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Dear Parents and Carers of the Kindergarten and EY as a whole.

As I said in the letter of last week, I would update you with our planning for the Early Years (EY). We use the term EY to cover all the children below Class One. It is useful to see EY as the bridge from beginnings of leaving the bounds of parental care to the entrance into Class One. These are special years for parents and children. Every age has its unique developmental stage where the children lay down markers for their futures. This education takes these seriously and for the pedagogy to really work needs the commitment to the whole journey from EY to Class 12.

The Government has reserved VAT exemption for children under Scottish school starting age - SSSA. We have made a case that our pedagogy holds that mixed aged groups have firmly been our practice for decades, and we have tried to make it possible for all Kindergarten children to be VAT exempt, but we are bound to uphold the government's decision that children over SSSA must be charged VAT on fees.

I also need you to be aware that VAT exempt groups cannot be mixed with VATable aged children so we do have to move children into different groupings.

To this end we will have to move children around the spaces we have.

1. The Seedlings groups will move to the Kindergarten building and they will have the two adjacent rooms to themselves. We will call these groups Appleseed K1 and Acorn K1. Children will also have their own playtime outside and will sometimes share the outside space with the two other groups.

2. We will also have two kindergarten groups for children aged three up to SSSA in the other two rooms in the Kindergarten building. Blackbird K2 and Greenfinch K2. These will be run in much the same way as they are run at present, but with a smaller age cohort.

3. The oldest children in Kindergarten will move to the present Seedlings building and be called Treetops K3. For this current school session children above SSSA are all those who turned, or will turn, 5 years of age on or before 28th February 2025.

Sadly, the fees for these children, Treetops K3, will have VAT at 20% added to the fees as of 1st January 2025. However, this gives us the opportunity to expand the range of activities opened up to these children. It has been a long time coming, but we wish to update our approach to the older children in Kindergarten with more; group forming activities, crafting and later in the year have short introductions to other teachers in the school eg. movement, languages, music. This has been a successful change in other SW Kindergartens allowing older ones to develop further skills. It particularly helps the younger ones in K2 as they can have a slower pace. We feel Treetops will not only benefit the children whilst in kindergarten, but also later when they move into Class 1.

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Not only do children in these years develop movement skills and dexterity, they begin the activity of thinking. We can call this maturity of thinking. Another dimension to be aware of is the ability to restrain an impulse or wilfulness. A third development stage is becoming socially aware or group ready. With these milestones that are met in the kindergarten, we will be promoting that children really build up their days at school in preparation for Class 1.

We will continue to be a partner provider with Edinburgh City Council and offer the 1140 scheme. As we have been doing since taking on the scheme, we will continue to review how it plays into the finances of the school.

I have not put a timeline on the moves yet. It looks like it will have to happen over the Christmas holidays.

There is one piece of information that I know parents will want to know. Who is taking which group. Lorna and Tess will continue with the Acorn and Appleseed. Aki and Hannah with the Kindergarten age. Dawn will take the Treetops K3.

After decades of Dawn's faithfulness in the kindergarten, bringing joy and healthy growth to so many children, she will be moving away from the school in July. I am sure Dawn will have lots to say about her onward journey over the next months. We will be wishing her all the best once Treetops has had the benefit of her touch.

I could well imagine there are many questions and you will be seeking clarity on many points. I invite everyone to an in person meeting on Wednesday 27th at 17.45 to have a conversation on any issue this letter may have raised for you. I hope we will all fit in the Eurythmy room as the hall is busy.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my close colleagues Helen and Alistair for helping put this letter together and of course the input from those with the children in Kindergarten.

With best wishes

Nick Brett