



Mixing Classes Policy

Reviewed: Spring Term 2019

This policy is to be reviewed annually

Hove Junior School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Mixing Children Policy and Transition 2019

At Hove Junior School we mix classes each year and review new classes dependent on the needs of the children and school to ensure that:

- There are opportunities for children to learn and play with a wider variety of peers
- To enable greater social interaction and educational equality between children as they move through the school
- To ensure that the classes remain balanced in response to pupil transfer and transition during phases
- To promote a greater sense of community

Principles

- The arrangements for class mixing are based on the professional judgements of Class Teachers, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Headteacher
- We will always consider what is in the best interests of individual children and classes as a whole when making decisions
- We will always consider the happiness and welfare of the children and will take into consideration existing friendship groups when we create new classes. The children will be asked to name three children they may like to be in a class with. When teachers organise classes they will ensure that a child is in a class with at least one of the three named.

The Process

- Mixing classes letter goes out to parent/carers in May
- Class Teachers meet to ensure a range of educational, social and personal needs, gender, maturity and a good balance of friendships are represented in each class
- SLT/Inclusion Team meets with class teachers to discuss and finalise groupings
- Headteacher and SLT meet and approve classes
- New classes are shared with parents and children in July

Criteria for Mixing Classes

Classes will be mixed to achieve a good balance according to the following criteria:

- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ability levels
- Range of special educational, social and personal needs
- Friendships*

**Friendships: Over the course of their primary years, children will have a range of friendship experiences. We find that with children some friendships can be very fluid, whilst others can stand the test of time. Children will also remain free to play with whoever they would like at playtimes and lunchtimes.*

Children are asked to list 3 friends when mixing classes at the end of the year. Teachers will be selecting classes for children based on their in-depth knowledge of the children – including who they get on with. We will ask the children for a list of 3 names as we want to make sure that we haven't overlooked any groups, or that we haven't missed out on the fact

that someone might be best friends at home with a child from another class. It is a mechanism to ensure that all avenues are addressed, and to give your child a voice in the process. If your child feels uncomfortable doing this, they don't need to do it. It is worth mentioning that our main feeder Infant School – West Hove Infants now mix at the end of Reception and Year 1, and so the children will not only be used to mixing within their year group but will also know many of the children in the class they are allocated.

Rationale

As a school, we follow the principles of the Working With Others initiative. This is a school ethos which sees adults and children working supportively of each other. As a result of this, we practice group working and flexible working scenarios whenever appropriate and mixing classes at the end of the school year. This approach aims to continuously improve relationships between children and adults. As adults, we model dialogue which gives children the responsibility to reflect on their language and behaviour. We have high expectations of the children and aim for them to act independently when appropriate, to resolve issues and solve problems.

Curriculum

Within our school Curriculum Policy we have stated – in consultation with parents/carers and children – that when the children leave our school we would like them (amongst a wealth of other qualities) to be: confident – aware of others – kind and considerate – friendly and able to make friends – interactive – sociable.

We have been implementing Working With Others' strategies across the school now for some time and find that the development of all the above essential life skills are nurtured through our Working With Others philosophy and approach.

Working With Others

Working With Others is about working with, and learning from, each other. It is about learning to work with a range of different people, having our thinking challenged and developing our emotional literacy. We encourage Working With Others within the classroom, across year groups and across the whole school.

Working With Others means we sometimes must work outside of our comfort zone and be adaptable and flexible. We must communicate with each other and, most importantly, trust each other.

Working With Others reinforces our strong LEARN Behaviour Code and helps us to ensure that when the children leave our school, they are truly equipped with the skills needed to support them to make the very best of the next phase of their education.

The impact of Working With Others has been significant, leading to greater collaborative working, empathy and independent thinking. These life skills have been recognized by both staff and children.

“Mixing classes encourages peers to be more supportive and makes for a more cohesive, dynamic classroom.”

Co-founder of Working With Others

Staff have commented:

“Children are a lot more confident with sharing ideas and working with all children in the class which develops their independence as they move through the school.”

“It has enabled less vocal children to develop a wider friendship group through KS2.”

“Children are more aware of relationships and helping each other.”

The children say:

“It helps you communicate and make more friends.”

