



Newton Hall Infants' School

Mixed Age Classes Policy

Date Approved	June 2026
Date Review	June 2027

Mixed Age Classes

Following our reduction in published admission number due to falling birth rate in the area and reduced funding, the school will be teaching children in mixed age classes. The structure of classes will change depending on the size of cohorts.

A mixed-age class is defined to be a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group. On occasions, where pupil numbers and class size restrictions dictate, year groups will be split between classes. The expertise of the staff is used to ensure your child is placed in a class with their best interests in mind (see below).

"Research strongly supports the idea that mixed-age classrooms are better for students."

The mixed-age classroom is like a family: the older students nurture the younger ones and motivate them. We also believe that one of the best ways to improve one's knowledge or abilities in a subject is to teach the subject to others.

Most human activities involve a cycle in which a beginner learns necessary skills, perfects them through use, and hones them through mentorship. That is true of careers, sports teams, and even hobbies. It is also true of the educational experience of children in mixed year group classes. Research strongly supports the idea that mixed-age classrooms are better for students. Not only do children out-perform peers of the same age academically, studies also show that they thrive socially. Here's why:

Competition is removed

In mixed-age classrooms, children are more likely to cooperate than compete. This spirit of cooperation and caring makes it possible for children to see each other as individuals as opposed to competitors. This reiterates our nurturing, family approach.

Children develop a sense of family with their classmates

Mixed-age classrooms generate a family of learners who support and care for one another. Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and take leadership roles. They model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, helping younger children to accomplish tasks they would not be able to do independently. This dynamic increases the older child's level of independence and competence while increasing the younger child's spirit of belonging in a community of learners. Younger children will have the opportunity to extend their learning and increase their vocabulary whilst working alongside older children. Mixed year classrooms are both socially and psychologically healthy because they promote friendship and provide extended contact with adults and peers of varying ages. Children in these classes therefore show a notable increase in self-esteem.

Children seen as unique individuals

When classrooms contain students of varied ages, teachers concentrate on what children *can* do, rather than what they *can't* do. Teachers focus on instructing each child according to his or her own strengths.

Self-esteem blossoms

Multi-age classrooms are socially and psychologically healthy because they promote friendship and provide extended contact with adults and peers of varying ages. These groups show a noticeable increase in self-esteem.

How the Curriculum is Planned

- ♦ Maths and English – is planned weekly within each phase and is adapted accordingly for the needs of pupils within each class.
- ♦ Phonics will be taught in individual year groups
- ♦ All other subjects are planned within a two-year rolling programme which is also adapted according to individual, or class needs. The rolling programmes have been developed to create a broad and balanced curriculum over a two-year period. National Curriculum / Early Years Foundation Stage framework content for children from both years within the key stage has been carefully considered to ensure that the progression of skills is clear.

Principles

- ♦ The arrangements for class splitting/mixing are based on the professional judgements of class teachers, teaching assistants, the senior leadership team and the Headteacher
- ♦ We will always consider what is in the best interests of individual children and classes as a whole when making decisions
- ♦ We will always consider the happiness and welfare of the children and will take into consideration existing friendship groups when we create new classes

Splitting/Mixing Classes

Our previous experience of mixed age classes has shown that we take a number of influences into consideration and make a professional judgment based on this. Split year groups are considered very carefully, depending on each cohort of children.

Classes will be mixed to achieve a good balance according to the following criteria (in no particular order of preference):

- ♦ Protected characteristics – to create a balance of the number of pupils in each class;
- ♦ Ability – as far as possible, a mix of abilities will be in each class;
- ♦ Social - staff will make a professional decision about where a pupil should be placed for educational, social and emotional reasons (including friendships)*;

*Friendships

Over the course of their time in school, children will have a range of friendship experiences. We find that some friendships can be very fluid, whilst others can stand the test of time. With that in mind and as we prepare to draw up the class lists we will consult with the children, use observations of them in the classroom and at play to inform our decision making.

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the staff when making a decision.

We do not take into account requests from parents about which class they would like their child in or if they can "be with their friends". This is because it would be impossible to take all requests into account and we must make a decision that is in the best interests of all the children in the school both educationally, socially and emotionally. The one point where we seek out parental views before our decisions are published is in the case of twins and siblings close in age. However, it is the teaching staff who make the final allocation based on their professional judgement of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.

As the decision about which class a pupil goes into is based on confidential information, the school cannot explain the full decision about class-setting to parents or children as this would mean discussing confidential matters. No pupil is disadvantaged by which class they are in.

The process:

- ♦ All staff observe the children's friendships at work and play
- ♦ Class teachers meet to ensure a good balance of friendships, range of educational, social and personal needs, gender and maturity are represented in each class
- ♦ Senior leadership team meet with class teachers to discuss and finalise groupings
- ♦ Headteacher and senior leadership team meet and approve classes
- ♦ New classes are shared with parents and children in the second half of the Summer term to support transition.

