



# Parents' Guide to Mixed Age Classes



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

### Things that do happen!

They do make good progress, have individual attention, maintain friendships, make other friendships, play together, work together in smaller classes and experience another year group.

### Things that don't happen!

They are not kept down or held back and they definitively do not miss out. Just as children reach all their baby milestones at different rates, so too their stages of learning will progress differently.

### Contacts

Class organisation is a whole school process and arrangements involve the full teaching team. We encourage parents to discuss any issues about mixed age teaching with their class teachers.

**Please don't hesitate to talk to us!**

## Teachers' Responsibilities

All teachers are responsible for the individual development of every child in their class. Mixed year group classes do not change this responsibility. At Frieth 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 tasks but 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.

## 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.





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## Why mixed age teaching?

Schools come in many shapes and sizes and there are advantages and disadvantages in all systems of education. For most rural, small schools mixed age classes are a way of life. Unless a school is of at least 175 pupils there is insufficient funding to provide single age classes, even if there were the physical space to do so. There have been a number of studies into the effectiveness of mixed age teaching in small schools over the years. These studies have concluded that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that curriculum provision in these small primary schools is inferior to that found in larger schools. In fact, there is no national data to suggest that there are any negative impacts on pupil progress due to mixed age classes. The factors which keep the positive impact on pupil progress are: the size of the school; the more in-depth knowledge of the pupils; greater flexibility in staffing.

Traditionally our KS1 has always been mixed age taught and the results achieved in KS1 SATs have been above national averages.. Our results in KS2 since moving to Mixed age teaching have remained strong and again, the proportion of pupils attaining at level 5 and above continued to be above national averages.

The cohort sizes within small schools fluctuate from year to year. Our aim is to keep all the KS2 classes to a similar size, thereby ensuring that they all have an equal share of the teachers' time. This means the splitting point for each year group may vary from year to year according to the numbers of pupils within the cohort and within the cohorts above and below the split class.

At some point in KS1 and in KS2, every child will spend two years within the same class base. When the pupils spend a second year with the same teacher, they do not do the same work as all our classes run on a rolling curriculum plan that ensures that topics are not repeated and that all pupils cover the required work over the four years. In the core subjects our pupils are and will be taught according to their individual ability and needs and in line with the curriculum appropriate to their age range. The key is targeted learning opportunities and individualised assessment leading to a thorough understanding and knowledge of each individual pupil.

There are many proven benefits to mixed age teaching, such as: pupils form wider friendships and 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, rather than always being seen as the youngest; there is greater flexibility; and there is better differentiation because of the focus on individualisation.