



Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019

Sir John Cass's Foundation  
Primary School  
Headteacher: Miss A Allan

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been brought to my attention that there is some concern about the provision on offer to the children in the 'bulge classes'. I am hoping that by writing this letter you will be able to understand more fully the reasons behind some of the decisions we have made and are making currently, as well as putting your mind at ease.

Fundamentally a bulge class or school expansion occurs when a local authority predicts there will be fewer places in schools than there are children living in a locality. They occur to ensure that every child has a place at school and receives an education. We are pleased that we were able to accommodate a bulge class and offer an extra 30 places to families; families that otherwise would not have been able to be a part of the SJC community.

In any school, from year to year, changes happen. They happen for many reasons - staffing, funding, areas for development etc. When any school expands, whether it is permanent or temporary, there are also going to be changes. When any change occurs we always do whatever we can, within the constraints we have, to offer the highest quality of education and the best start in life to all of our pupils. Here at SJC we are proud of our child centred provision and the high standards that we achieve. Please see below for our latest data, the KS1 data is your children at the end of their Year 2:

KS2 Progress			KS2 Reading		KS2 Writing		SPAG		KS2 Maths		R/W/M combined	
Reading	Writing	Maths	% achieving expected standard	% achieving higher standard	% achieving expected standard	% achieving higher standard	% achieving expected standard	% achieving higher standard	% achieving expected standard	% achieving higher standard	% achieving expected standard	% achieving higher standard
+4.8	+2.5	+3.9	89	50	86	39	100	71	96	54	86	29

EYFS		Phonics		KS1 Reading		KS1 Writing		KS1 Maths		R/W/M combined	
%GLD	%Exceeding	% Y1	% Y2	% achieving Exp standard	% achieving Greater depth	% achieving Exp standard	% achieving Greater depth	% achieving Exp standard	% achieving Greater depth	% achieving Exp standard	% achieving Greater depth
83	0	93	83	91	40	86	19	95	51	84	11

### Educational provision:

Since Reception, the year group has consistently been staffed with more than 1 teacher per class and with a minimum of 1 TA. This is beyond the level of provision in most schools and indeed more than in most of our other year groups.

Reading partners is a provision that we have had in school for a number of years. Last year we extended the programme to the Year 2 classes and increased the number of volunteers working with the children.

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**Sports / Physical** - Specialist PE provision was extended to the Reception year, the year that we took in the bulge class. Your children are therefore benefitting from an additional year of specialist sport provision. Swimming is a part of the national curriculum and something that we offer to children in Key Stage 2. For the last few years, swimming has taken place for children once a week throughout Years 3 and 4. The pool that we use has space for 60 pupils at a time but has no availability in the week for further sessions. We have had to change the way that swimming is structured this year. It is not possible to have 60 beginners in the pool at one time, therefore we have split the year 3 children and swimming is taking place as follows:

- Autumn term: Year 3C and Year 4
- Spring term: Year 3I and Year 4
- Summer term: Both Year 3 classes

Your children will also swim in Year 4

We realise that this is a slightly reduced amount of swimming during Years 3 and 4 however the length of each swimming lesson is longer than it was 3 years ago, when your children joined the school. It still exceeds that available in many other schools throughout London and the country and is also more than enough to fulfil national curriculum expectations. As stated above, one of the difficulties with swimming, is the availability of the pool for lessons. What happens however is that many schools don't use the pool as frequently during the summer term. We were able to take advantage of that in the summer term last year and offered for the first time ever, intensive swimming lessons for our Year 6 pupils. This has paved the way for access to the pool for intensive swimming sessions for the next few years, therefore enabling your children to swim again in the summer of Year 6.

Please also recognise that when your child is not swimming they will be doing additional PE/Sports lessons.

**Music** - When the bulge class joined the school, strings provision began in Year 4. This has now been brought forward to Year 3 so your children are learning a musical instrument for an additional year than you may have originally been expecting. This year we have invested in an additional 30 violins, plus an additional double bass. We have increased the hours that our music staff work each week, in order to ensure that the bulge class are able to have the additional year and the same amount of teaching as the children in the two years above them. The reason we have not been able to increase the number of cellos for the children this year is that the cello teacher has no additional time within her week to offer to our school. The option here was that we retained our current music staff, who are incredibly talented and well regarded in the world of music, or we altered our music staff and potentially compromised on the quality of provision that we offer.

