

MIXED AGE CLASSES – THE APPROACH



WHY AND HOW HAS THE DECISION TO MIX YEAR GROUPS BEEN MADE?

Every year we consider the following:

- review the numbers in each year group
- the individual needs of pupils in the group
- the staffing and the classes we have.
- we consider the needs of the year groups alongside the budgetary implications of the different scenarios

There is never one simple answer but a key factor is that we do not prioritise the needs of one year group above the needs of another.



BENEFITS OF MIXED YEAR GROUPS

Enhanced Social Skills

- In mixed age environments, children have the chance to build relationships with a diverse group of peers. This interaction fosters collaboration and helps children learn to communicate effectively with others, bridging age gaps and nurturing friendships that extend beyond their immediate age group.

Improved Self-Concept

- Children in mixed age classes often demonstrate a stronger self-concept. They tend to have more positive attitudes towards school and display better personal adjustment. This inclusive setting encourages self-confidence, as children see themselves as valuable contributors to a community where everyone has unique strengths.

Stronger Communication Skills

- With opportunities to engage with peers who may be older or younger, children develop robust communication skills. They learn to express their thoughts and ideas using a richer vocabulary and more complex sentence structures, often stretching beyond what is typical for their age group.

Deeper Understanding of Pupil Needs

- In a mixed age classroom, teachers have the advantage of working with the same group of children over multiple years. This continuity allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of each child's individual needs and strengths, fostering a more tailored learning experience.



HOW WERE THE PUPILS CHOSEN FOR THE CLASSES?

The decision was based on many different factors including:

- Age
- Attainment
- Friendships
- Emotional maturity
- Balance of gender where possible

HOW DO LESSONS WORK IN A MIXED CLASS



THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- Behind our new approach sits a set of teaching and learning principles. This is what we use to plan lessons. We then teach using these principles and monitor against them.

St Leonard's CE Primary Academy – Lesson Design							
Vision: ‘Living and Learning Together with God’s Help’							
Resilience		Curiosity		Ambition		Independence	
Values							
Respect	Compassion	Courage	Perseverance	Friendship	Forgiveness		
Behaviour Principles							
Ready		Respectful		Safe			
This is demonstrated through relentless routines and calm, kind, consistent adult behaviour. We revisit these rules and their meaning regularly which is effective in supporting staff in reinforcing consistent expectations.							
	Awareness and understanding of cognitive load		Clarity of intended skill and knowledge learning outcome		Engaging / interesting hook		Purposeful activities which impact positively on intended outcome
	Suitable adaptations to tasks make learning accessible to all – all children able to engage		Focused groups identified for specific support or challenge		Targeted questioning including using subject specific vocabulary		Retrieval practice and appropriate use of assessment
							High expectations of pupil engagement through all parts of lesson, underpinned by strong behaviour management

How do lessons work in a mixed class – the lessons

- Most lessons take place as a whole class although staff plan creatively so that pupils are taught what they are needed in the way that will help them learn best.
- Staff 'adapt' activities which means that pupils have slightly different tasks, or more support or challenge, to ensure that pupils practice the skills that they need to move on at their level. This is the same in all classes, mixed or not – a child-centred approach
- So what does that look like in principle in each subject?



OUR CURRICULUM - MATHS

- We are using the Oak Academy mixed-age planning materials for Maths with support from the trust.
- We have focused on building a maintained, coherent curriculum which focuses on coverage.
- This approach has been designed based on the mastery principles.
- We have moved away from thinking about year groups specifically and focused on what do we need to cover from the start to the end of a key stage.

FOR YEARS 1 AND 2...

- For our mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, we use separate teaching inputs and tailored learning activities to ensure that each year group receives age-appropriate curriculum content. This approach reflects the distinct progression between the Year 1 and Year 2 curriculum, enabling all pupils to build secure knowledge and skills while working towards their respective learning expectations.

KS2

- Rather than adopting the Oak National Academy curriculum in its original structure, we have organised the Year 3 and Year 4 and year 4 and year 5 content into purposeful units that emphasise the most important concepts and disciplinary knowledge. This approach supports deeper understanding while maintaining the breadth and ambition of the curriculum.
- The way the curriculum has been designed is that no new learning for any year group will happen unless the prerequisite skills have been taught.

Foxes (Y3/4)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Autumn				Y3 Unit 2 – 6 Numbers to 1,000				Y4 Unit 3 Calculation and conversion of measures	Y4 Unit 4 Comparing, ordering and rounding 4-digit numbers	Y4 Unit 5 Column addition and subtraction with 4-digit numbers	Y3 Unit 8 Informal and mental strategies for adding and subtracting two 3 digit numbers		Consolidation
Spring	Y3 Unit 9 Understand additive relationships and apply them to rearrange equations		Y3 Unit 10 Column addition		Y3 Unit 12 Column subtraction	Y3 Unit 11 + Y4 Unit 7 – 14 Times tables + Patterns + Understanding and manipulating multiplicative relationships							Consolidation
Summer	Y3 Unit 13 – 18 Unit fractions and non-unit fractions								Y4 Unit 25 Division with remainders	Geometry: Y3 Unit 7 – Right angles Y3 Unit 19 – Parallel and perpendicular sites in polygons Y4 Unit 15 – Coordinates Y4 Unit 22 – Properties of 2D and 3D shapes and symmetry			

