

Mixed-age Classes at Tavistock Primary and Nursery School



At Tavistock Primary and Nursery School our Pupil Admission Number (PAN) is 60. Schools usually work on an average class size of around 30 pupils with no more than 30 in a Foundation or Key Stage 1 class (apart from in very exceptional circumstances). A mixed-age class is a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group within the same classroom. At Tavistock, children from Year R to 6 are taught in mixed-age classes at times, dependent on the fluctuating needs of our community.

In 2024-2025 there will be mixed-age classes across Reception and Key Stage 1. The structure will be as follows:

- 1 Reception class
- 1 Reception/Y1 class
- 2 Year 1/2 classes

Staff in Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are very experienced and are aware of the complexities of teaching mixed classes. They work extremely hard to ensure that teaching is always effective.

Mixed-age classes have the following benefits:

- There are increased opportunities for flexibility in groupings, enabling learners to work with the appropriate ability, regardless of age.
- Children are viewed as unique individuals; a mixed-age class lends itself specifically to this approach.
- The teacher focuses on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths – learning is highly personalised.
- 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.
- Mixed-age classes encourage a spirit of co-operation where learners are more likely to support each other than compete.
- Giving older learners the chance to support younger learners socially builds their confidence and leadership skills. The younger learners also benefit as they see their older peers modelling positive, mature behaviours.
- Older children model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, and younger children are able to accomplish tasks more effectively because of the modelling by older children. This dynamic also increases the older child’s level of independence, confidence and competence.
- There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers.

Challenges and Solutions

Teachers of mixed-age classes face the challenge of responding to a wide diversity of learners within their classroom - this is the norm in any primary classroom and high quality teaching and learning successfully addresses the full range of diversity.

Teachers skilfully weave the curricula together to cater for all learners, creating a bespoke experience that is tailored to the class and the individuals within it. Areas of learning are regularly revised and revisited particularly in English and Maths - most themes having significant overlap between year groups, e.g. addition in maths and prefixes in spelling are taught across all year groups, at different levels. This is the case with most of the Maths and English curriculum. Where there is no overlap of content, specific year group objectives will be planned and delivered separately. Most lessons take place as a whole class although staff plan creatively so that pupils are taught what they need in the way that will help them learn best.

The content taught is aligned with the National Curriculum and, as necessary, works on a rolling programme of topics and themes. Foundation subject expectations are set out over a Key Stage, with the additional flexibility to deliver content earlier or later. This is monitored and tracked by subject leaders to ensure full coverage is achieved; thus ensuring that learning is progressive for all learners.



Frequently Asked Questions

How will the pupils be grouped in each class?

For the 2024-25 academic year we will have a mixed Reception and Year 1 class and two mixed Year 1 and Year 2 classes. The children in these classes have been grouped according to their age. The oldest Year 1 pupils are mixed with Year 2 pupils and the youngest Year 1 pupils are mixed with the oldest Reception pupils.

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

Definitely not! The way in which teaching and learning is organised in primary schools means that teaching is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Our staff are very experienced and able to plan and deliver work to match the needs of mixed-age learning. They provide challenge for the higher attaining children and targeted support for those in need, whichever year group they are currently in.

How will we ensure the highest standards for all children?

Teachers use formative assessment to observe and diagnose how a child is learning, respond to their learning needs and adapt teaching accordingly. Both national and local data for performance of children at the end of KS1 and KS2 suggests that being placed in a mixed-age class has no negative impact on children's academic achievements. Children who find aspects of the curriculum more challenging will be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes. Children working above the expected standard will be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them on to explore new concepts.

The quality of learning tasks in the curriculum is high. There are a range of opportunities for open-ended, explorative, reasoning and problem-solving learning, all of which extend children's understanding whatever the content of the curriculum. Rich texts have been carefully chosen ensuring that they are easy to learn but contain the relevant sentence structures and vocabulary to stretch children at the appropriate level.

How will teachers plan, ensuring coverage of both the year group curriculums, and preventing repetition of content?

With the exception of Maths and English the curriculum content isn't split into separate year group content, rather, there is an expectation of coverage for the end of the key stage. Subject Leaders have developed a progression of skills for children to work through in each year group. In the case of Maths and English, the two curricula are aligned, with the majority of objectives being matched with a similar but progressive objective for the older year group if appropriate. Ensuring coverage of national curriculum objectives/Early Years Framework for both year groups in the same classroom will therefore be easily facilitated by normal classroom practice.

How will two year groups be taught alongside each other in one classroom?

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 will be taught to their individual academic needs and not simply to their age. Teachers will choose work appropriate to the standard a child is working at, ensuring that all needs are catered for.

Sometimes teachers teach one year group at a time for short periods within a lesson, while the others work independently, collaboratively, or with support from a Teaching Assistant. This is how all classes at school work and will be no different in the mixed-age classes.

Staff adapt activities, which means that pupils may have slightly different tasks, or more support or challenge. This ensures that pupils practise the skills that they need to move on at the appropriate pace to meet their learning needs.

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What happens if my child's friendship group is being broken up?

Care is taken in allocating children to classes, including recognition of their social needs. It is beneficial for children to experience classes with different classmates so that their circle of friends and acquaintances can be extended beyond the traditional age boundaries. Playtimes and lunchtimes provide opportunities for children from all classes to mix and play together.

It is normal for friendships to emerge and develop in all classes. All children have occasional difficulties with friendships and social skills in all school years, and a key focus for education at Tavistock Primary and Nursery School is supporting children to learn to develop strong personal and social skills.

Within all classes, children are allocated a new talk partner each week. There are also many occasions where children work in small groups, which are based on academic need rather than friendship. Both of these help children get to know all their peers and develop their communication and social skills.

How are the mixed-age classes monitored?

Teachers regularly assess pupils, both informally (from day to day) and formally (with tests and other assessments). Where pupils need extra help, we discuss the best way to support their needs. This could be in class or through intervention groups. This is the same, whether within a mixed-age or single-year class.

Teachers regularly compare books across the team to moderate outcomes and secure consistency in teaching and learning.

Members of the Leadership Team frequently monitor lessons and look at children's books. Where areas for improvement are identified, staff work together to make the changes necessary.

Three times a year, we hold Class Progress Meetings. These focus on monitoring assessment information and ensuring that pupils are making the progress we expect, based on their previous attainment. Information from these meetings is shared with Governors as part of their monitoring role.