



Composite Classes in Primary Schools

*Advice for Parents and
Frequently Asked questions*

What is a composite class?

A composite class is defined to be a class in which there are pupils at more than one stage of the primary school. In most cases, a composite class will comprise of pupils at only two stages e.g. P.4 + P.5 = P.4/5 but it is possible, particularly in smaller schools that a composite class could contain pupils from three or more stages.

Why are composite classes formed?

Composite classes are formed in most schools partly because of the way in which the pupil roll is configured in any given year. Composite classes are formed to make efficient use of teaching staff in a school.

The number of teachers in a primary school is based on the number of children on the total school roll, not on the number in any single year group. The headteacher decides on the best possible structure of classes based on the number of pupils enrolled.

Do composite classes have fewer pupils in them?

Generally, yes. The maximum size of a composite class will be 25 pupils, whereas the maximum size of a P2-P3 class will normally be 30 pupils and the maximum size of a P4-P7 class will be 33 pupils.

If a composite class has to be formed, how are decisions taken about which children should be allocated to which class?

The Head Teacher will form classes using their professional judgement taking account of a range of criteria to best meet the educational, social and emotional needs of children. The range of criteria to be considered include the following:

- Working groups (ie groups of children who are together for the greatest part of their curricular experience)
- Social groups
- Levels of attainment and achievement
- Particular family circumstances
- Gender balance

What is a typical age range within any composite class?

Before answering this, it is important to realise that the law which governs the age at which children must be enrolled in school means that, within any one year group, there is the potential for an age range of as much as 18½ months, e.g. the youngest child in a P.1 class will have celebrated her/his 4th birthday on 28th February prior to the August enrolment, whereas the oldest child in that same class may be only a few days short of her/his 6th birthday when starting the school in August.

It is therefore quite possible that the age range within a composite class will be less than the age range in a straight stage class

Will my child be held back if she/he is in a composite class?

Definitely not! The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Much work is undertaken in small groups and it is at least as easy to form groups with similar existing achievement levels in a composite class as it is in a non-composite class. Furthermore, the school will plan the educational experience for pupils classes in ways which ensure progression and continuity.

Will forming a composite class mean that my child's friendship grouping is being broken up.

This may be the case, although care is taken in allocating pupils to classes that their social needs are not ignored, in general terms it is likely to be good for children to experience classes with different classmates so that their circle of friends and acquaintances can be ex-tended.

Promoting good working relationships

You should be assured that all teachers will be sensitive to the social and emotional needs of children in their classes and will be encouraging members of the class to develop good working relationships with each other. There will be many opportunities for your child to continue to be involved with his or her whole year group including a range of curricular and social activities.