We believe we have made the best choice for the children, however this does come at considerable cost to the school. You may have seen in one of our summer term newsletters a request for funding in order to be able to offer this equality of provision for our pupils. We were able to secure £5,000 of the funding necessary to offer this, however we are still looking for the remaining £4,500 per year.

**Cooking** - This currently starts in Year 4. We are exploring options for the provision for the bulge class over the next 4 years. We cannot promise that the provision will take exactly the same format, due to work commitments of our cookery teachers. We will ensure however that over their time in the school, the bulge class will experience cookery of the same quality and will learn the same skills.

**Clubs:**

Last year for the first time and due to parental requests, we offered clubs to Year 2 children - both at lunchtime and after school. This year, we have maintained our offer for Year 2 pupils that your children benefitted from last year and have also increased the capacity of the performing arts club and added an extra sports club (Jump Start) for upper Key Stage 2 to free up spaces in multi sports for Year 3. We have added an extra member of staff to the supervision of chess club to allow for increased numbers of children who are able to attend.

Clubs do change slightly term on term, due to offers from local businesses and staffing constraints. Last year for example, we were able to secure a science club for half a term and a robotics club for 2 terms.

I understand that a number of parents have been unhappy with the way that we allocated club spaces this term. For the last 2 years, we have offered clubs on a first come first served basis and while this system does have its merits and is in many ways easier to manage, it means that the same children were getting into all of the clubs and we weren't being fair to our whole school community. Another drawback was that often, children weren't interested in participating in the clubs their parents had chosen for them. This term we trialled a different way of offering clubs, however I recognise that this was also less than ideal. It is never easy when we can't offer children their first choices or clubs fall on a day when there is already another commitment, however we will try to offer clubs in a more transparent way for all concerned in the spring term.

### **Trips:**

Having 2 classes in the year group has no impact on trips. We don't foresee this to change.

We are looking into ways to increase the amount of subsidy we can offer for the school journeys, in order to maintain affordability for parents and carers and to ensure that every child is able to attend these valuable activities.

We recognise that the current venues we use for our school journeys do not have capacity for 60 children at once. We will take the classes separately however we are exploring the option of using one different venue, during the children's time with us that offers similar opportunities, but that all 60 children can attend at the same time. I do believe it is important that the children have the opportunity to go away together to maximise their social and emotional development.

### **School facilities / resources:**

- I pads were purchased for your children when they were in Year 2 to enhance current provision. Your children were the first to experience this.
- We have purchased additional Chromebooks for the bulge class to ensure that no children lose out in terms of the computing curriculum
- Free school lunches for all pupils - from last year, we were able to secure funding for every child in Key Stage 2 to have a free school lunch every day. When negotiating this funding we ensured that the funding for the additional class was included.
- Additional toilets. With an increased number of pupils, there is an increased wear and tear on facilities and equipment. This summer we refurbished our Key Stage 2 toilets and added an additional 2 toilets.
- 18 months ago we made an agreement with the Sir John Cass's Foundation to use The Flat regularly for small group teaching spaces. This agreement means that even with an additional class in the school, we have space to carry out interventions and small group support
- Over the summer we undertook refurbishment of the dining hall, with a new small group teaching space added. This also allows for carrying out small group support and intervention work.

- Library provision - as well as an improved collection of resources, each class now has a timetabled slot weekly, there is increased free access to the library during break and lunchtimes.
- Increased resources for playtimes - sandpit, building blocks, table tennis table, and adventure cube. All of these provisions have been added since taking the bulge class

I hope this information has gone some way to easing your minds. I would ask that you trust us as a school to be working to offer the best we can for all our children. We want every child to have the best possible start in life that we can offer and the decisions we make as a school have this aim at their heart. The world of education, expectations from the Department for Education and Ofsted are always changing and our provision has to reflect this. We are also in a very uncertain time when it comes to funding. The constraints that we are working in financially are becoming increasingly tight - this is not due to the additional class, but rather to the political and economic climate.

If you have further concerns, please do come and see me.

I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you over the coming months and years.

Kind regards,

Miss A Allan  
Headteacher