

Maids Moreton CE School



Information for Parents about Mixed Age Classes

What is a mixed age class?

A mixed age class is defined to be a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group of the primary school.

In most cases, a mixed age class will comprise of pupils from 2 year groups. However, it is possible, particularly in very small schools, that a mixed age class may contain pupils from three or more year groups.

Our proposal would mean that our EYFS class would remain as a single year group, and we would have a key Stage 1 class of Year 1 and 2 pupils, a lower Key Stage 2 class of Year 3 and 4 pupils and an upper Key Stage 2 class of Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Our classrooms are much larger than the average school class size so we have plenty of space to accommodate 30 pupils.

Are mixed age classes unusual?

Many primary schools with under 150 pupils adopt the mixed age group model. Local examples include Padbury, East Claydon, Twyford, North Marston. In none of these schools is the provision of mixed age classes an issue or a concern.

As a staff at Maids Moreton, we can draw upon first hand experience of working in previous schools with mixed age classes.

How would teachers plan, ensuring coverage of both the Year 1 and 2 curricula, preventing repetition of content?

With the exception of Maths, English and Science, the curriculum content for Years 1 and 2 is not split into separate Year 1 and 2 content, rather, there is an expectation for the end of Key Stage 1.

Curriculum areas such as History and Geography would be taught on a two year cycle, ensuring that content is not repeated. The school would adopt a two year rolling programme to ensure all children have covered all the necessary subject content in each subject by the end of each two year block.

In the case of Maths and English, the two curricula are completely aligned, with the majority of Year 1 objectives being matched with a similar but more challenging objective for Year 2. For example, Year 1s are expected to count forward in multiples of 2, 5 and 10, and Year 2 are further expected to do this backwards.

Ensuring coverage of national curriculum objectives for both year groups would therefore be easily facilitated by normal classroom differentiation. This approach would be the same for the Year 3/4 class and Year 5/6 class going forwards.

How would two year groups be taught together?

The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils building on their prior knowledge and understanding. All children develop at different rates. It isn't automatic that the oldest child in a class will achieve better than the youngest child. Children would be taught to their individual academic needs and not simply to their age.

All classes currently in the school have pupils with a large range of abilities. The teachers at Maids Moreton are skilled at teaching classes which include children working on curriculum content of different levels.

For example in a lesson about addition, all children might learn to add two numbers together. Some children will add two single digit numbers, other will add a single digit number to a two digit number and some may work on adding two, two digit numbers.

In the majority of lessons, the children would start the session together on the carpet with the teacher targeting questions at individuals or groups of children at an appropriate level. Children would then be provided with appropriate activities to consolidate or practise what they have been taught, with the teacher and Teaching Assistant working with children who require additional assistance or who need to be extended and explore concepts in greater depth.

How would we ensure the highest academic expectations for all children?

Both national and local data for performance of children at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 suggests that being placed in a mixed age classes has no negative impact on children's academic achievements. This is supported by educational research, with some studies suggesting that children often perform better when placed in classes with a bigger age range. **Research has shown that children taught in mixed year groups do just as well as children in single year groups. The quality of teaching is the most important factor, not the structure of the classes.**

The staff at Maids Moreton are experienced at planning and delivering work to match the ability range of pupils within their classes. A mixed age classroom means that the children would have greater flexibility to learn with children of their own abilities. Children who find

aspects of the curriculum more challenging would be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes. Children working above the expected standard would be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them on to explore new concepts.

How would we manage statutory testing across both year groups?

As you may be aware, children in both Years 1 and 2 are subject to statutory testing, with Year 1 children undertaking the Phonics Screening Check and Year 2 undertaking SATS tests. At Maids Moreton we are committed to achieving the best possible standards for our children without teaching to the test. We would continue to teach phonics in three groups as we do currently, across Key Stage 1. Year 1 children and those Year 2 children retaking the test, would be prepared for the Phonics Screening Check in exactly the same way as we already do. Equally, preparation for SATS testing in Year 2 would not sit outside of normal classroom practice. Year 1 children would not be expected to sit the Year 2 papers and they would be taught their usual curriculum during Key Stage 1 SATS, with Year 2 children working separately to sit the papers.

The same model would be applied in the Year 5/6 class when the Year 6 children would sit their Key Stage 2 SATS and 11 plus selection exam.

What are the social benefits of the arrangements?

In mixed age classes, the older children tend to act as positive role models to which the younger children often aspire. This 'vertical' grouping often nurtures thinking & problem skills, vocabulary and social competences. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work and interact with a wider circle of peers.

The children would have continued learning with the same teacher over a two year period, and this would provide an opportunity for the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of each child's individual needs and strengths and be in a stronger position to support the child's learning. This makes a seamless transfer from one year group to the next.

The school at maximum capacity, would hold 105 children, retaining the small school ethos that staff, pupils and parents appreciate.

I hope the information provided above is useful and answers any questions you may have. If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Keira Ainsworth Head Teacher