



Mixed Age Classes and split year groups

Information for parents

Mixed-age classes are common in schools and pupils are not at a disadvantage if they are in a mixed age class. Below you will find some of the frequently asked questions and our response to them.

What is a mixed age and split year group class?

A mixed age class is defined to be a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group of the primary school. In most cases, a mixed age class will comprise of pupils from only one key stages, eg KS1 or KS2, however, there are times, particularly with smaller schools, when pupils from more than one key stage are taught in the same class.

Why are mixed age and split year group classes formed?

Mixed age classes 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 year group). It is not uncommon for this situation to change from year to year as the sizes of year groups can vary quite dramatically.

How long will the school operate mixed year groups?

The school leadership will continue to monitor the school structure and numbers on an annual basis. The school's curriculum has been designed around a two-year rolling programme and this will continue regardless of whether children are taught in mixed or single age classes.

Will my child be held back if she/he is placed in mixed age or split year groups?

No. The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that the teaching and work are tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Our staff are experienced in planning and delivering work that matches the needs of the individual learner and this is no different to the normal class provision. All teachers provide challenge and support for children, regardless of year group. Our curriculum at St Francis' has been designed to be taught in a 2 year rolling programme which means that children will not be repeating work or topics. The National Curriculum clearly sets out what children should cover by the end of the Key Stage; this is supportive of those schools where it is necessary to teach children in classes of more than one year group.

Will being in a mixed age class be detrimental to my child?

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect on the education of children in that class. Performance data of children at the end of KS1 and 2 suggests that being placed in a mixed age classes has no negative impact on children's academic achievements. This is supported by educational research, with some studies suggesting that children often perform better when placed in classes with a bigger age range. A mixed age classroom means that the children will have greater flexibility to learn with children of their own abilities. Children who find aspects of the curriculum more challenging will be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes. Children working above the expected standard will be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them on to explore new concepts.

How will two year groups be taught alongside each other in one classroom?

All children develop at different rates. It isn't automatic that the oldest child in a class will achieve better than the youngest child. Children will be taught to their individual academic needs and not simply to their age. All classes in the school have a large range of abilities. Teachers will choose work appropriate to the level a child is working at, ensuring that all needs are catered for.

Will this mean my child's friendship group is being broken up?

Extra care has been taken in allocating pupils to classes. Your child's class teacher has used their considerable knowledge of your child's needs in school to place them in their new class, ensuring their social needs are supported. We also know that it is good for children to experience classes with different classmates in order that their circle of friends can be extended in a safe and supportive way. Whenever new classes are formed, opportunities are created beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes.

How will a mixed year group affect my child emotionally and socially?

Children learn to form wider friendships and relate to broader groups of children, creating a classroom atmosphere where children are enjoined to help others and seek support from their older peers rather than simply relying on adult support. Socially, pupils enjoy being taught in mixed-class groups and love growing in stature across the two years. Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles and younger pupils are able to accomplish tasks they could not do without the assistance of older children. Pupils develop a better sense of familiarity with their classmates and learn to mix with a wide range of age groups from a young age.