

Mixed-age Class Teaching and Learning Policy appendix

What is Mixed Age Teaching?

Mixed age teaching is when two, or more, year groups are combined to create one class of children. This is especially common in small, rural schools where the pupil intake numbers are less than the usual class size of 30. At St Peter's, we have 4 classes to accommodate the 100 pupils in the school. Our school has 4 classes: Cygnus: Reception; Tucana: Year 1 and 2; Phoenix: Year 3 and 4; Pegasus: Year 5&6.

What happens when your child goes into a mixed age class?

They form strong relationships, make good progress, have individual attention, get new friends every year, make other friendships, play together, work together in smaller classes and experience another year group. **They all access the correct curriculum for their year group, age, and stage of development**, although the pathways to the same learning will be different according to the cycle that the school is teaching.

For core subjects, there are two main approaches to teaching mixed-age classes. One is to keep the class together wherever possible but being flexible when necessary. Another is to provide separate teaching for individual year groups. This is how we teach phonics, PE, PSHCE and some maths. The national curriculum has many requirements that are similar for each year group., which allows us to have the flexibility to teach the class, as a whole, if necessary. The table below shows what children are required to learn in number and place value in Year 3 and 4, for example:

Year 3	Year 4
recognise the place value of each digit in a three-digit number (hundreds, tens, ones)	recognise the place value of each digit in a four-digit number (thousands, hundreds, tens, and ones)
compare and order numbers up to 1000	order and compare numbers beyond 1000

For our foundation subjects: Art, DT, Geography and History, we teach the National Curriculum using Cornerstones Maestro curriculum as a spine. The table below shows how each year group is taught the appropriate skills for their age group.

Cycle	Topics
Cycle A	Teach and assess knowledge from cycle A, revisiting and recapping from cycle B Teach and assess skills for appropriate year groups
Cycle B	Teach and assess knowledge from cycle B, revisiting and recapping from cycle A. Teach and assess skills for appropriate year groups.

*It may be that the higher year group skill is demonstrated by both year groups but the teacher will ensure they have at least taught the appropriate skill and may assess only against skills taught.

Example:

Cycle A Coastlines Tucana Class	Geography
Cycle B Bright Lights Big City Tucana Class	
KNOWLEDGE	SKILL
The world's seven continents are Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America	Y1 To name and locate continents on a map Y2 to name and locate continents on a map and a globe

In this lesson, some Y1s might also be introduced to and use globes but the teacher will only assess them against whether they can use a 2d map to correctly name and locate continents. The expectation that they can confidently and independently use them will come in year 2 once they have had more experience of using maps to connect the idea of a flat map and round globe.

Misconceptions about Mixed Age classes

- Pupils are not kept down or held back
- Pupils miss out on learning
- There is no academic disadvantage or advantage to being in either the younger or older part of the cohort. The ambitious curriculum is in place regardless.

What are the benefits to mixed age teaching?

There are however many proven benefits to mixed age teaching, such as:

- There is a greater focus on individualisation.

- The spread of age ensures ambition and challenge and scaffolded support for knowledge.
- Pupils form wider friendships and strong relationships
- Pupils relate to broader groups of other children.
- Younger pupils get the benefit of experiencing being the oldest in their class and the responsibilities that go with this.
- There is greater flexibility of learning opportunities.
- Children have less transitions to cope with.

What is the whole school approach?

We work hard throughout the school to ensure that all children in a particular year group maintain their group's identity. Opportunities will be created for all children in the year group to work together, take part in workshops and trips together, sit together at dinner time and play together. We hold a transition day for the children to meet their new teachers and spend time preparing them for the changes that will happen in the Autumn term. We use transition activities and booklets to prepare children. We plan short activities that are delivered by other staff and in other classrooms to familiarise pupils with upcoming change. We refer to pupils by their class name but often split them into year groups to allow a mixture of both identities.

What are the teachers' responsibilities when teaching mixed age classes?

All teachers are responsible for the individual development of every child in their class. Mixed year group classes do not change this responsibility. At St Peter's there is already a wide range of needs within each class and year group and the teachers are already proficient at adapting the curriculum to meet the pupils' individual needs across the curriculum.

In mixed year group classes, the teachers take the objectives and plan a programme of study to teach these objectives effectively across the ability range of the class. At times pupils will work at the same pace, building on skills and knowledge from the previous year; some children will have additional mastery work (deepening and broadening their skills); work at different levels of ability and at other times the pupils will do completely different work specific to their needs within that area of learning. At all times, the teacher is finding out about each individual child's abilities and is planning and evaluating accordingly in terms of the differentiated outcomes of the tasks the teacher is asking the children to perform.