

Mixed classes at Grange Junior School

The number of children in our year groups fluctuates over time, based on the needs of our community. As a result, for the year 2024-2025 we will be running mixed classes in Year 3 & 4 and will adapt our curriculum to meet these arrangements. As a leadership team, we decided that 5 mixed classes across these year groups would enable teachers to work collaboratively rather than only having one mixed class. This decision has been discussed in detail since our numbers and funding were finalised in April.

Below are some answers to '**frequently asked questions**' about this.

Why and how has the decision to mix year groups been made?

Every year we review the numbers in each year group, as well as the individual needs of children in the group, the staffing and the classes we have. We then model different scenarios for the year and discuss this with the Trust. We consider the best ways to meet the needs of all of the year groups as well as the financial implications.

What is considered in order to ensure mixed classes work?

Detailed discussions and ongoing training are provided to all teachers to continuously improve teaching and learning. Subject specific training is provided according to the age range teachers oversee and this will focus on the delivery of the curriculum to mixed age classes.

We will also reorganise our curriculum so that children don't repeat learning from an earlier year group and ensure that all children are sufficiently challenged and supported. Our curriculum will be organised as a rolling programme so that all the same learning will be covered just over a two-year period.

As a Trust a significant piece of work this year has been around the creation of a Common Curriculum. This means that schools across the White Horse Federation will use the same robust planning and resources giving teachers more time to consider adaptations and teaching approaches. This work has included producing planning for mixed aged classes.

How will the new class structure be monitored?

Teachers regularly assess children, both informally (from day to day) and formally (with tests and other assessments). Every week teachers complete the RAG which is an assessment tool that tracks every child's progress. The Senior Leaders meet weekly to monitor this and support teachers in ensuring children meet their full potential. Where children need extra help, we work on ways to support this. This could be in class or through intervention groups. This is the same whether within a mixed or single year class. Teachers regularly compare books across the year group classes to compare outcomes and develop consistency between different teachers. Members of the Leadership Team frequently monitor lessons and books, and this includes observations of lessons. Where things could be improved, staff are supported in this. The leadership team also review formal assessments regularly and identify ways to best deploy staff across the whole school to best support the range of needs across the school.

How will the children be organised into their different classes?

Staff have clear considerations when planning classes. The main focus is that the classes are balanced, with a similar spread of attainment and needs across each class in both Year 3 and Year 4. We consider friendships and where a change of social group might be helpful. We work closely with the Infant School and use their knowledge of the children to support this process.

How we will support the children?

Children are given specific age-appropriate outcomes for lessons so that they are clear about what they need to achieve. Expectations for children are often different and this is not always solely linked to age. Not every child is working at their age expectation. Lessons and activities are adapted for all classes – mixed year group or not. All teachers are used to working in classes where they cater for children at different stages and these principles will be applied when teaching a mixed class. Many schools nationally and across the trust already run mixed age classes very successfully and the outcomes children make are not affected.

Will children's emotional needs be picked up, and children nurtured in a mixed class?

In September, we always spend a significant amount of time getting children settled into their new class. Emotional needs are picked up in all the usual ways and the older children are often able to pass on the benefit of experience in class discussions. We have a strong pastoral approach in school and work with all children on this through daily interactions and planned programmes of support as required.

Learning and the curriculum

Will the separate Y3/4 curriculums be covered?

Children will continue to cover their year group curriculum in English and Maths in the same order, as this is how they are designed to be taught. Some of the English and Maths curriculum are designed to be repeated and many objectives naturally go together. We have reviewed other areas of the curriculum so that all content will be covered with some being delivered on a two-year rotation. This means children will have the same experiences but not necessarily in the same order.

How do lessons work in a mixed class?

Most lessons take place as a whole class although staff plan creatively so that children are taught what they are needed in the way that will help them learn best and develop the skills they need for their specific year group. Sometimes teachers teach one year group at a time for short periods within a lesson, while the others do an activity to apply this knowledge independently. This way of designing a lesson already happens across the school and works effectively. On occasion, year groups may be taught separately, e.g. some PSHE units. As we move through a school year and assess the children; we regularly review our groupings and how we are delivering some areas of the curriculum to ensure children meet their full potential.

How will you ensure that Y4s don't repeat work they have already done?

As explained above, we have mapped out the curriculum to ensure there is no repetition or omissions for either year group. Where the National Curriculum gives single year group objectives, these will be covered by the correct year group. As described above this is likely to be delivered by the teacher to one year group whilst the other work independently.

How will trips be managed?

Most trips will take place as a class and are always linked to the work being covered in class. The number of classes that can attend at one time is dependent on the place that we are going and this will be planned according to our risk assessments. Currently this happens and sometimes we spread trips over more than one day.

How will we ensure a smooth transition for the new Year 3 pupils?

We will start our transition for Year 3 next week. Year 3 will spend their first day getting to know some of the main routines; (eg; start of the day, breaktimes and assemblies) where different places are (eg; Computer Suite and Library) and who different people are. During their first day they will also think of some questions that they would like to ask their new buddy the following day. They will also have an assembly with Mrs Gordon and Mrs Arthur. After spending one day on their own we will start the process of getting them familiar with their new class. We have planned different activities, so the children get to know each other and what our school rules and values mean. The transition for all pupils will be a gradual process and will continue into September. Year 3 children will be given a Year 4 class buddy to help them settle and get to know each other.