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Tuesday, 7th June 2022

Dear Parents/ Carers,

RE: Class balancing and Mixed-age classes

Due to a falling roll within our school, as with many other schools in Southwark, we are in the process of re-organising all of our classes, with some being organised into mixed-age classes. Mixed age classes are not uncommon and are formed in most schools partly because of the way in which the pupil roll is configured in any given year (i.e. the numbers of pupils in each different year group) and this situation can change from year to year as the sizes of year groups varies.

In September, we will be carefully mixing our classes to achieve a balance of ability, age, gender, culture, friendship groups, home language, special needs and confidence.

The balance between parallel classes is kept under review to ensure that each class works well – academically and socially. Very occasionally, it is necessary to re-balance a year group. This is always done in the best interests of both the group and individual members.

Why is the situation different in my child's school from that in other school?

It is fair to say that different situations pertain in all schools. Many schools in Southwark and throughout London have falling rolls and may therefore arrange groups of pupils in mixed age classes. Schools have no choice but to form one or several mixed age classes and of itself it is not an issue or a concern. A number of schools in Southwark have formed mixed age classes, and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect whatsoever on the education of children in that class.

Do mixed age classes have fewer pupils in them?

Sometimes this may happen within smaller settings or when the needs of the children lead this. However, the maximum size of any class with infant children will usually be restricted to 30 children, whilst this is more flexibility in KS2.

Will my child be held back if s/he is placed in a mixed age or split year group class?

Definitely not! The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Our staff are very experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed age learning. They provide challenge for the more-able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in. Furthermore, the school plans educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways which ensure good progression and continuity whichever year group or class they are in.

Belong

Believe

Achieve

But forming a mixed age or split year group class may mean that my child's friendship grouping is broken up?

Although care is taken in allocating pupils to classes their social needs are not ignored. In general terms it is likely to be good for children to experience classes with different classmates so that their circle of friends and acquaintances can be extended beyond the traditional age boundaries. Where new classes are formed, it is of course, perfectly feasible for schools to create opportunities beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes (such as at lunchtimes, special activities, PE etc.) Certainly when children transfer to secondary school, new friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life and this situation is generally welcomed by many children. The school will make every effort to ensure that year groups are not split every year.

Are there any benefits to the arrangements?

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. This 'vertical' grouping often nurtures thinking & problem solving skills, vocabulary & social competences. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. The children usually have several years with the same teacher and this provides a perfect opportunity for the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of a child's needs and strengths and is therefore in a stronger position to better support the child's learning. In turn, the child knows their teacher well, understands the expectations they have and can build upon a level of trust that encourages them to 'have a go' or try something new.

How are split year groups considered?

These include (and are in no particular order of preference):

- social learning group
- emotional development
- readiness to learn
- stage of learning
- additional needs
- gender and age (balance of class and year group)

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the Headteacher and class teachers when making a decision. On Friday 15th July all children will receive their end of year report to parents and in your envelope you will receive the information about your child's class for the next academic year. On Monday 18th July all children will have the opportunity to spend some time with their new teacher in their new classroom. Children starting reception with us in September will be invited to an enrolment meeting as well as a stay-and-play session.

It is the Headteacher who makes the final allocation based on their professional judgement of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.

Thanking you all for your support and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



**Rebecca Benjamins,
Headteacher**

06/06/2022