



The Federation of
**Fryern Infant &
Junior Schools**

The Fryern Federation
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Growing Together, Learning for Life

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Questions and Answers from parents regarding mixed age classes.

Now we have finished our school tours for prospective parents we can collate all the questions we have been asked and share the school's response. Apologies this has taken longer than initially planned but due to high demand we extended our tour dates.

Q: Is this something that will follow through?

Yes, as the cohorts move through the school so will the mixed age classes. We envisage mixed age classes of Year 1 and Year 2 from September 2024, then in September 2026 mixed Year 3 and Year 4. At the moment we are unsure what this will look like in Year 5 and Year 6 as it is a long way off.

Q: How do you plan to meet the needs of all abilities in a mixed age class?

The teachers currently differentiate learning and vary the tasks in many different ways. Within a class currently there are children working at many different levels. The teachers know the children as individuals and are able to plan learning accordingly to meet the needs of all pupils. The teachers have a secure knowledge of the national curriculum and the requirements for each year group. Many schools already operate this set-up and we will be visiting schools and using other expertise in Hampshire to support us.

Q: Wont pupils become bored or frustrated if the work is too easy or challenging for them?

By knowing the pupils' individual strengths and areas for development the work will be able to be pitched accurately so that no child is bored or frustrated. The work will not be too easy for some or too hard for others, just like it isn't currently. Using their on-going assessment, teachers will plan learning that matches pupils needs.

Q: Are there plans for additional LSAs to support the larger range of need?

Not currently. The range of need within a class won't necessarily be that much greater than it is currently although there may be larger numbers of pupils working at a similar level. There will be three teachers within a team, who will have weekly opportunity to plan together ensuring staff support each other with planning and task design to effectively meet the needs of all pupils.

Q: Is this decision driven by funding?

Yes. In the Chandlers Ford area there is a significant number of surplus school places. Each pupil on roll brings in an amount of money to the school. With less pupils on roll, the school is funded less money, yet still needs to pay its staff, bills etc. By moving to mixed aged classes and

reducing our PAN (published admissions number) the school will have less unfilled places and in a stronger financial position. Many local schools are in a similar position and they will all be exploring different ways of addressing the financial challenges that they face. For us at Fryern, this was the way we believed we could still continue to provide the high-quality teaching and curriculum that we believe in.

Q: It doesn't reduce resources it requires more?

Instead of having 4 classes requiring 4 teachers and LSAs with approximately 22 children in each class the school will have 3 classes of a maximum of 30 children in each class (in line with infant class size legalisation). If current numbers on roll in the Current YR and Y1 stay the same there would be 27 children in each class.

Q: What are other local schools doing?

They are all exploring different options. Some schools have also reduced their PAN, others are finding other ways to make savings. We would recommend visiting them and asking.

Q: Can parents see what research the school has done?

A lot of the research has involved talking with other Headteachers and school leaders who have either made the same choice in recent years or have operated a mixed age class system for many years. We have further discussed this with the local authority. We have also read different articles on this subject which have further informed our decision making.

Q: Will this effect admissions to the juniors?

Yes, we have applied for a change to our PAN for the junior school to come in to action in September 2025. This is currently open to consultation.

Q: Is it all a bit choppy changey?

While the first year of children move through the school it may look like that as they will go from being mixed year one/two to a pure year three, then mixed year three/four. However, the school will be doing its best to ensure that this is not how it feels to the children.

Q: Will the classes be mixed every other year?

This is something we are still considering. The children will still complete a friendship form and this, alongside our knowledge of the children will continue to support us when organising classes.

Q: How will you manage transition?

The school already has a very carefully planned transition pathway when the children move to the next year group. This includes careful organisation of new classes based on knowledge of the children, friendship forms and balance of academic attainment. There are many opportunities for the teachers to meet and talk with each other about their new class as well as the chance for the children to meet their teachers on different occasions. Alongside this the teachers meet to share and discuss curriculum strengths for individuals and the cohort in general so that planning can be adapted and developed. A more bespoke approach is put in place for individual children requiring additional support with transition. We will continue to reflect and adapt, making changes as we find out more about the impact mixed age classes may have on children's transition.

Q: Won't there be greater workload for teachers?

The teachers will still get weekly planning time together as they do currently. This means they can discuss planning and share the work load across 3 teachers (currently 2). Teachers already

have children with a range of needs and abilities in their class and are adapting the curriculum to provide stretch and challenge for all pupils. This now means there will be three teachers supporting each other to do this rather than two which there are currently.

Q: How will you teach both Y1 and Y2 curriculum at the same time?

This is something that we are currently exploring by visiting other schools where this is managed successfully and has been for some time. By making these decisions now we have plenty of time to ensure our approach to this will be successful.

Q: I can see how it would work for History/Geography, but how would it work in maths and English?

Maths is the subject where the most challenges will lie. However, as a school we use white rose maths to support our curriculum and planning and white rose has already developed mixed age planning which we will be able to use as a starting point.

English is more straightforward with teachers being able to use their modelling and questioning, as well as adjusting expectations to ensure that the curriculum for each year group is covered and children have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills appropriately.

Q: When this rolls up through junior school, what will it look like in Y5 and Y6?

At the moment we are not entirely sure, however we will be continuing to explore different options so we can make an informed decision.

Q: Do you think it will put more pressure on Year 5?

No, this is something we would be looking at carefully.

Q: Generally, how will the children be grouped?

The three classes will be a mixture of abilities from across year one and two. We will use our usual approach when deciding on classes – friendship forms, knowledge of children, personalities, balance of boy/girl, balance of abilities.

Q: How will you approach problem solving skills?

The maths curriculum incorporates problem solving throughout and this will continue to happen.

As shared in the meetings, this is not a decision the school has undertaken lightly. We believe that this is the best way for us to continue to hold on to everything we value at Fryern and continue to provide high-quality teaching and an engaging curriculum.

We hope that this reassures you and answers many of the questions that you may have had. Our next steps are to visit other schools where mixed age classes are implemented effectively, continue working on our curriculum and explore different teaching approaches. As a school we will continue to keep communicating with parents and sharing with you the journey that we are on.

Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact Miss Piggin or Miss Robert via the school office.