



## **Hethersett Woodside Primary and Nursery School Class Structure Policy**

### **Background**

At Hethersett Woodside Primary and Nursery School, we are committed to ensuring an effective learning environment for all pupils.

The balance of pupil characteristics and needs in each class across the different classes in a year group can have a profound impact on the progress and happiness of each child.

Our school admits children throughout the year, where there are spaces, assigning them to classes where places are available. By the end of an academic year, with children joining and leaving the class, classes can become imbalanced in terms of gender, education needs, language, personal, social needs, maturity and friendships.

From September 2024 we shall mix children across a cohort at certain key transition points in order to maintain balanced classes throughout.

### **Rationale for the Mix Up approach**

We feel that regular, routine mixing of classes will help the children's relationships, help to balance the classes and limit any ongoing friendship issues within classes which are not conducive to learning, allowing children to develop better resilience and develop broader friendships in a safe and comfortable environment. We have also seen that children appear to develop a strong class identity and tend not to mix with children in the other class. We feel that by mixing the year group, the children will have the opportunity to make friends across the year groups and see themselves as a year group team rather than just a class, thus building a stronger school community and pride in our school.

- to be given the opportunity to connect and re-connect with all of the children in their year group, building strong, positive connections.
- to create opportunities for children to learn and play with a wide variety of peers
- to further develop children's collaborative skills for learning
- to ensure that classes remain balanced in response to pupil transfer (mobility); transition between phases and year groups and changes to individual needs within each class.
- to promote a greater sense of community in a large primary school (being part of a year group, not just a class)
- to prepare children for secondary school where they will be taught in different classes throughout the year

### **Principles**

- The arrangements for class mixing are based on the professional judgements of class teachers, the Inclusion team and the senior leadership team (and not in response to parental choice)
- We will always consider what is in the best interests of the classes and cohort as a whole when making decisions.
- We will communicate the criteria for class mixing in an open and transparent way.
- We will always consider the happiness and welfare of children and will take into consideration existing friendship groups when we create new classes.

### **Process**

- Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants observe the children's friendships at work and play

- Class Teachers meet together to consider new classes - to ensure a good balance of friendships, range of educational, social and personal needs, gender and maturity are represented in each class
- Phase Leaders meet with Class Teachers to discuss and finalise groupings.
- Senior Leadership Team approve classes.
- New Classes are shared with parents and children in July at our planned transition events in school i.e. 'move up morning', handover meetings.

### **Including the children in the decision**

The children's opinions are important to us. It is not our intention to separate good friendships and, of course, the children will still be spending valuable time together out on the playground at break and lunch times. The children's friendships will be taken into account when we decide the class lists. The class teachers will talk to the children beforehand to explain the process and to reassure the children of any worries they may have. All children will write the names of 5 friends they would like to be in a new class with. We will ensure they are in their new class with at least one on their list.

### **Criteria for Class Mixing**

Classes will be mixed to achieve a good balance according to the following criteria:

- Gender
- Attainment levels
- Range of special educational and learning support needs
- Stage of learning English as an additional language
- Social and personal needs
- Friendships

In terms of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; we will consider very carefully which class they are designated, and take into account their needs and support required.

### **Informing parents and children**

Once class lists have been published, changes will not be possible as this would make the process unmanageable. The new class lists will be based on the professional judgements of our team, with the best interests of our children at heart.

May 2024

Ratified by Governing Board: June 2024