

Mixed Age Classes Policy

Safeguarding Statement

Everyone at Horton Grange shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to:

- Providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn in school and;
- Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in school.

Rationale

Due to projected growth in pupil numbers as a result of extensive building of housing in the local catchment area, in 2018/19 the school changed its admission number from 60 to 90. The intention was to start with the Reception intake for September 2018 and grow through school. Adaptations were made to the school building to allow for this.

The school is funded per pupil. Currently we are in a transition period with typical intakes in Reception of around 73 children. Each year we are seeing these numbers typically rise. School is funded for three teachers in Reception regardless of number of children but as they move into Year 1 onwards the funding is based on number of children and therefore it is not financially viable to have pure age classes in some year groups. Schools are financed on a model of 30 children per class. In Key Stage 1 schools are not permitted to have class sizes above 30. This is, however, permitted in Key Stage 2. Therefore, there may be times when the school must consider an organisational model which includes mixed age classes. Governors have agreed that there will be a need for mixed age classes in some cohorts but not all.

Principles and process for organising mixed age classes

- The arrangements for class structure are based on the professional judgements of class teachers and the Senior Leadership Team.
- We will always consider what is in the best interests of individual children and classes as a whole when making decisions.
- No child will be socially isolated by splitting a year group unless behaviour factors are a higher priority.
- Arrangements will be made where possible to ensure children have opportunities to socially interact with children in their own age cohort eg break times and lunch times. There may also be occasions where the structure of the curriculum will be organised into stage not age groupings for some lessons eg Phonics sessions which may provide further opportunities for contact with age cohort (note during the academic year 2020/21 this was not possible due to the COVID pandemic and bubbles being in place to restrict possible contacts). There may also be other curriculum areas and enrichment events, where greater numbers can be accommodated, to access the year group cohort.
- The aim is for the mixed age class to be smaller in number to support the implementation of the curriculum effectively.
- 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.

Children will be assigned to classes for the following reasons:

- Gender – we will try to create a balance between the number of boys and girls;
- Ability – we will try to create, as far as possible, a mix of abilities;
- Maturity – inevitably, some children will be asked to be in classrooms with older pupils and some will be assigned to classes with younger children – staff will make a professional decision about where a child ought to be placed for educational, social and emotional reasons;
- Other specific needs.

We do not take into account requests from children of 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.

As the decision about which class a child goes into is based on confidential information, we do not explain the full decision about class-setting to parents or children as this would mean discussing confidential matters about other children.

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 themes 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 in a straight year group or in mixed age classes. All tasks are differentiated 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. 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.

In order to ensure parents are aware of the way we set classes:

- We explain it to parents when they are shown round school before making the decision to apply for a place at Horton Grange Primary School
- Have a copy of this policy on our website and available to parents upon request
- Contact parents of children who will be in the mixed age class during the final summer term to ensure a dialogue takes place.

Complaints and Appeals

Initially, any concerns should be shared with the headteacher who will be able to reassure you about your 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 teaching and learning interests of the whole school, making the best decision in the interests of all pupils, not one pupil or indeed one year group.

Parents cannot refuse to have their child placed in any class at Horton Grange Primary 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 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.