



Composite Classes

A Guide for Parents

What are composite classes?

Primary schools have children at seven year stages, P1 to P7. Composite classes occur where children from two or more year stages are grouped together eg P2/3 or, in the case of some small schools, P1/2/3.

Why do composite classes have to be formed?

Schools receive a total number of teaching staff, including the Head Teacher, based on the number of children on the school roll. No account is taken of the number of children at each year stage.

In law, the maximum number of children in classes at P1 is 25, P2-3 is 30 and P4-7 is 33. However, the authority is working to reduce class sizes to 18, or as close to that number where possible.

The average class size at P1-P3 at present is 19. In law, the maximum number of children in classes at P4-P7 is 33, although most classes at this stage will average less than 30.

Composite classes are formed when the number of children at a year stage is greater than that allowed, or where the number is much smaller than the

number allowed. A composite class has a maximum number of 25 children.



How are composite classes formed?

In a way, all classes are composite classes as there is always a range of ability and pace of learning in any large group of children.

Children already work in groups in their classes according to their stage of learning. All children are individuals and learn at different rates. Children in composite classes will continue to be treated in the same way.

When making decisions on which children will be included in a composite class, the Head Teacher will consider the following:

- existing language groupings
- existing mathematics groupings
- the pace of learning within a group
- attainment levels
- evidence of child's work

Who decides?

Responsibility for class structure rests with the Head Teacher who will only allocate children to classes after discussion with promoted staff and class teachers.

Evidence of the child's written work, on-going assessment, national assessments and present mathematics and language groupings will be taken into account by the Head Teacher.

What happens next?

The Head Teacher will:

- consult with the Parent Council
- speak to all children at the stages involved
- send a letter to all parents/carers of these children indicating the present class structure, the proposed new structure and the pupil's class and teacher for the new session (if known)
- extend an invitation to all parents/carers of these children to visit the school should they wish to discuss any concerns they may have

Can a composite class continue for a second year?

In many cases, a composite class can successfully continue as a class group for a second year (indeed, some children will be in a composite class throughout their time in Primary School) but the Head Teacher should:

- consult children and parents
- discuss with staff before making a final decision

What is the Authority's view?

- Children are not disadvantaged through being in a composite class.
- At all times opportunities should be sought for year groups to come together for particular educational and social activities.
- All children will be actively encouraged to achieve their full potential in a supportive, challenging and motivating educational environment.

Alan Ward,
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