“It can be hard at first in a new class but we are all in the same position and everyone helps each other.”

“It helps us to understand each other.”

To further enhance transition we have also built on the ‘Learning Characters’ used at West Hove Infant School, our main feeder Infant school, which again reinforce these key life skills.

Learning Characteristics

Hove Junior School has developed and implemented 6 Learning Characteristics. The Learning Characteristics represent key life skills and behaviours that underpin our curriculum and learning. The children are actively encouraged to demonstrate, utilize and reflect on these attributes to enable key curriculum skills and life-long behaviours to develop leading to an increased depth of understanding both in their classroom discoveries, interpersonal relationships and into their futures. We hope by developing these key characteristics the children can approach challenges in a dynamic and resourceful way that prepares them to be global lifelong learners.

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|  | Question |  | I am curious I ask questions |
|  | Collaborate |  | I can learn from others I can use my team work skills |
|  | Reflect |  | I can reflect on my learning I can suggest my next steps |
|  | Take Risks |  | I can challenge myself I learn from my mistakes |
|  | Independence |  | I can help myself I can use my initiative to find solutions to problems |
|  | Perseverance |  | I keep going and never give up I am resilient as I use my growth mind-set |

REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually and agreed by the Governing Body.

The Headteacher and SLT will review the process and criteria for each year’s class mixing arrangements.

APPENDIX A

Mixing Classes - Frequently Asked Questions

Does this apply to all year groups? We discuss all year groups, as we do each year, but our current school prospectus states that we mix up each class at the end of every school year.

How will you decide the mixing within a year group? This will be based on a variety of factors including:

- Child's views on friendships
- Teacher's views on friendships
- Working groups
- Ability
- Gender
- Potential mobility

Will my child still be in a class with their friends? When we have decided to mix a year group, we will ask the children which group of friends they would like to stay with. These responses will be considered when we divide the year group and every child should have at least one friend in their new class. Some children already have friends in the other class and have requested the opportunity to work with these friends.

Why have the classes in some year groups become imbalanced? When 120 children start in Reception the classes are balanced out as much as possible taking into account a range of factors such as friendships, special needs, EAL, age and gender. As the children progress through the school the classes can become less balanced due to variety of reasons:

Mobility – for a number of years we have experienced quite a high turnover of pupils and due to an apparently random combination of factors this affects some year groups more than others. If a new child joins we can only place them where there is a space as we do not want class sizes above 32 except in exceptional circumstances.

Special Needs – children develop at different rates and it is not always apparent when joining KS2 that at some future point a high level of support may need to be put into place. Sometimes children with high level needs join us further up the school and depending on where there is a space in the year group we may not have any option as to where to place that child. Some children need access to specialist equipment and that may determine which class they need to be based in.

High Ability – children develop at different rates and it is not always apparent when joining KS2 which children will excel at different subjects. This may cause an imbalance between classes as the year group progresses through the school.

What are the benefits for the children?

- Better resilience in developing friendships in a safe, comfortable environment.
- Arguably even more important in Y4/5 when they will be moving to secondary school soon and having a wider base of friends would be beneficial.
- Widening working groups.

- Being part of a year group and not just a class.
- For some children less mobility within the class.
- For some children a better match to a working group.

What are the benefits for the school?

- Further development of good attitudes to learning.
- Children developing resilience in facing challenges whilst in a safe and supportive environment.
- Greater potential for grouping children as we aim for overall improved academic performance across the school.

What is the process?

- Team leaders lead discussions with class teachers in their year group and will make recommendations.
- Team leaders and SLT will make the final decisions about how a year group will be mixed.
- Children will be asked for friendship information.
- Class teachers will begin to suggest future classes taking into account:
 - Children's views on friendships
 - Working groups
 - Ability
 - Gender
 - Potential mobility
 - Children and parents to be informed of new classes on transition day.

Should children moving up into Year 6 go through this process? This is a hard decision however we honestly feel that we would not be giving your child the skills they need for secondary school if we didn't help them make friends with more children at this school before they go. Our investigations and experience have demonstrated that there is a significant period between the change of classes and SATs that allows children to settle into their studies before May. Parents of children who have moved on to secondary school who said they were really glad we had mixed up our classes as their child did not struggle as they had more confidence to deal with their new environment.