



## **Mixing Classes - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Does mixing take place every year?**

Mixing takes place every year for all classes. Towards the end of every academic year, the teaching faculty use their professional judgement to evaluate and discuss the learning and progress of each class. A decision is then taken as to how to mix year groups in order to achieve a good balance so that teaching and learning can be optimised. A number of factors are discussed these may include social skills, behaviour and academic abilities. The amount of mixing may be just a few pupils or may be a bigger number of pupils, depending on the needs of the group.

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

Ensuring our pupils feel safe, happy and ready to learn is at the heart of our ethos and we know that friendships play a big part in how content our children feel. Children are invited to list at least three children that they would like to be with. These responses are taken into account when we organise the year groups. We will ensure that every child has at least one close friend and ideally two or more friends in their new class. We have also learned that some children already have friends in the other class and specifically request the opportunity to learn with children in the adjacent class.

### **Does balancing abilities across both classes reduce challenge?**

We 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 do not stream or set classes as this has a detrimental effect on attainment. We continue to teach mixed ability classes but also offer flexible groupings for some lessons.

### **“My child has settled down well this year and I worry that mixing up the classes may leave my child having to find their feet again and disrupting their progress.”**

Class teachers are very aware of such dynamics. We want children to make maximum academic progress and do not want to put any child in a position where they have a set-back. At the start of every academic year, time is taken for dialogue, icebreaker and team building activities in line with our behaviour policy which has positive relationship at the heart of our ethos.

### **The numbers of pupils in different classes is varied, why is this?**

When 60 children start in Reception the classes are balanced out as much as possible taking into account a range of factors such as friendships, special needs, EAL, age and gender. As the children progress through the school the classes can become less balanced due to variety of reasons:

- Mobility – schools in Cambridge have quite a high turnover of pupils due to a number of factors including families moving out of the area for housing or to move to other countries
- 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. We do not know through admissions paperwork from county or from pre-school providers, on entry to Reception, as to whether a child will be with us for a short or long stay. However, this year we are planning to ask that question directly from parents on the “All about Me” booklet and that may help with future planning of classes.
- Special 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 where there is a space in the year group the child will join us. 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 Reception which children will excel at different subjects. This may cause an imbalance between classes as the year group progresses through the school. Mixing classes allows for this to be evened out.

#### **How is the mixing within a year group decided?**

This is based on a variety of factors including:

- Children’s views on friendships
- Teachers views on friendships
- Working groups
- Behavioural needs
- 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 less mobility within the class
- For some children a better match to a working group

#### **What are the benefits for the school?**

- Further development of positive 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 for mixing classes?**

1. Team leaders have discussions with class teachers around June time and will make recommendations on class organisation.
2. Senior leaders, Mrs Burton, Ms Hall and Mrs Snape review the recommendation for how classes will be mixed.
3. Children will be informed and asked for friendship information as well as who they work well with
4. Class teachers will work together to suggest arrangements for future classes taking into account:
  - Children's views on friendships
  - Working groups
  - Ability
  - Gender
  - Potential mobility
5. Children and parents will be informed on "Jump-Up Day" which is the new class transition day in July.

### **My child was notified of their new class; they are in a class with at least one friend, but is still not happy?**

Change can be difficult for some pupils; however, learning how to manage change is one way to build resilience. Children may become too dependent on just one or two friends and learning how to build new relationships is a very important social skills. Children should have a chance to adjust, connect and settle in with a new group of peers before a decision is taken to move them too quickly. This may be a period of two weeks or half a term.

Classes will remain as have been organised, but if children/parents/carers really do have a concern, contact the senior team via the office and the school will see what can be done, however, the school reserves the right to organise as needed based on their professional judgement and broad whole school perspective. Thank you for your understanding.