Badgers (Y4/5)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Autumn	Y5 Unit 1 Understand tenths as part of a whole, represent and calculate mentally	Y5 Unit 2 Compose and calculate with decimals including column addition and subtraction	Y5 Unit 3 Understand hundredths as parts of a whole and represent	Y5 Unit 4 Use knowledge of decimals to solve problems in different contexts: length	Y4 Unit 23 Money: apply efficient strategies when calculating with money	Y5 Unit 5 Negative numbers	Y5 Unit 6 – 8 Short multiplication and short division						
Spring	Y5 unit 9 – 11 Area and Scaling			Y4 Unit 17 – 21 Fractions greater than one				Y5 Unit 12 Calculating with decimal fractions			Y5 Unit 13 – 16 Factors, multiples and primes		Consolidation
Summer			Y5 Unit 17 – 20 Fractions		Y4 Unit 6 Perimeter			Y5 Unit 21 Converting Units			Y5 Unit 22 Angles: compare, name, estimate and measure angles		Consolidation

ENGLISH

- In our mixed-age classes, writing is taught through a two-year cycle of carefully selected high-quality texts, ensuring that all pupils experience a broad and balanced writing curriculum without unnecessary repetition.
- We have mapped the key grammar and punctuation knowledge and skills across the two-year cycle to ensure clear progression and full curriculum coverage. While pupils share the same stimulus text where appropriate, teachers adapt learning outcomes and expectations to meet the objectives for each year group, enabling all pupils to make progress within their respective curriculum.



EXAMPLE OF NEXT YEARS TEXTS

- In the second year, this model will largely stay the same but we will change the texts.

Text	Narrative outcome		Non-Fiction outcome
 1	Retelling Whole story		Writing to Inform: Instructions How to find your way home
	Plot focus: • Plan and write stories with a simple beginning, middle and end • Write endings that resolve the problem and conclude the story Grammar Focus: Year 1 • Write simple sentences. • Re-read writing to check it makes sense. • Use basic punctuation. Year 2 • Write narratives about real and fictional events. • Use subordination and coordination.		Features: Chronological order Equipment or material list (if appropriate) Organisation using bullet points/ numbers Imperative verbs Final evaluative statement Grammar Focus: Year 1 • Write simple instructions using sequencing words. • Compose sentences orally before writing. • Use capital letters, full stops and simple adjectives. Year 2 • Write for different purposes, including instructions.

	Granny Come Here on the Empire Windrush Patrice Lawrence	Writing to Persuade: a balanced argument Key Question: Was moving from Jamaica to Britain the right decision for Granny and other Windrush passengers? Grammar focus: Year 4 Fronted adverbials: Firstly, In addition, For example,	Writing to inform: Letter
Features:			Logically sequenced paragraphs e.g. opening statement, more detailed classification, description of the subject with

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St. Leonard's--Long Term English Writing Overview

		On the other hand, At first, Furthermore, In conclusion, Imperative verbs: Consider the benefits Imagine leaving Think carefully about the evidence Year 5 Modal verbs: could would might were able to Rhetorical question: Should people have to face discrimination when they move to a new country? Power of 3: courage, determination and resilience your home, your friends and your family opportunities, employment and hope	examples/elaboration of points: summary Grammar Focus: - Plural and possessive apostrophes - Expanded noun phrases with modifiers Year 4 Complex sentences with subordinating conjunctions: Although moving to a new country can feel frightening... When people work hard and use their skills... If you decide to travel here... While life in a new country can be challenging... Commas after subordinate clauses: Although moving to a new country can feel frightening, ... If you decide to travel here, ... While life in a new country can be challenging, ... Year 5 Parenthesis:
			Year 5 Parenthesis: (and determination) - opportunities that may not have been available at home - Persuasive language: exciting opportunities successful future brighter future valuable contribution

FOUNDATION SUBJECTS

- For next year, we have implemented a new curriculum called Cornerstones. Working with the company, we have designed a bespoke 2 year cyclical curriculum which enables all children to be taught the full curriculum of whatever year group they are in.
- We ensure that all areas of the National Curriculum are taught across the correct phase (EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2). This means that, for example, some children will learn about “The Great Fire of London” in Year 1 and some will learn about it in when they are in Year 2.
- Our approach is we look at coverage from the start to the end of a key stage rather than individual year groups.

