



Mixing Classes - Frequently Asked Questions

Does the mixing of year groups happen in other schools?

The practice of mixing classes is widespread in most large primary schools – and has been practised successfully in other Tenax Trust primary schools for many years, so we know the model works.

Will this apply to all year groups?

We will discuss all year groups, as we do each year, and then make a decision. At this stage of discussions it will not apply to all year groups, partly because the classes are already fairly evenly balanced and partly because decisions made and actions taken at this time last year have been highly effective. We are looking to mix children at the end of Year 2 and Year 4.

Will my child still be in a class with their friends?

When we have made a decision to mix a year group we will ask the children which group of friends they would like to stay with. These responses will be taken into account when we divide the year group and every child should have at least one friend in their new class. In addition each child will be with a number of children from their existing class. Some children already have friends in the other class and have requested the opportunity to work with those friends.

Does “matching children up to working with other children of similar abilities to encourage challenge” mean that the school will be streaming and/or setting?

What this means is that we will aim to put together a good balance of abilities within each class, such that children who share similar strengths or difficulties in particular areas can sometimes work together. We are not proposing to stream or set. We will continue to teach mixed ability classes but remain open to flexible groupings for some lessons just as we do now.

“My child has settled and has been working increasingly well this year with their academic peer group (which does not necessarily overlap with their friendship group) and I worry that mixing up the classes may leave my child having to find their feet again and disrupting their progress.”

The current class teachers are very aware of their own class dynamics. We want children to make maximum academic progress and do not want to put any child in a position where they have a setback. We will be taking such issues into account.

Why have the classes in some year groups become imbalanced?

When children start in Early Years the classes are balanced out as much as possible taking into account a range of factors such as friendships, special needs, EAL (English as an Additional Language), age and gender. As the children progress through the school the classes can become less balanced due to variety of reasons:

- **Mobility** – for a number of years we have experienced quite a high turnover of pupils and, due to a combination of factors, this affects some year groups more than others. If a new child joins we can only place them where there is a space as we do not want class sizes above 30 except in exceptional circumstances.
- **Special Education Needs** - children develop at different rates and it is not always apparent when joining Reception that at some future point a high level of support may need to be put into place. Sometimes children with high level needs join us further up the school and depending on where there is a space in the year group we may not have any option as to where to place that child. Some children need access to specialist equipment and that may determine which class they need to be based in. Sometimes a child with high level needs may be out of their designated year group.
- **High Ability** – children develop at different rates and it is not always apparent when joining Early Years which children will excel at different subjects. This may cause an imbalance between classes as the year group progresses through the school.

How will you decide the mixing within a year group?

This will be based on a variety of factors including:

- Children's views on friendships
- Teachers' views on friendships
- Working groups
- Ability
- Gender

What are the benefits for the children?

- Better resilience in developing friendships in a safe, comfortable environment – arguably even more important in Y4/5 when they will be moving to secondary school soon and having a wider base of friends would be beneficial.
- Widening working groups.
- Being part of a year group and not just a class.
- For some children a better match to a working group

What are the benefits for the school?

- Further development of good attitudes to learning.
- Children developing resilience in facing challenges whilst in a safe and supportive environment
- Greater potential for grouping children as we need for overall improved academic performance across the school

What is the process now?

- Team leaders are in the process of discussions with class teachers and will make recommendations.
- Class teachers, Team leaders, Mrs Abdullah, SENDCO, Mrs Ley, behaviour and inclusion mentor, and Mrs Hood will decide on the final groupings.
- Children will be asked for friendship information.
- Class teachers will begin to suggest future classes taking into account:
 - o Children's views on friendships
 - o Working groups
 - o Ability
 - o Gender
 - o Potential mobility
- Children and parents to be informed of new classes prior to transition day
- Team building experiences for the new classes will be timetabled for the first weeks back in September.