

Reception News

27.5.22

This week in Reception

Firstly, thank you for the wonderful support you all gave the garden party. We raised over £3000 for the redevelopment of the outdoor area.

We have spent time this week talking about kindness and the need to ask for consent for affection such as hugs from friends.

The children really loved working with Nadine and Lucy for the flower pounding (Tataki Zome). Amazingly, they worked with all 90 children across and afternoon. We are very grateful for their time and expertise.

Our chicks went to their new home in the countryside on Monday with the grandparents of children in the school. Some children have made cards to send to them. We were reassured that due to different incubation times of turkey hatchlings, they definitely were chicks!



Phonics

Philippa's group had short sessions this week as they were first to lunch so used the time to work on sentences and the need for sense, a capital, a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

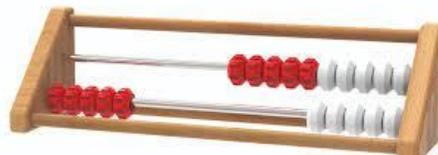
Ashleigh's group continued working on letter formation of g,q,y and u. Knowledge of CCVC and CVCC words was called upon to write captions. For example, 'frogs can jump'. The week was ended with high frequency tricky word bingo

Bethan's group have been reading and writing sentences using correct punctuation with the inclusion of tricky words, CCVC and CVCC words. High frequency words were practiced through different games.

Gabi's small group have been perfecting their letter formation on the computer and by doing lots of writing and recapping of the Phase 3 tricky words and adding in some from Phase 4.

Maths

This week in maths we have continued to practise subitising by introducing rekenreks in a formalised way. You might like to ask your child about this and the 'pause, point, push' method.



We have looked at number tracks (**not** a 100 square type layout) and played dice games that require using a dice with small numbers, so that instead of counting on the number of jumps, the children had to say the next numbers along the track. Eg) if you are on number 4 and roll a 2 you would say, 5,6.



Q&A session:

Thank you to those of you who attended this week's Q&A session. We have attached a summary of the questions submitted and our answers to those at the end of this letter. We hope that we were able to allay some of your concerns and that you feel reassured that the mixing of the classes will have a positive outcome for all children.

Advice on how to discuss the transition into Year 1 with your child:

As we discussed at the Q&A session, much of our focus next term will be around preparing children for the transition into their new classes. We believe it is best not to go into the reasons for the split but focus on what they will actually experience in Year 1. At school we will be talking to the children about how exciting being in a new class will be, whilst also addressing any anxieties children may have. To reinforce this at your home you could:

- Explain that your child will still get to see friends from their current class (play times, phonics groups, communal year 1 outdoor area used daily)
- Tell your child that they will be able to keep old friendships but have even more friends through meeting new people
- Possibly organise playdates with new classmates outside of school
- Reassure your child that they will get to see their new classroom and the Year 1 areas several times before making the transition in September
 - For any children who are particularly anxious or have additional needs, they will be able to visit their new classroom as much as is needed before September
- Let your child know that current Reception teachers will be available to welcome all children into their new classes on their first day of Year 1 and be present all morning

Reminders and requests:

INSET day: Friday 24th June (school closed to children, including WRAP)

Sports Day: 13th July

Mayow picnic trip: Tigers - Monday 18th July
Lions - Tuesday 19th July
Bears – Wednesday 20th July

Summer BBQ: Friday 8th July

End of term: Thursday 21st July

We are starting to plan our end of year art installation/exhibition and would love to receive **helpful donations** from parents:

- 1 item of bright coloured old clothing (to use as a backdrop for our art displays)
- Old fabric (e.g. bed sheets, calico, scrap material) for sewing
- Buttons
- Sweet wrappers
- Tetrapaks
- Green plastic bottles (small or large)
- 2l plastic bottles (such as empty cola bottles etc.)
- Plastic bottle lids
- Recycled umbrellas
- Herb cuttings
- Small plastic plant pots
- Plastic/wooden cutlery
- Garden canes

Volunteers:

Volunteers are now welcomed back into school. In order to fulfil safety requirements, please could you go to the website; parents- correspondence- volunteer application form and fill in a form emailing it back to info@kilmore.lewisham.sch.uk for attention of Kate. Please make clear the year group you would like to help in (we hope it might be Reception!).

Best wishes,

The Reception Team



Reception Parents Q and A Session Tuesday 24th May

These are the questions sent in by Reception parents, we have tried our best to answer these fully.

Given that Kilmore has rarely (or ever?) mixed classes, were the school governors informed of the proposals to do this?

The Governors were fully aware of the disparity of need in the year group and fully support the Senior Leadership Team's operational decisions that support the quality of teaching and learning.

What other options were looked at to avoid disruption to all 90 Reception children?

We tried to remedy within classes by having additional adults. We have sought in-house advice from SENCO and SLT and external via the outreach inclusion services. We believe this will not harm any children and will benefit the significant majority.

If other options were considered why were they dismissed?

All classes are full. It was looked into if one or two children could move but this in itself seemed unfair (Would you feel comfortable if your child was the only one moved?) and in order to support balance, it became clear more than one or two moves were needed.

