



# **CLASS ORGANISATION 2021/22**



## **SCHOOL ORGANISATION FOR SEPTEMBER 2021.**

This letter is to inform parents of the arrangements for next year. As you will be well aware, we have to make decisions based on varying numbers of pupils in each year group. With varying numbers of pupils each year and externally enforced factors (such as national limits to infant class sizes), there will always be a need for a "fluid" approach to our school's organisation.

I apologise for the length of the following explanation but feel that in order to do justice to the subject I need to give you a full picture.

### **INFANTS (Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1)**

Reception	23		
Year 1		17	16
Year 2		11	11
Total	23	28	27

### **JUNIORS (Key Stage Two)**

Year 3	11	11	11		
Year 4	12	12	11		
Year 5				29	
Year 6					34
Total	23	23	22	29	34

*Please note: The above pupil numbers are for illustrative purposes only.  
The profile may, and often does, change during the summer term.*

### **Mixed Age Classes**

Some parents have reservations about having their children in mixed classes. Parents often find it more acceptable to have their child in a mixed class if they are from the younger age group. Many parents feel that in this situation their child will be in a more challenging situation. On the other hand some parents do not like their child to be with younger children and feel that they may be 'held back' or will end up doing work that is too easy for them. These fears, though understandable, are not borne out in practice.

Firstly the starting date for any academic year is the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. This is an arbitrary date that has its origins back in time to a more rural England when children used to help bring the harvest in during the later summer months. Children born in September are almost a full chronological year older than children born later in the academic year, for example, in July or August. It seems quite normal, however, for them to be in the same year group. If we then compare two children, one born in August and the other born in the following month, though they may be only a few days difference in their respective ages they can, under the normal arrangements, find themselves in quite different year groups. Levels of maturity and ability do not necessarily follow year groupings exactly and some younger children are often more mature and more able than some older pupils.

Secondly, the school curriculum is designed to allow for mixed classes. Elements of the curriculum are taught on a cyclical basis, that is, knowledge and skills are taught on a number

of occasions over a period of time. For example, in English, the correct punctuation of sentences is taught in all year groups but at different levels dependant on the age and ability of the children involved. In Science, Electricity and Magnetism is covered on a number of occasions. Knowledge and skills are revised, consolidated and extended as we go along.

Thirdly, and **most importantly** work in all classes is differentiated. This means we seek to give children work which best suits their needs at that time, based on prior assessment. Children in a mixed class are therefore not given work that is either too easy or too difficult. Teachers are used to dealing with a wide range of ability and need.

### **Does this happen in other schools?**

Yes, other schools, especially in York, have to make similar choices. Infant schools or departments have a ceiling of 30 pupils to a class. This further complicates the mathematics. Smaller schools inevitably have to have mixed classes. One of the more successful primary schools in York in terms of KS1 and KS2 test results has, at times, had only two classes; one class containing children from Reception, Y1 and Y2 whilst the other class accommodated children from Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6!

### **Will my child end up following the curriculum for a different year group?**

No, the foundation stage curriculum and national curriculum can be organised so that this does not happen.

From September 2014 we began work on a revised national curriculum which we have organised using a thematic approach. Themes are arranged to accommodate mixed-age classes i.e. into a three-year cycle for Early Years and KS1 and into a two-year cycle for Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2, in order to avoid replication.

Teachers target the individual child with the appropriate level of work within each topic or subject. Within any class, each teacher will create smaller groups of children with similar learning needs. The situation in a mixed age class is no different. The teacher must plan and assess carefully, however all staff do this as a matter of course.

### **Why are mixed age classes necessary?**

#### **Funding**

The school receives a sum of money for each pupil it has on its register. In order to put a teacher in front of a class of children a school must have enough children in the class to attract sufficient funding to pay the teacher. Classes of 29 to 30 on average provide enough revenue for a teacher to be employed. On average if a class has fewer children than this the school begins to lose money. We are expecting to have 209 pupils on roll next September. We can therefore afford approximately 7 teachers.

#### **Cohort Size**

Where we have 30 children in a particular cohort the mathematics is simple. Thirty children divided by thirty equals one class of thirty pupils who will have been born in the same academic year. If there are 35 children it isn't quite so clear cut. In this situation the school is left with four choices. These are outlined below.

