



Mixed age classes split year groups-information for parents and carers.

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. In most cases, a mixed age class will comprise of pupils at only two stages (e.g. Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2).

Longlands Primary School is a one and a half form entry school which means we have an intake of 45 children in each year group This in turn means that we have three mixed age classes across the school. When children start their time at Longlands in order to get the children off to the best possible start we have two Reception classes.

The organisation pattern for our school is listed below:

Foundation Stage			
	Reception 1	Reception 2	
KS1	Year 1	Year 1/2	Year 2
Lower KS2	Year 3	Year 3/4	Year 4
Upper KS2	Year 5	Year 5/6	Year 6

Within each class the teaching and learning will vary from whole class teaching to group work – either independently or under the direction of an adult – and children working individually. On occasions teachers will group children for some activities by ability and work will be differentiated according to the ability of individual children.

Our pattern of organisation allows staff and children to work closely together in their Phase groups. Planning across a phase group e.g. UKS2 (Upper Key Stage 2) allows staff to stretch able children and support those who take a little longer. Team work amongst staff allows them to teach to strengths and to use each other's strengths and talents when planning.

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

No. There are no evidence bases or published studies to suggest that that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect whatsoever on the education of children in that class. The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that teaching and work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The staff at Longlands are experienced at planning and delivering work to match the needs of mixed age learning. They provide challenge for the more- able children and support for those needing more help whichever year group they are currently in. Much work is 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.

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 the 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 secondary 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. This 'vertical' grouping often nurtures thinking & problem skills, vocabulary &

social competences. There is often a greater sense of cooperation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of peers. The children will on occasions, 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 Longlands, that we 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 Head teacher 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, when finalising allocations to classes the final decision is made with strong professional judgment as to where each child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.