



Mixing Classes

FAQ FOR PARENTS



RACKHAM C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mixed age classes

It is commonplace in the local area for schools to operate with mixed-age classes. Our experience shows that pupils in a mixed age class are not at a disadvantage and most will find they benefit from the experience.

Below you will find answers to some of the frequently asked questions which may be helpful. You should also see the **School Policy on Mixing Classes** available from the school office.

Which classes are mixed?

Mixed age classes occur throughout our school. Because the number of pupils we have in each year group can vary, classes are re-organised each year to avoid one class being much larger than another.

Why does the school have mixed age classes?

In Key Stage 1 the government sets the pupil limit per class at 30. Our intake number 45 per year, so in most years we have enough pupils for more than one class per year group. In some year groups we have fewer pupils than others, but we aim to keep our class sizes as small as is possible. Mixed classes allow us the flexibility to respond to changes with the minimum disruption to our pupils' educational journey.

Recently pupil intakes into Reception have fallen below 45, however the Local Authority tells us that this is likely to increase significantly in coming years due to the housing development in the village.

Why split classes on age?

In Key Stage 1 children are distributed between the classes based on their age alone. This is the fairest way of splitting a group of pupils to avoid bias and maintain children's self-esteem. (See school policy for further details).

There is no evidence that being in a class with pupils of a younger year group is disadvantageous. In fact, pupils at Rackham often inform us that they enjoy sometimes being the oldest and sometimes the youngest in a class and able to share or learn from the experience of their classmates. Staff witness children making friends that they would not normally have spoken to in the playground.

We ensure that there is a proportional mix of gender in each year group.

Is my child covering the same curriculum as the other classes?

The National Curriculum for KS1 and KS2 sets out what each child should cover in each subject. All children are entitled to access the National Curriculum and Governors have a duty to ensure this is happening.

Each year, our teachers select themes for the learning to focus on each term. We then take those themes and link relevant parts of the National Curriculum to them, ensuring that, during a Key Stage, pupils have covered all that is expected.

Our 'Curious Curriculum' means that teachers share the themes with their pupils and each class chooses the theme that they would like to learn about. This then enables each teacher to plan their term's lessons in a more personalised way, as each child feels that their learning is relevant to them. Children in the same year group, but in different classes, may have a different theme, but they will all be covering the relevant parts of the National Curriculum for their age.

Feedback from our pupils has been unanimous – they much prefer this way of learning to the old one. It creates much more work for our teachers but results in a better quality of provision and our pupils are making better progress since it was introduced.

Is my child disadvantaged by working with children in a younger year group?

Simply, No.

All pupils are taught according to their age. The National Curriculum is split into skills and knowledge that should be securely learnt by pupils in each year group, so for example, pupils in year 1 follow the Year 1 curriculum irrespective of the make-up of their class.

Our teachers are skilled professionals and manage this effectively - it is what they are trained to do. Children may sometimes find their work challenging, especially when they are learning something new and may need support with this. Other times the work given may be felt to be easy – this is useful evidence that your child has securely understood it. Usually the work set is somewhere in between, so your child can work independently and think about what they are doing as they apply their learning.

How do I know my child is making progress?

The class teacher continuously assesses each child's progress against Age Related Expectations in many ways. This helps them to plan learning opportunities to ensure your child continues to progress.

Each term a member of the School Leadership Team meets 1-2-1 with the class teachers to discuss the progress of pupils in their class. Children are individually assessed to see whether they are on track to meet end of year expectations in reading, writing and maths. Your child will be identified as achieving:

- expected progress,
- better than expected progress
- less than expected progress.

In each of the core subjects, teachers assess the sub-level that your child is working at – this will be “Working Towards”, “Secure” or “Greater Depth” and that data is put into our tracking system. If your child does not make expected progress in one term do not be alarmed, it does not necessarily mean that they are falling behind – it is normal for pupils to learn at different rates and they may catch up the following term, be assured we keep an eye on them to ensure this is the case.

If at any time we are concerned that your child is struggling to keep up with expected progress, you will be informed, and we will discuss the support that we will put in place to help get them back on track.

Why can't all pupils in a year group always go on the same trips?

The visits that our pupils go on are directly linked to the learning taking place in their class. Pupils who go on educational visits will usually find the experience very different from a family visit to the same place, as workshops or talks are arranged as part of the visit. Pupils go on the trips which are of most direct benefit to their individual learning needs.

Whilst the trips for pupils in a single year group are not always identical, your child will get a valuable learning experience that can be followed up in class. When teachers are organising visits, they discuss what the aims of the visit are and ensure that there are appropriate learning opportunities during the visit. It is not unusual for all classes in a year group to go on the same trip –we have often organised whole Key Stage trips where the learning experience is valuable to all the pupils involved.

To ensure that there are opportunities for the whole year group to be together we do plan specific activities and events such as year group open mornings, concerts and performances, sporting tournaments, residential visits, sports days etc.