Why has Kilmore never floated the idea that mixing of classes may be a possibility?

Classes have been moved around before, although not for a while as there has not been the need. It is clear and strongly felt by all practitioners, that the whole year group needs to be mixed to ensure the success of all children. Going forward we will ensure all new parents are aware this may be a possibility.

Why was a short consultation period not considered on the broad concept of mixing classes?

This is a decision that can only be made by the school and the school alone. Taking 90 parents individual concerns and preferences is not possible. We take friendship requests and comments at the beginning of the Reception year as we are unfamiliar with the children and only have a narrow view of them i.e. name, date of birth, address provided by Lewisham. At this point of the year we now know the children very well and feel well placed to make decisions. Of course, we know parents are the experts of their child as individuals but school staff are the experts in class dynamics and in understanding how best to manage them as a group.

Will the school do anything differently in future as a result of parental feedback?

Yes, when new children start there will be a clause written in their induction letter that states staff will reflect at this point in the year (Summer 1) as to whether classes should move forward as they are or be reorganised and reviewed where deemed necessary.

Will Julie be holding face-to-face or online events for parents in future to talk about her broad plans for the school and what broad issues she is looking at, with opportunities for questions?

Julie's broad plans are to ensure that all children can access quality first teaching which is why she is addressing the current imbalance in Reception. It is also important she has time to observe and get to know her community, addressing any immediate concerns. Julie is open in her leadership style and works closely with the governors around priorities. It is hoped that as society continues to open up, more and more face to face and in school parental involvement can be planned.

How does the school plan to open up meaningful and constructive dialogue with parents in the future?

We believe this is strength of the school. In Reception alone there are always opportunities to communicate with the class teacher in person, in reading journals, via email and when your child is 'child of the week'. As well as termly parent meetings, a stay and play at the beginning of the year, curriculum meeting, home visits and parent drop-ins to look at your child's books. All of the above is

to keep parents involved and have a good understanding of what's happening in the year. This was not a decision involving dialogue, as it was something that had to be made by the educational practitioners that work with your children every day.

How will transitions be handled?

It has already started. We have always thought it was important to start transition early to ensure children feel secure in the change and have many opportunities to discuss it. As previously done, children will receive a booklet with photos of their new environment, visit it in person (this will be done more this year) and meet their new teacher in several ways. Additionally, they will have the chance to spend time as a new class group during phonic sessions in the last few weeks of term. We have also ensured that their current teacher is available across the three classes on their first day of Year 1 to support them on their first morning.

Questions that as a school you could have asked parents:

1) to give a list of friends you would like your child to stay with from their existing class

2) to name any friends that your child currently has with children in the other classes

We did not need to do this as we observe the children at school all the time and know which friendships the children have and who they play and learn with best. We understand that children have additional friends e.g. clubs, old friends, parental friendships, play date friends that may not be dominant in the class. However, this decision was not based solely on friendships but on promoting as much equality in all its forms across all three classes. The Reception team worked together to make sure it was as fair as possible to all children.

Why has this not been communicated with the parents?

This was communicated to parents via a letter, which we felt was important to go out now so you had a chance to talk with us before half term. Then in the last half term we could focus on transition, ensuring this is done smoothly and with your support. Some schools do this at the end of the school year, but we felt this would not be supportive.

Has this been talked about for some time?

We have had concerns about the year group for some time, this is not unusual and these will often resolve themselves as children settle. However, this year, possibly due to Covid, more children have continued to need support in different ways e.g. socially, SEND, emotionally etc. This decision to mix the classes was conveyed to you as soon as logistically possible once the decision had been made.

Why does the school think that breaking up a group of 5 year olds who have bonded with one another is a good idea?

First and foremost, this is about supporting all children to have a successful and accessible educational journey at Kilmorie school. By doing this we are balancing the classes personally, emotionally and academically giving all an equal opportunity of a good education to all children. Children are resilient and happily make friends at this age. Our children are used to mixing all the time for phonics, free flow and playtime. In Year 1 they will continue to build on their existing bonds and new ones as again they have the chance to mix in phonics, free flow and at playtimes. We know some children will find change difficult but we will support them. These skills are part of our Kilmorie qualities as resilience is a life skill.

Could you please elaborate on the reasons behind this decision? In particular, examples of the imbalances, issues/concerns that teaching staff had in the current set up and what wasn't working that the re-mixing is hopefully going to address.

Some examples of imbalances:

Personalities don't support each other behaviourally, high level of SEND needs that means other children are not always able to access learning e.g. not getting enough challenge or able to regularly talk to an adult, workload of teachers

Benefits:

Inclusive classes, adults spread evenly across the year group (ratios), wellbeing (children and staff), and opportunities to consolidate and explore new friendships.

Does the school feel whether these imbalances exist in the other year groups? And is a re-mixing being considered for other year groups?

There have been and are imbalances in other year groups/classes which are carefully monitored. However, currently the imbalances are not as significant as the current reception year. Each year group is considered individually and there have been occasions where they have been mixed. Upon reflection these should have been done earlier to ensure all children's wellbeing and a successful educational journey.