



# Mixed Age Classes

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How will the classroom look if both Y1 and Y2 children are being taught?

Many schools teach in mixed age classes and this can be highly effective. It is important to remember that all children develop differently and are not restricted by the year group they are placed in. Children born on 31 August and 1 September may be similar developmentally, but are placed a year apart in the English school system. Increasingly frequently, parents are requesting deferrals for children born near this key date, as it often seems to make little sense to have a single cut off point. Teachers are adept at working in terms of “stage” and not just “age.”

The mixed age classroom looks just like a single year group classroom. Children will start most of their lessons all sitting on the carpet together for an input. Our skilled and experienced teachers will target questioning at individual children or groups, as appropriate. All children will benefit from these discussions; younger children can learn from older children and older children will develop skills in explaining their thinking so that others can understand it.

A typical lesson will often start with an initial input on the carpet, where the teacher introduces new knowledge or a key skill. Children will then work in groups; some may remain on the carpet for an extension of the discussion and perhaps more complex development. Others will consolidate or practise what they have been taught, independently or with the teacher or teaching assistant. Children who need additional support or children who require a greater level of challenge will receive this individually or in groups during the sessions.

### How will teachers plan to teach both year groups?

In most subjects, the National Curriculum is not split into separate year groups, but into Key Stages. Therefore, there is an expectation for what children will learn within both Year 1 and Year 2. Subject leaders at Saltergate have developed progression documents that allow children to work through content in a rolling programme, ensuring that all children will access the necessary areas of learning. Year 2 children will receive additional challenge, to extend their thinking and learning; they will also work towards higher expectations in terms of recording and presenting their learning. For September 2024, the curriculum will cover new knowledge for the children entering Year 2; there will be no repetition of themes or content from Year 1.

In Maths and English, the curriculum for Year 1 and Year 2 are aligned. This means that Year 1 and Year 2 children would all be working on the same content, for example, addition, but the objectives for their learning would be different. However, one of the benefits of mixed age classes is that Year 1 children who are ready for challenge would have the opportunity to tackle a Year 2 objective and conversely, a Year 2 child who is finding something difficult could initially work on a Year 1 objective to build basic skills and develop confidence.

We will continue to deliver a curriculum that enables children to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills; these extend children's understanding without them having to access a separate curriculum. As you know, at Saltergate we choose books carefully to inspire our children and to base some of our learning upon; we will continue to use high quality texts which all children can access and enjoy, and which contain the relevant sentence structures and vocabulary to stretch children at the appropriate level.

It is certainly the case that teaching the National Curriculum and ensuring coverage of all areas can be very smoothly facilitated in a mixed age classroom.

**How will Saltergate make sure that Year 2 children have the opportunity to excel academically?**

We want every child at Saltergate to achieve their full potential. National data for performance of children at the end of KS1 and 2 suggests that being placed in a mixed age classes has no negative impact on children's academic achievements. This is supported by educational research, with some studies suggesting that children often perform better when placed in classes with a bigger age range. A mixed age classroom means that the children will have greater flexibility to learn and to have their needs met, something that is very important to us at Saltergate.

Children who need support will receive this, just as they have done in their single age classes. Children who are ready for more challenge will be provided with learning opportunities to deepen their understanding and to excel.

**How will we ensure that Year 1 children have a positive transition from YR into the mixed age classes?**

The two transition visits will enable to children to have a gradual introduction to their new classrooms and outdoor areas. We have lots of plans for a very nurturing and creative environment which will enable the children to feel safe and secure. Our skilled and experienced teachers will work to build strong and positive relationships with all the children, getting to know them as individuals. A detailed handover of information will also enable the teachers to form these bonds quickly and smoothly.

Research evidence shows that children can thrive in a mixed age class. Children learn to form wider friendships and relate to broader groups of peers, creating a classroom atmosphere where children help, and learn from, each other. This teaches all children many skills around interaction, socialisation and emotional literacy. Saltergate is a family, and each of our classes will be a smaller, nurturing family unit, where everyone has a sense of belonging.