

Understanding Mixed-Age Classes

Our Community Multi Academy Trust



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

**HOW YOUR CHILD CAN THRIVE IN A SMALL
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

“To improve the life chances of all children.”

Across our schools with mixed-age classes, we are proud to provide a nurturing environment where every child is known and supported. Our mixed-age classrooms enable teachers to personalise learning, ensuring each child is challenged and supported at just the right level. Pupils thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, developing confidence, independence, and lasting friendships along the way. This booklet explains how our approach works and why it benefits every child in our mixed-age settings.



A guide for parents and carers

Across our schools with mixed-age classes, our vision is to provide a high-quality, nurturing education where every child is known, supported, and challenged to achieve their best. Like many small or rural schools, we carefully plan how our classes are organised to ensure financial sustainability while maintaining excellent educational outcomes.

This booklet has been created to explain what mixed-age classes are, why they are used, and how they benefit children academically, socially, and emotionally. It also addresses common questions and offers reassurance to families considering one of our mixed-age schools for their child.



Children thrive when they feel they belong

Why we organise mixed-age classes



In our mixed-age schools, class structures reflect the strengths of smaller, community-focused settings, where every child is known as an individual and teaching is planned around need, not just age.

Mixed-age classes are a positive choice, allowing us to make the best use of expertise, resources, and learning spaces. Teachers focus on high-quality teaching, clear progression, and personalised support, ensuring every child receives the right level of challenge.

This approach works particularly well in smaller schools, creating calm, purposeful classrooms where pupils thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Key benefits for children:

- Older pupils develop leadership, mentoring, and collaborative skills.
- Younger pupils gain confidence and learn from peers.
- All children enjoy personalised learning, strong relationships, and continuity in their education.

These groupings help our schools maintain high standards while supporting, challenging, and nurturing every child.

HOW LEARNING IS ORGANISED



Teaching in mixed-age classes is carefully planned to ensure all National Curriculum requirements are met, with learning that is progressive, engaging and appropriately challenging.

All subjects are taught in line with the expectations set out in the national curriculum, ensuring age-appropriate provision across our schools. Depending on how mixed-age classes are structured, schools plan learning through either a two or three-year cycle across all subjects. This approach is carefully sequenced to build progressively, ensuring full coverage of the curriculum, with appropriate adaptations and opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding.



SUPPORTING Every Child

In our mixed-age schools, teaching is carefully planned to ensure every child is supported and appropriately challenged.

Pupils who are ready to move their learning forward are encouraged to deepen and extend their understanding, while those who need additional support benefit from targeted teaching and small-group work. Teachers use a range of strategies and flexible grouping, supported by their strong knowledge of each child, to help all pupils make progress.

As part of Our Community Multi Academy Trust (OCMAT), staff work closely with colleagues across the Trust, sharing expertise and best practice. This ensures children benefit from the care of a small school alongside the wider support of a strong Trust.

Consistency and Strong Relationships

Many pupils benefit from having the same teacher for more than one year. This helps staff build a strong understanding of each child and support their learning effectively over time.

Strong relationships help children feel confident, secure and ready to learn, while also supporting positive partnerships with parents.



“We offer a values-led education where every child is known, supported, valued, celebrated, and inspired to achieve the very best that they possibly can.”

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS



Mixed-age classes across our schools provide rich social and emotional benefits for all pupils:

- Older pupils mentor younger ones, building confidence and leadership skills.
- Strong friendships develop across ages, creating a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Children learn empathy, independence and collaboration, helping them thrive both socially and emotionally.

Research shows that pupils in mixed-age classes often enjoy school more and develop a positive self-concept.

References

- * Parrott, F. & Cohen, S. (2021). Mixed-age play and social development in primary schools. *International Journal of Play*.
Gehrsitz, M. et al. (2021). Composite classes can boost pupil attainment. *Royal Economic Society*.

Community • Compassion • Inclusion



PARENT WORRIES & FAQ

- **Will my child be held back academically?**

No. Teaching is personalised, adapted, and scaffolded strategically with high ambition. Children progress based on their attainment and starting points, not simply their age.

- **Will the curriculum be repeated?**

No. Subjects are planned carefully on a cycle, ensuring progression and depth rather than repetition.

- **How is progress monitored?**

Through regular assessment, moderation, leadership monitoring and governor oversight.

- **What happens when classes are full?**

Class sizes are carefully managed, and waiting lists are operated for in-year admissions.



PARENT VOICE / TESTIMONIALS

“We were hugely apprehensive before our daughter entered the mixed class, but we now have a better understanding of the curriculum and the selection process of how the children move up through the different classes, we feel it actually works better for our child. Often they are working in smaller groups and therefore gains a lot more from her time in the classroom.” – parent

The school has gone above and beyond to understand our child’s needs. He feels safe, included, and able to learn at his own pace, with staff always ready to adapt and support him.” – parent

Our daughter has grown in confidence and happiness in a nurturing environment where differences are celebrated and every child is valued.” – parent

Joining this school was life-changing for our son. He is no longer academically behind, his mental health has improved, and we finally see our little boy thriving again.” – parent

Inclusion is not just a policy here; it’s visible every day in the way teachers adapt learning and support every child to succeed.” – Parent voice

From the moment our son arrived, he was welcomed, understood, and supported with patience and consistency. His confidence and sense of belonging have flourished, and he genuinely loves school.” – parent of a Year 4 pupil

PUPIL VOICE / TESTIMONIALS

“I love going to my hand writing group, and getting to practice writing with others. I have made lots of new friends!”

- Year 1 pupil

“I like being in a mixed-age class because the older children help me feel more confident asking questions.” -

Year 3 pupil

“The teachers organise things so that everyone is learning at the right level for them. Even though we’re in the same class, we don’t all do exactly the same work.” - Year 5 pupil

“There’s always someone to work with, and it never feels too scary because everyone knows each other really well.”

- Year 4 pupil

“You don’t just mix with your own year group — you get to know lots of different children and make more friends.” - Year 6 pupil

SEE US IN ACTION



We would be delighted to welcome you and your child to visit our mixed-age schools, explore the classrooms, and see for yourself how every pupil is supported to grow, learn, and flourish.

Please contact the school offices via the links below to find out more and to arrange your visit.

- [Borden CE Primary School](#)
- [Bredgar CE Primary School](#)
- [Lydd Primary School](#)
- [Milstead & Frinsted CE Primary School](#)
- [Lynsted & Norton Primary School](#)
- [Petham Primary School](#)
- [Selling CE Primary School](#)



As part of Our Community Multi Academy Trust, our schools are proud to be rooted in the Trust's values of Community, Compassion, and Inclusion, ensuring every child is supported, valued, and able to thrive.



“TO IMPROVE THE LIFE CHANCES OF ALL CHILDREN”

- Family Feel – caring mixed-age environment
- Tailored Learning for Every Child – lessons personalised by ability
- Grow in Confidence and Knowledge – peer learning across ages
- Nurturing – support for every child
- Rural Settings, Strong Communities – friendships across year groups
- Collaboration Across OCMAT Schools – small-school learning, big Trust benefits



www.ocmat.org.uk