Concerns from parents/carers

We are aware that having children in a mixed age class where a child is not with all of his/her friends can be a concern for parents. We work hard to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by which class they are in. When children are placed in mixed age classes, they will follow the same National Curriculum through a variety of concepts and levels appropriate to their individual ability. Children will not be "held back" or "struggle to keep up" in any class.

All teachers are trained to work in mixed ability classes whether currently in a straight year group or in mixed age classes. All learning is adapted to challenge the needs of individuals wherever they are on

the learning continuum.

In all primary classes there are a wide range of abilities and all children will learn in different ways at a different pace, responding to a variety of methods and resources. Teachers are able to adapt to the different needs within any class and plan accordingly. The range of abilities will not be significantly different in a mixed age class. Programmes and schemes of work are compiled to suit the development needs of all learners in different groupings.

Opportunities are made for children from the same year group to mix together during break times, lunch times, after school activities, sports teams etc.

Children quickly adapt to their new classes, and we ask they are given an opportunity to do so. We will give them opportunities before the end of the school year to meet their new class mates. However, being a small school, the children already all know each other and regularly play together.

- ♦ Parents will be informed of where their child is placed.
- ♦ Any serious concerns should initially be shared with the senior leadership team or the Headteacher who will be able to reassure parents/carers about their child's allocated class. The organisation of classes is carefully considered to enhance the best chances of educational success for all pupils at school. The motivation when organising classes is to protect the academic, social and emotional interests of the whole school, making the best decision in the interests of all pupils, not favouring one pupil or one year group over another;
- ♦ Parents cannot refuse to have their child placed in any class at Newton Hall Infants' School. This is a managerial decision based on this policy;
- ♦ The governing body have delegated the responsibility of day-to-day management of the school to the Headteacher and senior leadership team. If there are extreme and exceptional circumstances regarding a pupil, on rare occasions, the governing body may consider an individual case;
- ♦ The decision of the Headteacher is final. Children will not be moved once the class has met their new teacher since this would inevitably involve moves of other children to accomplish this.
- ♦ If a parent feels that the school has not adhered to the Mixed Age Classes Policy they can raise this in the first instance with the staff at school, and if still not satisfied, they should raise their concerns through the Complaints Policy available from school or on the school website.

FAQs

Will my child be held back if she/he is placed in a class with the young year group?

Definitely not! The ways in which teaching and learning are organised in primary schools means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The staff at the school are very experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed age classes (all classes already have pupils of different ages and abilities in). 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. The school are still accountable for children making the expected progress and meeting their year group expectations whatever class set up they are in.

I am concerned that forming a mixed age or split year group class may mean that my child's friendship grouping is being 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, opportunities are created beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes (such as at lunchtimes, playtimes, special activities, trips, school performances). When children transfer to junior school, new friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life, and this situation is generally welcomed by many children. Children don't spend a lot of learning time with their friends anyway as they are rarely sitting together in the classroom.

How will teachers plan, ensuring coverage of both the years' curriculums, preventing repetition of content?

With the exception of phonics, the curriculum content for year groups is not split into separate year content, rather, there is an expectation for the end of the key stage. Curriculum areas such as history and geography will be taught on a two-year cycle, ensuring that content is not repeated unless it needs to be built upon. Ensuring coverage of national curriculum objectives / / EYFS framework for both year groups in the same classroom will there be easily facilitated by normal classroom adaptations and careful monitoring.

How will pupil progress be monitored?

- ◆ Teachers regularly assess pupils, both informally (from day to day learning) and formally (with tests and other assessments). Where pupils need extra help, we work on creative ways to support this through the use of individual and class provision maps. This could be in class or through intervention groups.
- ◆ Teachers regularly take part in moderation across the school and with other schools to compare books and outcomes, and develop consistency between different teachers.
- ◆ Members of the leadership team frequently monitor lessons and books; this includes observations of lessons. Where things could be improved, staff are supported in this.
- ◆ We regularly hold pupil progress meetings with staff 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.
- ◆ Governors monitor the progress of pupils termly, as well as over time.
- ◆ The school is regularly monitored by the local authority.

Can you tell us when individual children are leaving or joining our child's class?

No. We cannot do this as this is confidential information for the families/children involved. However, most parents do let their classmates know in advance so that the children can say goodbye. Sometimes family circumstances do not always allow for this.

Review

The senior leadership team will review the process and criteria for each year's class mixing arrangements in the Summer Term ahead of the following year's class mixing.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the leadership team and governors to take account of pupil numbers and budget figures each year.

