress review process. Our deputy headteacher, Mrs James, leads this and our teachers will be supported by our two assistant heads (Mrs Foster and Miss Kynaston) to adapt and vary provision for all children.

Q: Will TA support be guaranteed?

Yes, our staff are allocated to years three and four for the days and times specified and this is not planned to change. It has not been possible to have full time staff in these year groups (because of whole school need) so there are some job shares to form FTEs.

Q: How will all children be supported in a larger class, regardless of needs and/or abilities?

Across both schools, Teachers are supported by leaders to use cut-a-way teaching, our pedagogical approach to delivering learning based on our understanding of what children know, understand and can do. We do not teach children as a whole class as it is often an impractical way of sharing what they need to know and do. Cut-a-way teaching involves children being taught in small groups- flexibly organised- based on where they are at a given point in learning. This approach considers that fact that children have different strengths, knowledge and comprehension and in order to nurture this, learning must be suitably pitched at all times (across all subjects).

We do not ability set because it places a ceiling on attainment (and ultimately achievement).

We do not teach in one way because we recognise that this will not support all children to gain knowledge and make progress. We vary and adapt teaching and learning by modelling, the use of resources and explanations to ensure all children acquire key knowledge and embed this in their long- term memories. We understand that all children learn

in different ways and that it is the responsibilities of teachers to meet children's needs (rather than children fitting a system).

Quality first teaching (QFT), as described above, is the only way any child can learn and make progress, in my view. It is the approach the entire federation uses to ensure our children attain well. It will be essential that our teachers in years three and four are supported to employ these approaches consistently and routinely and leaders will be working closely with them to achieve this.

Q: What training have staff had to support children's learning?

All of our staff have obtained the national, recognised qualifications that enable them to teach. Our in-house professional development programme is tailored to meet the objectives of our school improvement plans which have been written with a focus on improving outcomes for all children. Training has included:

- Delivering effective quality first teaching
- Adaption and variation in lessons
- Neurodiversity
- Safeguarding
- Meeting children's emotional needs
- Curriculum sequencing and organisation
- Meeting the needs of children with SEND and those who are pupil premium

I am confident our staff in years three and four have the training and skills to teach large classes. They will be supported by a full complement of leadership to do so and regular monitoring of provision, to ensure all children are being appropriately supported, will take place.

Q: How will Leaders support Teachers?

From September, the schools leadership team will comprise of: Headteacher, Mrs Lucy Howe, Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Heather James, Two Assistant Headteachers, Mrs Sophie Foster, Miss Katie Kynaston Two Teaching and Learning Leaders Mrs Lynsey Bromley, Miss Natalie Hogbourne and a non- class based Special educational needs coordinator, Mrs Clare Kealey.

Our assistant headteachers will support the teachers in years three and four to plan lessons, deliver them and assess children's learning. Our deputy headteacher will undertake pupil progress reviews with all adults working in years three and four to ensure adaption and variation of learning is benefitting all children. Our SENDco will support teachers and teaching assistants to meet the individual needs of children with specific needs. I will be regularly undertaking monitoring and evaluation exercises to ensure fidelity to our aims and improvement goals.

Our assistant headteachers will work with teaching and learning leaders by co-teaching to secure consistency in lesson delivery across both schools. Allocation of leadership will be prioritised to years three and four to ensure any possible negative consequences of large class sizes are eradicated.

Q: If this doesn't work, is there a contingency plan?

Yes, but it would be necessary to restructure the school and reduce teaching assistant capacity if three small classes were to be reinstated.

Q: How will we ensure children's pastoral care?

From September, we have increased emotional literacy support assistant capacity and made the SENDCo role non-class based. This will ensure more time can be given to children and their families who are experiencing concerns, worries or school avoidance.

We will have eight adults across years three and four (when it is common practice to only have one class teacher and a part time TA in KS2) so I do consider that this is sufficient support to enable us to meet children's needs.

Q: How will we manage infection control?

In all classrooms we undertake thorough cleaning to ensure tables, chairs, light switches and regularly touched surfaces are disinfected. In KS2, children have their own pencil case with personal equipment and we have found that the combination of these approaches has managed infection control well.

Q: Will my child's Teacher be teaching all the time? (considering non- contact time)

We are aware of concerns raised from the parent questionnaire about the absence of teachers (in class) who have additional leadership responsibilities. This year, whilst we undertook the task of re-mapping our curriculum, it has been necessary to release teachers from their teaching commitment more than we would have in the past. This has been a key piece of work for the federation that has been absolutely necessary but is now completed. I do recognise that this has affected some children and their parents and I apologise for this.

From September, all teachers will be in class except for their allocated non-contact time for planning, preparation and assessment (one afternoon a week). On Friday afternoons, Miss Hogbourne and Miss Spain, who is an early career teacher, will have additional non-contact time. We have purposefully allocated this time on a Friday because it has less of an impact on the children (we have celebration assembly which means it is usually a catch-up afternoon that can be easily taught by a higher level teaching assistant).

Apart from these times, unless they are unwell or undertaking professional training, teachers will be in class. We have appointed a cover teacher to assist with sports commitments so this will not impact on Miss Hogbourne's time (although, in capacity as PE leader, there may be some occasions when she needs to attend a competition but these will be kept to a minimum).

Q: Will there be the chance to discuss these FAQs in person?

Yes. We will now be inviting all parents of children in years two and three to our transition evening on Wednesday 3rd July at 5:45pm. Whilst this is not the opportunity to change this decision, I do hope it will provide the chance for you to ask questions, seek clarification beyond these FAQs and to facilitate discussion.

Foxhills is committed to ensuring every child progresses and is happy, safe and well-educated. Our team will work tirelessly to ensure this happens for your child and will continue to remain ambitious for their attainment and achievement. We are confident that two classes will work and that your children will continue to receive high quality tailored provision that enables them to thrive.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting.

Kind regards,

Lucy Howe