

Stannington First School



Class Organisation Policy

Author:	Alexandra Palmer
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Chair of Governors	Tim Hague
Headteacher	Alexandra Palmer

Class Organisation policy

At Stannington First School, we make a decision in the summer term of each academic year as to one of the following options:

- Leave all the classes and teaching staff as they are and transfer children to the next year group
- Leave the classes as they are, move teaching staff to a different year group and transfer children to the next year group
- Rearrange the classes and staffing prior to children transferring up to the next year group

Rationale for class organisation

Class organisation is reviewed annually to ensure:

- all pupils have access to the best possible learning environment
- classes remain balanced in response to increasing/decreasing pupil numbers

The decision regarding whether a class reorganisation is required is taken each summer term, when the school has confirmed the number of pupils on roll for the following academic year. If a reorganisation is required, there is then consultation between the headteacher, members of staff and governors before a final decision is made.

Some academic years, the best option is considered to be creating a mixed class or a split year group. (see FAQ below) If class reorganisation requires the creation of a split year group, the decision regarding how to split a cohort of children is made following discussion between the staff, headteacher and governing body. This is a strategic organisational issue for the school, informed by the professional judgement of the headteacher, class teachers and governing body. It is not considered an issue for wider consultation as in these circumstances there is no universal agreement from parents.

If a cohort is to be split between two classes, we will communicate the criteria for the decision in an open and transparent way. Regardless of the outcomes of any class reorganisation, staff will always ensure that children from a split year group continue to play together and that at social times, including lunchtime, children operate as a whole year group and can form any grouping they wish from their current or previous classes.

Should classes be reorganised, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- Consideration is always given to grouping children in classes that will benefit them educationally, i.e. in the teacher's professional judgement the children will learn / work well together within the classroom environment.
- Class teachers will also give consideration to friendships and ensure if a cohort is split between two classes, children have at least one friend to support them.

Mixed age classes and split year groups – information for parents (FAQ Frequently asked questions)

What is a mixed age and split year group 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.

Why are mixed age and split year group classes formed?

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 year group). It is not uncommon for this situation to change from year to year; as the sizes of year groups can vary as has been the case at Stannington First School. The annual intake of children or Published Admissions Number (PAN) at Stannington First School is 20 children and with 5 year groups (excluding nursery) and with 4 designated classrooms, this means that children are organised into 4 classes. One factor that influences these class sizes is that EYFS and KS1 children should only be registered and taught in groups of 30 or less children. Physical classroom space is also a consideration.

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

No.

The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in our First School means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The Staff at Stannington First School are very experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of our pupils. They provide challenge for the more able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in this is required whether the pupils are in a mixed class or not.

Much work in our school is already undertaken in small groups that contain children from 1 or 2 year groups or those of similar existing achievement levels. Furthermore, the school plans the educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways which ensure good progression and continuity, whichever year group or class they are in.

Why is the situation different in Stannington First School from that in other Morpeth schools?

Different situations pertain in all schools. Other schools in the Morpeth area have less than 100 pupils or between 100 and 150 and may therefore arrange groups in 3, 4 or 5 classes.

Each of these schools will generally form one or several mixed age classes. In none of these schools is the formation of mixed age classes 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.

I am concerned that 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, opportunities are created beyond our standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes (such as at lunchtimes, playtimes, special activities, trips, school performances). When children transfer to Middle School, new friendship groupings in different subject areas become a fact of life, and this situation is generally welcomed by many children.

What are the 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. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. The children may have continued learning with the same teacher and this provides an 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.

If a mixed age or split year group class is formed, how are decisions taken about which children should be allocated to which class?

Experience has shown at Stannington First that we must take a number of influences into consideration and make a professional judgment based on this.

Split year groups are considered very carefully, depending on each cohort of children. These include (and are in no particular order of preference):

- social learning group
- emotional development
- readiness to learn
- stage of learning
- gender and age (balance of class and year group)
- additional needs

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the headteacher and class teachers when making a decision. Parents are informed about the new organisation and opportunities are made available for any family wishing to discuss their child's learning. However, it is the headteacher who makes the final allocation based on their professional judgement of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.