

How classes are organised

Information for Parents



Introduction

This leaflet sets out to:

- Highlight key messages about how children learn.
- Explain how learning is planned for and organised, including the composition of classes.
- Share information about composite classes.
- Answer some frequently asked questions.

How do children learn?

We know that children, even of the same age, learn in many different ways and have different talents, abilities and interests.

There are key things that we can do to make sure that learning is successful for all children in schools.

Some of the key factors that lead to good learning include:

- Good teaching and a teacher who understands what children already know, what children can already do – and builds on this.
- Involvement of children in their own learning – where children understand when their learning is good and what they need to do to make their learning better.
- Confident and secure children who know they will be listened to – because they have important things to say about their learning.
- Strong relationships between teachers, children and parents – because we know that the involvement of parents supports learning and gives teachers important information about children as individual learners.

Because we know these key things about learning, we take them into account when learning is being planned for and organised in schools.



How is learning planned and organised?

A great deal of forward planning is given to any planned change in how learning and classes are organised. The need for change happens as the roll of a school goes up or down, and may happen a number of times during your child's time at primary school.

In Stirling Council schools, the way that classes and learning are organised need to take into account:

- Numbers of children in the school
- Children's dates of birth
- Gender – to ensure a good mix of boys and girls
- Additional needs – to ensure a spread across classes

Composite classes

There are likely to be times when numbers of children in schools may result in the need to form composite classes.

This is when 2 or more stages are taught as part of 1 class e.g. the oldest children in P3 joining the youngest children in P4 to make a P3/4 composite class.

Careful consideration is given to ensuring that a range of learning and teaching approaches and opportunities are in place, in order that children can work with a range of other children and adults to support their learning.

Children in any class are taught according to their individual needs and next steps. This is the same whether a child is in a straight or a composite class.

Children tell us that friendships are important and schools ensure a wide range of opportunities for children to spend time with peers from across classes.



“It’s always helpful to know in advance about any changes - it’s important for parents to be able to talk to their child.”

What do parents say about how learning is organised in schools?

Parents have told us that good communication about how learning is organised, changes in classes or the formation of composite classes is important.

When children are part of a reorganisation of learning in schools, they face new experiences, opportunities and challenges. They may want to talk about these changes, and you can help children to prepare for change and to settle in comfortably and quickly, by chatting positively, and with excitement, about their new class.

Classes are almost always reorganised in the final term for the coming school year. Your child’s school will keep you fully informed from the earliest stages and staff will be sensitive to the needs of all children when planning for change.

“I was really anxious at the start, but shouldn’t have worried. They were in a composite class for 2 years and had a really good experience.”



FAQs

Why can't class structures stay the same from year to year?

Each year for a variety of reasons, children move in and out of schools. This, together with numbers of P1 enrolments, determines the roll of the school, and in turn the number of staff and classes the school is allocated. This number can fluctuate year on year, thus the number of classes in school can change regularly.

Why is a composite class necessary?

P1 classes have a maximum number of 25, P2 and P3 can have up to 30, and P4-7 have a maximum of 33. Schools are allocated staff based on the total school roll, not on numbers at any particular stage. When the number of children at a stage is too many for one class, and not enough for another straight class, a composite class needs to be formed. Composite classes have a maximum number of 25 children.

Why is my child in a composite class?

Stirling Council's policy on the Organisation of Classes outlines that composite classes will be primarily set up according to date of birth i.e. the oldest children in one stage together with the youngest children in the stage above. Headteachers may need to make adjustments to class lists to ensure a suitable gender balance and a balance of additional support needs across classes.

FAQs

Will my child's progress be slower in a composite class?

No. Curriculum and assessment guidelines provide a framework for pupil centred learning and all children experience a curriculum suited to their age, ability and stage. Each child will progress at their level of ability regardless of class structure. Every child across schools complete regular class assessments to inform progress and pace of progress.

All teachers are trained to work with mixed ability classes whether in a single year group or in a composite class. In all primary classes there are wide ranges of abilities and all children will learn in different ways, responding to a variety of methods and resources. Teachers are able to adapt to the different needs within any class and plan accordingly.

Will my child miss out socially in a composite class?

Schools make every effort to both encourage new friendships and support children to keep old ones. Opportunities are built into the school week for children to work and socialise across classes.

As parents and carers, you can also help by supporting your child to maintain previous relationships and encourage new ones out of school time.

Will my child be in a composite class again?

If numbers dictate the necessity for a composite class, then children may be in a composite class more than once. Indeed, many children can be in a number of composite classes, and in some cases are in composite classes for their whole time at primary school.



What if I am concerned about any aspect of how learning is organised in my child's school?

Parents should be informed about any changes in the way that learning is organised within their child's school and will have the opportunity to discuss this with the school if they have any concerns.

If you have concerns, share them with your headteacher, who will be able to give you further information and reassurance about how learning is organised in your child's school.

Where can I find out more?

Further information is available in the form of:

Schools, Learning and Education policy document, 'The Organisation of Classes'; Schools, Learning and Education Leaflet for and by children, 'Moving Classes'.

For more information on schools in Stirling and key education policies please visit the Stirling Council website at www.stirling.gov.uk

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Formats

If you need help or this information
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