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Dear Parent/Carer

8th February 2021

Re: Restructuring of Classes

I am writing to inform you about some significant changes which will be taking place in school over the coming months. Normally a change of this significance would involve face to face meetings but due to the current national lockdown I am unable to do this and for this I am truly sorry. I am therefore going to try to explain the restructuring of classes in this letter followed by optional zoom meetings for parents if they have any concerns or questions.

As you know our children have missed a significant amount of school bridging two academic years. Whilst I think parents are doing an amazing job of delivering remote learning during this difficult time, it is inevitable that many of our children will have missed learning opportunities and with the best will in the world there is no substitute for being taught by professional teachers and support staff. During the Autumn term we implemented a series of catch up interventions in an attempt to plug some of those gaps but just as the children were making progress we then ended up in this current national lockdown.

We will all be dealing with the legacy of this global pandemic for years to come and therefore, as a school, we believe that we need to be proactive and creative in how we ensure our children are given every opportunity to make accelerated progress when they do eventually return to school.

Our solution is creative, dynamic and very exciting and I hope that you as parents will recognise the benefits this offers to our children. Our ethos at Stanhope is that the child is at the centre of everything we do and every decision we make and myself and the teaching team are confident that this solution will help to inspire and reignite the children's love of learning.

Introducing Learning Zones

We believe that it is important that every single child is in the right learning environment which suits them at their current stage of development and learning and that by being in the correct learning environment they will flourish and make that all important accelerated progress.

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Therefore, we are restructuring our classes into 'Learning Zones' Each Learning Zone will encompass children from over two year groups.

We are giving each Learning Zone a new name and have decided that as we live in the North Pennines AONB and a Unesco Global Geopark, that we will name our Learning Zones after gem stones.

Each gem will have an allocated super power and the children will collect different super powers as they work their way through the school.

At the end of Primary school our children will be secondary ready as they will have collected 6 superpowers to enable them to leave us ready to deal with whatever lies ahead for them.

To try to make this make sense (which is really difficult in a letter) I will explain how the Learning Zones will work:

Name of Learning Zone	Super Power	Year Groups covered	Effective From	Teacher
The Opal Learning Zone	Independence	Nursery	22.2.21	Mr Storey
The Amethyst Learning Zone	Cooperation	Reception and Year 1	22.2.21	Mr Storey
The Sapphire Learning Zone	Teamwork	Year 1 and Year 2	22.2.21	Mrs Howes
The Ruby Learning Zone	Being Supportive	Year 3 and Year 4	01.09.21	Mr Clarke
The Emerald Learning Zone	Being Courageous	Year 4 and Year 5	01.09.21	Miss Hunter-Purvis & Mrs Green
The Diamond Learning Zone	Taking responsibility and problem solving	Year 5 and Year 6	Already mixed class	Miss Hepple

This is a huge reorganisation for our school and therefore we have taken the decision to begin implementation with our youngest children in Nursery, Year 1 and Year 2. In the next two weeks parents with children in those year groups will receive (via email) a letter which will confirm which Learning Zone your child has been allocated to.

These decisions have not been taken lightly and we have considered a range of facts such as:

- Academic ability
- Progress in Autumn Term and during remote learning
- Social skills
- Emotional maturity
- Impact on siblings
- Friendship groups
- Confidence

Our school has operated on the basis of mixed year groups in the past and in fact we currently have a mixed Year 5&6 class. Our teachers are experienced in delivering outstanding teaching and learning on an individual basis and we are therefore drawing on these strengths.

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We pride ourselves on our outstanding teaching team who are extremely experienced and have high expectations for all.

I know that some parents will see this as their child being either 'held back' or 'moved up' and these are terms which we are categorically not using. No child will be allocated to a Learning Zone on academic ability alone. I guarantee that every child will be considered with regard to those aspects listed above and any decision will be based on a professional judgement in terms of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.

In September 2021 we will then move onto implement Learning Zones in Key Stage Two and parents with children in those year groups will receive a letter in the Summer term informing them of which Learning Zone their child will be allocated to.

From then on, every Summer term parents will receive an individual letter confirming which Learning Zone their child will be in for the following academic year.

There are many advantages to this plan:

- Each child will be treated as an individual and have their own learning needs met
- Children will be in the correct learning environment to help them to make accelerated progress
- Our children in EYFS and KS1 will benefit from continuous provision
- Transition between key stages will be smoother and easier for children
- Those children who need stability and security will have an opportunity to develop within a familiar setting
- This allows us to guarantee the security and sustainability of our school for the future
- This new plan allows us to be flexible and respond to the needs of individual children who will return to school with a range of emotional and mental health needs

In September 2021, when we move to the whole school operating on mixed year group Learning Zones, we will also be changing our whole school reward system so that children will receive certificates for being, for example an: Amethyst Ambassador. At the end of each year the children in that Learning Zone will receive a certificate to confirm that they have achieved their super power! We will be replacing the star system with Dojos and gem stones (not real ones)!

The first class to be affected by these changes will be our current Year 1 class. Letters will be issued to parents with further details in the next few days and details of a zoom meeting for Year 1 parents will be contained in that letter.

Our staff team are really excited, motivated and committed to this change and it is great to have something positive to look forward to during these challenging times.

I totally accept the fact that this news will appear 'out of nowhere' and had we not gone into National Lockdown on 4th January, we would have been able to make this announcement sooner in the Spring term. However, to delay the implementation would not be in the best interests of our children. I hope that our school will fully reopen after the Easter holidays (or sooner if possible) but we need to be ready to support our children when they do return.

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Alongside this letter, is a question and answer sheet which I have prepared to try to answer any questions you may have. If after reading the letter and Q&A sheet you still have any questions or concerns please attend the zoom meetings which will be publicised in the next few days.

Yours sincerely

Mrs D Cross

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Head Teacher

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