

Mixed classes at Hawley Primary School

At Hawley Primary School, we have a PAN (Published Admission Number) of 45 children per year group. Children in EYFS benefit from small classes as they begin their learning journey. The engaging environment and support from our specialist team allow children to settle quickly and make great progress. To best meet the needs of our children and allow them to achieve their full potential, we have mixed-age classes throughout key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Below are some answers to 'frequently asked questions':

What is a Mixed Age Class?

A mixed age class is a class in which there are children who are from more than one-year group are taught within the same classroom. A mixed age class will comprise of pupils from the same Key Stage (Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2).

Why and how has the decision to mix year groups been made?

- We consider the needs of the year groups alongside the budgetary implications of the different scenarios.
- We consider the best ways to meet the needs of all year groups. There is never one simple answer, but a key factor is that we do not prioritise the needs of one year group above the needs of another. Our aim is to provide equality of opportunity for all.

What are the staff thoughts about mixed classes?

Staff are aware of the complexities of teaching mixed classes. There is a wider than normal age range of pupils and the difference in maturity between the oldest and youngest pupils whose needs are considered. School staff have identified the following benefits:

- Planning and preparation is the same for all staff in the team and can be better distributed. Phase teams work closely together and deliver the same content, thus reducing teacher workload.
- Children have a great opportunity to build independence in their learning. In this way, children do not always rely on adult support to access a task and become more confident independent learners.
- Children benefit in many ways from the opportunity to become an 'expert' for the younger children and a positive role model which the younger children often aspire to. However, this is not used as a strategy if it will mean the older child miss out on their own learning opportunities or that the younger children feel inferior to their older classmates.
- In English, mixed grouping allows for a wider range of vocabulary to be taught and children to learn stronger social and verbal competences. Children can become strong communicators using language often beyond their current year group.
- Specialist teaching in maths in upper key stage two provides both the challenge and support that our children require to meet the needs of the curriculum.
- There can be a greater sense of co-operation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers and opportunities to build friendships from across different year groups.

How will this be monitored?

- Teachers regularly assess pupils, both informally (from day to day) and formally (with tests and other assessments). Where pupils need extra help, we work on creative ways to support this. This could be in class or through intervention groups. This is the same whether within a mixed or single year class.

- Teachers regularly monitor and compare classwork across the team to compare outcomes and develop consistency throughout the team as part of our monitoring activities.
- Members of the Leadership Team frequently monitor lessons and books, and this includes observations of lessons. Where things could be improved, staff are supported in this.
- Three times a year we hold Pupil Progress Meetings which focus on monitoring assessment information and ensuring that pupils are making the progress we expect based on their previous attainment. Information from these meetings is shared with Governors as part of their monitoring role.
- Staff Appraisals are linked to pupils' outcomes, progress over time, and progress towards targets
- Link Governors monitor the progress of pupils termly, as well as over time.

How will the pupils be chosen for the classes?

- Staff have clear considerations when planning classes. The focus is that the classes are balanced, with a similar spread of attainment across each class. We look carefully at the academic make-up of the class both for reading, writing and maths.
 1. Friendships and where a change of social group might be helpful, we place the children with the team and the environment that will allow them to thrive.
 2. When grouping children, we make sure that children are in small groups so that are working at the same level of attainment. For example, it is important that there is a small group of pupils who are currently working at Greater Depth in Maths, so that the pupils have others around them who will be working on similar tasks, and they are able to have challenging conversations. This needs to happen at every level across the class.

Learning and the curriculum

Will the separate curriculums be covered?

- The mixed age classes follow a two-year rolling programme of study. These have been developed to create a broad and balanced curriculum over a two-year period. National Curriculum content for children from both years within the key stage has been carefully considered to ensure that the progression of skills is clear.
- English lessons have always been the same for both year groups although the finer teaching objectives for each year group differ.
- We have been using the White Rose mixed-age planning materials this year which means that pupils in the class all learn about the same concept at the same time but are taught the appropriate content for their year group.

How do lessons work in a mixed class

Children are not labelled according to ability

- Most lessons take place as a whole class although staff plan creatively so that pupils are taught what they are needed in the way that will help them learn best.
- Curriculum content is differentiated based on your child's ability, to challenge and support where appropriate.
- Sometimes teachers teach one year group at a time for short periods within a lesson, while the others do an activity led by the Teaching Assistant or work independently. This is how all classes at school function, but this can happen more in the mixed class. Because of this, we have carefully considered the staffing of both Teachers and Support Staff.
- Teachers plan activities to ensure that the same children aren't always working with the Teaching Assistant or independently.

- Staff 'differentiate' activities which means that pupils have slightly different tasks, or more support or challenge, to ensure that pupils practice the skills that they need to move on at their level. This is the same in all classes, mixed or not.
- On occasion, year groups are taught separately (e.g. Outdoor Learning).

How will pupils be sat in classes?

- At Hawley, teachers set up their classrooms in the way that best facilitates learning for their classes. Some prefer tables in rows, others prefer tables in groups.
- In most lessons, pupils sit in a specified place, e.g. year group tables or with others working on the same task. For other lessons, where appropriate, pupils can be given the choice of where to sit.

How will you ensure that children don't repeat work they have already done?

- The curriculum content will be different from last year, as we plan on a 2-year cycle.
- Where the National Curriculum gives single year group objectives, these will be covered by the correct year group.

How will trips be managed?

- Most trips will take place as a phase. The number of classes that can attend at one time is dependent on the place that we are going to.
- The residential trips in key stage 2 will only be for the year group e.g., only Year 5 will go to Stone Farm this year.