

Mixed Classes

We are currently finalizing our class structure for next September and this year there will be three mixed age classes in School. Given our numbers on roll and the size of the building we have, this is likely to increase in future. Mixed age classes are formed in most schools partly because of the way in which the pupil roll is configured in any given year (i.e. – the numbers of pupils in each different year group). The annual intake of children at Crooks barn is at least 38 children could be as high as 40. As in previous years, this has an impact on how we organize the children. The following information may answer any questions you may have.

Will my child be held back if she/he is placed in a mixed age or split year group class?

Definitely not! The ways in which learning and teaching are organized in primary schools means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The Staff at the school are very experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed age learning. They provide challenge for the more able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in. Furthermore, the school will plan the educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways which ensure good progression and continuity, which ever year group or class they are in.

Do mixed age classes have fewer pupils in them?

Sometimes this may happen, but this can also depend on the amount of space available in specific classrooms. However the maximum size of any class with infant children will usually be restricted to 30 children, whilst this is more flexible in KS2.

Why is the situation different in my child's school from that in other schools?

It is fair to say that different situations pertain in all schools. Many schools across the Local Authority have similar admission numbers and may therefore arrange groups like us. Each one of these schools has no choice but to form one or several mixed age classes. In none of these schools is the formation of mixed age classes of itself an issue or a concern. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect whatsoever on the education of children in that class.

But forming a mixed age or split year group class may mean that my child's friendship grouping is being broken up?

Although care is taken in allocating pupils to classes their social needs are not ignored, in general terms it is likely to be good for children to experience classes with different classmates so that their circle of friends and acquaintances can be extended beyond the traditional age boundaries. Where new classes are formed, it is of course, perfectly feasible for schools to create opportunities beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes (such as at lunchtimes, special activities, PE etc.). Some of our classes mix for Maths and English, so there is already lots of movement around school. Certainly when children transfer to secondary school, new

friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life, and this situation is generally welcomed by many children.

Are there any benefits to the arrangements?

Children benefit in many ways from the opportunity to become an 'expert' for the younger children and a positive role model which the younger children often aspire to. This 'vertical' grouping often nurtures thinking & problem solving skills, vocabulary & social competences. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. Some children will stay with the same teacher and this provides a perfect opportunity for the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of a child's needs and strengths and is therefore in a stronger position to better support the child's learning. In turn the child knows their teacher well, understands the expectations they have, and can build upon a level of trust that encourages them to 'have a go' or try something new.