



WILLIAM BARNES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Class Organisation Policy

Reviewed by SLT:	7.5.26
Approved by the Full Governing Body:	18.5.26
Next review due:	June 2027

William Barnes Primary School is currently a mixed form entry school in KS2. The numbers in each year group depend on pupil numbers across year groups and may result in a mixing in a number of ways. This document is to ensure that we fulfil our commitment, within the limits of our resources, and to the best of our ability.

This arrangement is not about ‘moving children up’ or ‘keeping children down’ but a statement of our commitment to providing a suitable education for the individual child and helping to ensure that every child can achieve their full potential.

The arrangements for class mixing are based on the professional judgements of class teachers, the Senior Leadership Team and the Head teacher (whose decision is final). We always consider what is in the best interests (educational, social and emotional etc.) of individual children and classes as a whole when making decisions and strive to achieve a balance – see criteria below.

We endeavour to be open and transparent about our criteria for class mixing, although we are bound to maintain confidentiality when discussing our reasons for decisions with parents/carers and pupils.

Rationale

Each phase is organised as below:



The model for mixed age classes has many benefits, as follows (*see Appendix, Research Summary*):

- Mixed age/ability groupings promote a growth mindset.
- Research suggests that if schools adopt mixed grouping they are more likely to use inclusive teaching strategies and promote higher aspirations for their pupils.
- As with any class, children will share their learning environment with peers of a similar range of ages and emotional maturity, which supports their social development.
- Regular mixing of classes can support other aspects of social development, particularly in a small-school environment.
- The mixing of children across classes and age groups makes the school more cohesive, promoting our ethos of belonging and continuity.

Primary school teachers are skilled in ensuring appropriate challenge and support for all children in their care. They are expert in developing key aspects of the curriculum to best support a child’s current stage, using strategies such as personalised learning and continuous assessment. As a school, we strive to continuously develop our practice as educators through a process of professional development and feedback.

As always, there will still be times when children have opportunities to work in different groupings such as phonics groups, trips/visits, extra-curricular activities and school-based interventions.

Class Organisation

Although there is no one single criteria for arranging classes, an effective class balance will be ensured through the use of the following criteria:

- Educational, social and personal needs
- Friendships/relationships
- gender

Identified Special Educational Need, English as an additional language, and family relationships (twins etc.) will also be taken into account on an individual basis, in consultation with parents/carers, teaching staff and other professionals if appropriate. Children who have a high level of need (those with an EHCP, or who are identified as vulnerable by the school for another reason) will be placed carefully in consultation with parents/carers.

Age, academic ability and socio-economic factors will not form part of the criteria.

On rare occasions, there may be circumstances not specified in this policy that have an impact on the appropriate class placement for a child. Specifically, such circumstances will be exceptional to the criteria above. In such a case, after appropriate professional consultation, the Head teacher will make the final decision on class placement for the child. If places become available mid-year, children new to the school may join a class where places are available (not necessarily linked to the criteria above, due to logistics & class sizes / spaces). The Head teacher will decide placement based on the needs of the child alongside the availability of a place.

Parents/carers and children will be informed of the class groupings during the Summer Term, before Transition Day. Prior to moving classes, children will spend time in their new groups being taught. Mixing of class groups and placement within a class will be communicated to parents & carers as part of the end-of-year arrangements.

Appendix - Research Summary

Sutton Trust Report (2011) *Toolkit of Strategies to Improve Learning - feeding into Education Endowment Fund Teaching and Learning Toolkit*: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/> Evidence from this research shows that though there may be some benefits for higher attaining pupils in very specific circumstances (e.g. gifted and talented programmes), these are largely outweighed by the negative effects on attitudes for middle and lower performing learners (with an average effect size of about 0.12), especially in maths. There is some evidence that effective and flexible grouping for particular tasks can be beneficial, or when effective teachers are assigned to low attaining groups. However, more routine setting arrangements tend to undermine low attainers' confidence and the belief that effort is more important than ability. The report also states that low income pupils are more likely to be assigned to lower attaining groups.

The report suggests that if schools adopt mixed ability grouping they are more likely to use inclusive teaching strategies and to promote higher aspirations for their pupils. Hattie, J (2009) *Visible Learning* Hattie found that ability grouping 'limits students schooling opportunities, achievements and life chances. Students not in the highest sets have fewer intellectual challenges, less engaging and supportive classrooms, and fewer well trained teachers'. 'Ability grouping guarantees the unfair distribution of privilege in that wealthy students benefit from access to high status knowledge that low income students are denied...If ability grouping leads to proportionally more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or from particular ethnic groups being placed in lower sets, then the use of ability grouping may serve to increase divisions along class, race and ethnic lines'.

Researchers suggest that implementing the most appropriate form of pupil organisation may be achieved through the selective and flexible adoption of different forms of ability grouping according to their fitness for purpose (Alexander et al., 1992). As Edwards and Woodhead (1996) state in relation to mathematics teaching in primary schools, Groupings need to be flexibly applied according to fitness for purpose incorporating combinations of within-class, group and individual teaching (p. 7). In *Streaming, Setting and Grouping by Ability* by Laura Sukhnandan with Barbara Lee, in order to implement this flexible approach, teachers need to be provided with the skills to select and apply the form of ability grouping which is most appropriate for the task in question. Teachers should also be allocated to classes on a fair basis, and encouraged to review their strategies in relation to pupil progress and to maintain flexibility in their organisation of pupils (GB. Scottish Office. HMI, 1996).

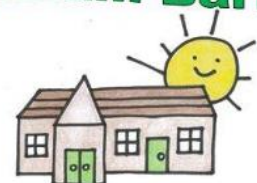
It is also important to recognise that over-complex patterns of pupil grouping can be problematic (for example, setting for every subject can limit class cohesiveness and thus pupils' sense of belonging). In addition, both parents and pupils should be kept informed about the rationale behind different forms of pupil grouping and the criteria for transfer between classes or groups.

Alternatively, attempts could be made to meet pupils' needs on a more individual basis. This could be achieved through greater modularisation of the curriculum, an increased emphasis on independent learning and improved library and information technology resources which would allow greater flexibility in the ways that pupils progress (Hallam and Toutounji, 1996).

From local studies (Seleznyov 2012, London Borough of Islington 2013), teachers who prefer setting talk in terms of the notional benefits to them as teachers (simpler differentiation, workload reduction) rather than benefits to pupils. All admit that there are disadvantages for the least, and to a lesser extent, the most able.

Key findings from the Education Endowment Foundation on the benefits of smaller class sizes are high cost with limited impact, and that 'smaller classes only impact upon learning if the reduced numbers allow teachers to teach differently – for example, having higher quality interactions with pupils or minimising disruption.'

William Barnes



Where every child counts