



Denmead Junior School Policy and Process for Mixing Classes

Responsibility for document: Headteacher

Policy Written: July 2022

Policy Approved: March 2023

Policy to be reviewed: March 2024

The mixing of year groups is normal practice for a school of this size. Our reason for deciding to mix classes throughout school is to build new and improve existing relationships, so that over a child's journey through the primary phase (including the infant phase), they would be mixed at least twice and be given the opportunity to connect and re-connect with all of the children in their year group, building strong, positive connections.

It will be usual practice for Year 4 classes to be mixed to lead into Year 5 and on occasion, children in certain other year groups will also be mixed, at the end of each academic year. The only reason Year 4 classes may not be mixed is if they were mixed the previous year and it is deemed that there is not a need for further mixing.

Each year the School Leadership Team will discuss year groups and make a decision as to whether additional year groups to year 4, would benefit from also being mixed.

Reasons for Mixing Classes

We have previously seen the positive impact of mixing classes in the past, we feel that regular, routine mixing of classes will help the children's relationships, help to balance the classes and limit any ongoing friendship issues within classes which is not conducive to learning, allowing children to develop better resilience and develop broader friendships in a safe and comfortable environment.

We feel that by mixing the year group, the children will have the opportunity to make friends across the year groups and see themselves as a year group team rather than just a class, thus building a stronger school community and pride in our school.

This also builds resilience that will be needed when moving on to secondary education, where children are regularly streamed and in addition, may attend different schools to some of their existing friends.

Benefits for the children:

- To create opportunities for children to learn and play with a wider variety of peers.
- To enable greater social interaction between children as they move through the school.

- Better resilience in developing friendships in a safe, comfortable environment – arguably even more important in the older year groups when they will be moving to secondary school soon and be taught in various groups.
- Being part of a year group team and not just a class.
- Building more relationships and connections with children in their year which will benefit them throughout their whole school journey and in the wider community.
- Enabling new children to settle better into school.
- To promote a greater sense of community in a large three-form entry junior school
- Strengthening the whole school community as families will also have the opportunity to develop relationships with other families within the year group.

Principles

- The arrangements for class mixing are based on the professional judgements of Class Teachers, the Phase Leaders, the SENDCo and ultimately, the Headteacher.
- We will always consider what we believe is in the best interests of individual children and classes as a whole when making decisions.
- We will communicate the criteria for class mixing in an open and transparent way through this document.
- We will always consider the happiness and welfare of the children and will take into consideration existing friendships when we create new classes.

Deciding new class lists

We want children to make maximum academic progress and develop well socially and personally and we do not want to put any child in a position where they have a setback. When mixing, the current class teachers who know the children very well, will work together to draw up the classes for the next year. These will be finalised with the Phase Leader and SENDCo, before being finally checked again by the class teachers, to try avoid any errors. There will be consistent criteria for teachers to consider in order to harmonise the classes for the maximum benefit of the children:

- Children's views on friendships
- Teachers views on friendships
- Range of educational, social and personal needs
- Age and level of maturity
- Balance of Gender
- Balance of Special Educational Needs
- Balance of English as additional language
- Balance of Ability

- Family relationships such as in year siblings or children of staff
- Advance and appropriate reasons from parents

Including the children in the decision

The children's opinions are important to us at Denmead Junior School, so we will involve the children themselves in our decision. We will ask them which friends they would like to stay with. It is not our intention to separate good friendships, however this may occur and, of course, the children will still be spending valuable time together out on the playground at break and lunch times regardless of which class they are in. The children's responses will be taken into account when we decide the class lists and every child will have at least one named friend in their new class. Some children already have friends in other classes and may request the opportunity to work with those friends. The class teachers will talk to the children beforehand to explain the process and to reassure the children of any worries they may have. By the end of the year the teachers know their children and families very well and so are better able to decide on the best groupings for the children.

Parents

Parents are also most welcome to talk, confidentially, to current class teachers throughout the year, to let them know their views too, should they wish to do so, in the knowledge that a year group mix may happen. Alternatively, parents may wish to email the school prior to any class mix with any relevant information that they may wish for the school to take into account. We will consider this information, alongside the other criteria, when making decisions on class lists.

In addition, the children's friendship choice list will be sent home so that parents can support their child in making good choices. These lists are not ranked. If these lists are not returned, class teachers will support children in making their choices in school.

Once the transition day has happened, we will only be making class changes in very exceptional circumstances and where conditions allow.