	Class 1	Class 2	Comment
<b>Option 1</b>	17	18	Financially impossible in the long term. The school would in effect be employing one more teacher than it needed or could afford and would ultimately tip into deficit. This is a very serious situation for a school. Classes of this size cannot be sustained except in the short term.
<b>Option 2</b>	35	No Class	Large class size- additional support would need to be a priority. In Reception/KS1 this would exceed infant class size limits.
<b>Option 3</b>	30	5 (+ 25 additional children from the year above or below)	This options means some children would be in a mixed year group and others would be in a pure year group. The curriculum could be organised in a 2 year cycle.
<b>Option 4</b>	17 (+ 13 from the year above or below)	18 (+ 12 from the year above or below)	This option allows for teachers to plan together in a 2 year cycle.

Each year the various options are considered for each year group within the constraints of the available budget.

## INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT IN CLASSES

**When there is more than one class within a year group**, there are a number of different factors that we consider when allocating children to classes. It is difficult to balance all of these factors and give them equal weighting, but we do try our best. Below is a list of criteria staff will consider when placing children.

### Academic ability

We attempt to provide a range of ability in each class. This arrangement benefits all children. We use a variety of sources to glean this information including teacher assessment during the year and optional or statutory assessments taken during Foundation Stage, KS1 & 2. The ability spread across a year group can be very wide. However we make use of group work, additional literacy and numeracy support, targeted interventions, and Special Needs Individual Education Plans to help teachers address the differing needs of individual pupils.

### Friendship groups

For year groups with more than one class, we send home a form for you to complete in consultation with your child. In it your child will be asked to nominate five friends that they would be happy to be with.

Whilst existing friendships are important, we do not see them as the most important factor. Children make friends quickly and we feel that a crucial part of social training is making new friends during their time with us. The ability to do this is very important in later life and tends to be a source of confidence.

We will endeavour to ensure that at least one of the names appears on the same class list as your son or daughter. We make no guarantees other than we will try to ensure there is one

familiar face. It is vital that you remain positive in front of your child and talk up the benefits of meeting new people whilst emphasising they will only ever be, at the most, two and half hours away from seeing their current best friend.

### **Learning partners**

We try to match children who work well together. This may not be their best friend. We try to separate children who find it counter-productive working together.

### **Special Educational Needs Pupils**

We seek to provide a balance across all classes.

### **Children in need of additional support**

Often where we have two or three children with a particular short term difficulty it is advantageous to group them together in the same class in order to make maximum use of one of our support assistants.

### **Teacher / Pupil**

Where possible we seek to avoid placing children with the same teacher two years in succession.

### **Male Teacher**

Where possible, we try to ensure that children are taught by a male teacher at some point during their time with us.

### **Twins**

The wishes of parents are always listened to. Sometimes twins need to be together; sometimes they need to be apart.

### **Age range**

We keep this within an academic year where we can but on occasions mixed-age classes cannot be avoided.

### **Gender balance**

We attempt to balance the number of boys and girls in a class, where possible.

### **The physical process of allocating places**

Teachers from each year group will meet and divide the year cohort into three rough levels of ability. Allocation of children seen as being a priority takes place first. For example children with Special Educational Needs are often placed first. Allocation using the above criteria then follows on in an attempt to arrive at a balanced, fair and equitable situation for everyone.

As each child is put into place, one less space is available to place other children. Our options are progressively reduced. This is where difficulty often occurs with friendship requests. The last few placements can take the longest time.

At the end of the process we hope to have suited everyone. If parents ask me to move a child after the allocation procedure has occurred, this would require another child to also be moved and may mean somebody is left without a friend from their list. For that reason, we

make considerable efforts to get things right first time. There must be very strong and compelling reasons for us to move a child after places have been allocated.

### **Finally**

As you can see there are a number of factors that affect which class a child is allocated to. It is a time consuming, often frustrating process. Its outcome will not always suit all children or parents or staff. Ultimately however, it is a considered compromise. Children are not allocated at random nor do we have a top or bottom class!

At Dunnington CE Primary School, we aim to match children with the provision appropriate to their needs. We are always happy to discuss the needs of individual children at any time in the year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lengthy document. If you have any questions about this subject or any other matter, please contact me.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. Hancy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'C' and a trailing flourish.

Caroline Hancy