Information about how we organise classes at Water Orton Primary School

At Water Orton Primary School our Pupil Admission Number (PAN) is 45. Schools usually work on an average class size of around 30 pupils, with no more than 30 in an infant class by law. This means that our groups of children don't fit into one class with one year group.

A mixed age class is a class in which there are children who are from more than one-year group within the same classroom. At Water Orton children from Year R to 6 are often taught in mixed age classes. This has been the case for many years.

At Water Orton Primary we have to have mixed aged classes.

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 pupils in the group, the balance of boys and girls, friendship groups, the staffing and the classes we already have. We then model different scenarios for the year, and subsequent years, and discuss this with Governors. We consider the needs of the year groups alongside the budgetary implications of the different scenarios. Teachers take a great deal of time to arrange the classes, taking into account all these factors.

We also recognise that transition to a new class within school can be very daunting for pupils. Research suggests that changes in peer group and familiar adults can have a negative impact on the academic progress that pupils make and can result in more anxiety and worry. In planning new classes, we aim to reduce the negative impact of class changes as much as possible. Therefore, where we have been able to, we have maintained current class peer groups and in some cases classrooms and teachers as well. Some change is inevitable, for example when pupils move into another phase in school or when staff members move on or move year groups and helping children to manage this can be useful in preparing children for transitions to secondary school and for life in general.

We have to consider the best ways to meet the needs of all of the year groups while maintaining a balanced budget. State schools are funded on the assumption that one teacher will work with approximately 30 children. We also have just enough classrooms in the school to run classes of approximately 30. Taking all of these things into account there is never one simple answer to how to organise our classes.

In 2025/26 the school will be organised in the following way.

Reception /1	Class names and allocation of teachers will be shared on Transition Day, which is Wednesday 10th July.
Reception /1	
Reception /1	
Year 2	
Year 2	
Year 3/4	
Year 3/4	
Year 3/4	
Year 5/6	
Year 5/6	
Year 5/6	
Evergreen – all years	

Organising the classes in this way creates consistency for all.

Research evidence tells is that mixed aged classes are as effective as single age classes, as does our experience over a number of years in school. They also have some potential benefits.

What are the potential benefits of mixed aged classes

- There are increased opportunities for flexibility in groupings, enabling learners to work with the appropriate ability, regardless of age
- The teacher focuses on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths, not their age – learning is highly personalised
- Mixed-age classes encourage a spirit of co-operation where learners are more likely to support each other than compete with one another
- Giving older learners the chance to support younger learners socially builds their confidence and leadership skills. The younger learners also benefit as they see their older peers modelling positive, mature behaviours
- Older children model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, and younger children are able to accomplish tasks more effectively because of the modelling by older children. This dynamic also increases the older child's level of independence, confidence and competence
- There are opportunities to build friendships from across different year groups

- In English lessons, mixed grouping allows for a wider range of vocabulary to be taught. Children can become strong communicators using language often beyond their current year group.
- Planning and preparation can be shared and approached together across classes with children in the same year groups which reduces workload and allows teachers to focus time on quality interactions with children.

What are the potential challenges?

Teachers of mixed age classes face the challenge of responding to a wide diversity of learners within their classroom - this is the norm in any primary classroom. High quality teaching and learning successfully addresses the full range of diversity. Teachers will do this by;

Continuing to weave different year group curriculum needs together to cater for all learners, teaching lessons that are tailored to the class and the individuals within it.
Capitalising on overlaps; In the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and the National Curriculum, areas of learning are regularly revised and revisited in English and Maths - most themes have significant overlap between year groups (e.g. addition in maths and prefixes in spelling are taught across almost all year groups, at different levels.)
Delivering a two-year curriculum program: Where there is no overlap of content, specific year group objectives are planned and delivered separately through the use of a two-year rolling program. This means that all content is covered and nothing is repeated (unless is needs to be or the curriculum tells us it must be)
Water Orton Primary already has an established two-year rolling programme of topics and themes for the curriculum so that nothing is missed or repeated. You can see how this works for **this year** by looking at the long-term plan on the school website.

https://www.waterortonprimaryschool.co.uk/curriculum/

A particular note about Reception and Year 1

The Reception and Year 1 environment will be set up as 3 bases with some areas shared between each classroom. The learning areas in each class will be thought out carefully to match the skill development for each age range in relation to the EYFS and KS1 curriculum. Children in Reception and Year 1 will have access to the outdoor classroom.
Children will experience a range of activities during the school day. This will include the opportunity to 'play' in the planned areas, work with adults on direct learning tasks and learn as a whole class with their teacher.
This kind of approach is known as a continuous provision approach and it is what Reception Year children experience in most primary schools. There is time for adults to work 1:1 or with small groups and have more focus time per child as well as engaging with them within continuous provision. This is in addition to direct teaching of subjects like phonics and maths.
Although there is a change of curriculum from year R to 1, we believe that the continued use of continuous provision will make this transition less of a barrier for children because the classroom organisation, rules and routines are similar to those that they are used to.
Further details about continuous provision are available on our school website.

In summary; It is in our interests to plan the structure of our school to ensure that pupils achieve the best outcomes that they can and we believe that our structure offers a positive experience for pupils.