

August 2020

Dear Year 3 Parents,

I trust you are all well and have had a chance to enjoy the summer break with family and friends.

As you are aware, the School has made the decision to create two classes in Year 3 for the forthcoming term. I am delighted that so many families are wanting to be part of the Ballard Lower Prep and we really look forward to welcoming you next week.

Although it is exciting to see the Lower Prep family grow, I am also mindful of class size and the individual and personalised attention we take pride in offering at Ballard. In many of our meetings, we focus on vision, values and strategy to make sure we are doing everything possible to provide the best education and school experience for all of our children.

I am delighted to announce that we are to welcome Mrs Carolyn Hookes-Gosney to the Lower Prep, who will act as one of our main Year 3 class teachers. Mrs Hookes-Gosney wanted me to pass on the following message to you all:

"I am delighted to be joining the team at Ballard and very much look forward to meeting everyone next week; I am thrilled to be a part of the next stage in your child's learning journey and look forward to getting to know them. I have been fortunate to have had a rich and exciting career to date, after training at The Royal Ballet School I spent my early years in the Performing Arts, however, with the arrival of my own family, I became very drawn to education, especially supporting children who found some aspects of learning just a little tricky. After qualifying I have enjoyed teaching in some fabulous Prep schools across Surrey and Hampshire, including Danes Hill and Durlston Court. I went on to take the role of Head of Pre-Prep at Sandroyd, in Wiltshire and after a successful inspection was appointed Head of Pre-Prep at St. Michael's in Sevenoaks, Kent and more recently at Barfield in Surrey. I have since settled locally with my family and now look forward to sharing my love of learning with the children at Ballard."

We have made the decision to keep all the children in the same Form Group to start the academic year in order to help the children settle in to the Lower Prep. By initially keeping the children together as one form, it will also enable Mrs Laurent, Mrs Hookes-Gosney and Mrs Stembridge (our Year 3 designated Teaching Assistant) to observe the children both inside and outside the classroom whilst keeping excellent children:teacher ratios. The children and Year 3 teaching team will start most of their lessons altogether for the input of the lesson, before splitting into two groups for the remainder of the lesson. For the subjects that are delivered by our specialist teachers, we have amended our timetable and staffing to make sure that the children have access to two teachers (for example, the children will have both Mrs Gray and Mr Prangnell for their music lessons).

Towards the end of September, the children will be asked to complete a simple online form to give them the opportunity to name three children they would like to be in a form group with for the rest of the academic year.

Finally, during the week beginning Monday 5th October, I will meet with Mrs Hookes-Gosney, Mrs Laurent and Mrs Stembridge to conclude the two form groups for the remainder of the 2020/21 academic year. Whilst discussing form groups, we will be focusing on sound, educational reasoning,

feedback and observations made by staff within September as well as making sure every child will have at least one friend from their preferences in their new form group. The half-term will end with all Year 3 parents having the opportunity to meet (in some capacity) both Mrs Laurent and Mrs Hooke-Gosney to discuss the first half of term, as well as the remainder of the academic year.

I truly believe that by taking this approach it will enable the children within Year 3 to have a smooth transition into the Lower Prep, as well as providing an excellent environment for children to flourish academically whilst also developing social skills.

I will be sending out another letter soon to inform all Lower Prep parents on all the finer details regarding how the new academic year will start for the Ballard Lower Prep family.

If you have any queries after receiving this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to meeting you via our virtual induction morning on Wednesday at 10.00am and welcoming you all back to School next Thursday with the excitement of a new academic year and new opportunities.

With best wishes,

Mr Simon Ridley  
Head of Lower Prep