Year 3/ 4 Cycle A

	A1	A2	Sp1	Sp2	Su1	Su2
Science	Mighty Metals Magnets	Eat Well Move Well	Feel the Force	Sunlight and Shadows	Power Plants: How Plants Live and Grow	Sustainable Earth
History		Local Study	Tribal Tales			Gods and Mortals
Geography				Planet Power	From Source to Sea	
Art				Ammonite		
DT		The Healthy Kitchen			Build to Grow	

Year 3/ 4 Cycle B

Science	Burbs Bottoms and Bile Digestive System	The Science of Sound	Kingdoms of Life	Mission Materials	Power Up!	Oceans Alive
History		Cradles of Civilisations	I am Warrior!			Traders and Raiders
Geography				Land Use Detectives	Europe Explorers	
Art				People and Places	Beautiful Botanicals	
DT		Mighty Machines				



Year 4/5 Cycle A

Science	Predator	Our Place in Space	Force and Friction	Magnets/ Light	Materials	Plant Investigations			
History	Animals Including Humans	The Greeks: A lasting Legacy	Pharaohs			Hola Mexico			
Geography				Mapping Our World	Mighty Mountains				
Art					Vista				
DT		Building through Time		Building Bridges					

Year 4/5 Cycle B

	A1	A2	Sp1	Sp2	Su1	Su2			
Science	Potions	The Journey of Blood	Eat, Chew Digest	Electricity focus	Light and Sound focus	Classification and evolution focus			
History	States of Matter	Tech Through Time	Fallen Fields			1066			
Geography				From Farm to Fork	Adventures Across the Americas				
Art		Mixed Media							
DT				Seasonal Plates	Patterns and Print				

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- Our foundation subject curriculum has been carefully mapped using the Cornerstones Curriculum approach to ensure that, regardless of the year group a pupil enters or whether they begin in Curriculum Cycle A or B, they will experience full coverage of the National Curriculum objectives within a two-year period.
 - The curriculum is structured through carefully sequenced units that build knowledge and skills progressively over time. Key concepts, vocabulary, and disciplinary knowledge are revisited and developed to support long-term retention and deeper understanding.
 - This approach ensures that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, with opportunities to make meaningful connections between subjects, develop subject-specific skills, and build a rich foundation of knowledge throughout their primary education.

- We have to understand the difference between knowledge and coverage.
- In our lessons, the skills - which is our knowledge - will be year group specific to ensure we have progression throughout the school.
- The coverage will be from the start of a key stage to the end of a key stage.

Skills

[View progression](#)

In this lesson children will:

A

Programme of study covered

- **Y3** Combine a range of text, images, animation and audio and video clips for given purposes.

Programme of study covered

- **Y4**  Manipulate a range of text, images, sound or video clips and animation for given purposes.

SCIENCE PROGRESSION

Skill	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Questioning	Ask simple scientific questions.	Ask and answer scientific questions about the world around them.	Ask questions about the world around them and explain that they can be answered in different ways.	Ask relevant scientific questions, independently, about the world around them and begin to identify how they can answer them.	Ask a wide range of relevant scientific questions that broaden their understanding of the world around them and identify how they can answer them.	Ask and answer deeper and broader scientific questions about the local and wider world that build on and extend their own and others' experiences and knowledge.



SKILLS

- By the end of each cyclical cycle, children will have covered the correct skills for each subject for each year group.

Concept/Aspect	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Human body	AOL-World Skill Draw pictures of the human body and name some of the different body parts.	Skill Draw and label the main parts of the human body and say which body part is associated with which sense.	Skill Describe the stages of human development (baby, toddler, child, teenager, adult and elderly).	Skill Describe how humans need the skeleton and muscles for support, protection and movement.	Skill Describe the purpose of the digestive system, its main parts and each of their functions.
	Assign	Covered Skill Explore the five senses and the body parts associated with them.	Covered	Covered	Covered x 2
Staying safe	AOL-PSED Skill Follow instructions when in different environments and when handling simple equipment, such as scissors.	Skill Describe ways to stay safe in some familiar situations.	Skill Describe what humans need to survive.	Skill Explain why light from the Sun can be dangerous.	Skill Explain the precautions needed for working safely with electrical circuits.
	Covered	Assign	Assign	Covered x 3	Covered x 3
Healthy lifestyle	AOL-PSED Skill Wash and dry hands regularly and say why this is important.	Skill Explain why hand washing and cleanliness are important.	Skill Describe the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, a balanced diet, good quality sleep and personal hygiene.	Skill Explain the importance and characteristics of a healthy, balanced diet.	Skill Describe what damages teeth and how to look after them.
	Covered x 3	Assign	Assign	Covered x 3	Covered x 4

COVERAGE

- By the end of each key stage, all children will have covered the National Curriculum objectives for that phase.
- For example, by the end of KS2, all children will have covered the below for these areas:

National Curriculum Strand	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Working Scientifically	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plants	Structure and function; requirements for growth; water transport; life cycle	—	—	—
Animals Including Humans	Nutrition; skeletons and muscles	Digestive system; teeth; food chains	Human development and ageing	Circulatory system; healthy lifestyle; transport of nutrients and water
Living Things and Their Habitats	—	Classification using keys; environmental change	Life cycles: reproduction	Classification of living things (including microorganisms)

FINAL REFLECTION

- Implementing mixed-age classes is about more than combining year groups; it is about designing a curriculum that enables every pupil to succeed.
- Through careful curriculum mapping, clear progression, and adaptive teaching, we have created an approach that ensures all children access an ambitious curriculum while meeting the expectations of their own year group.
- As we continue to refine our practice, collaboration, reflection and responsiveness will remain at the heart of our work, ensuring the best possible outcomes for every learner.

