Saint Joseph & Saint Teresa
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*'Together we live, learn, love'*

**Policy for Class Structures.**

At St Joseph and St Teresa's Catholic Primary school we aim to provide a rich and engaging experience for our children in order to realise their academic, personal and spiritual potential.

We aim to achieve this through the teaching of our values:

 Fairness  Self esteem  Tolerance and respect  Achievement  Caring and kindness  Hard working

We believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment and believe that they should feel and be safe at all times. To enable this to happen we work together with all members of the school community, children, staff, parents/carers and governors to promote our motto: "Together we live, learn, love."

At St Joseph and St Teresa's Catholic Primary school, we have seven-year groups and only five classes. Due to this, we split certain year groups so that the children are taught in mixed ability year groups.

The current curriculum is very clear when it talks about children's learning. With the removal of levels, all pupils are deemed capable of reaching their year age-related standards, unless a child has a significant or complex learning disability or difficulty.

The National Curriculum not only provides a basis for explaining what pupils are to learn and at what stage, but it raises expectations by including the key concepts that all pupils need to achieve by the end of each year or phase.

All children need to be given the opportunity to learn the skills for their year group.

From September 2026, we will be splitting the children after considering a number of influences and will make a professional judgement based on this. Split year groups have been considered very carefully depending on each cohort of pupils these include (and are in no particular order of preference):

- Emotional development;
- Maturity and social confidence;
- Readiness to learn;
- SEND;

- EAL;
- Learning styles;
- Additional need and
- Gender balance

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the staff when deciding classes. The one point where we seek out parental views before our decisions are published will be in the case of twins. However, it is the Senior Leadership of the School who will make the final allocation based on their professional judgement of where the child will best flourish in both their personal, social and academic achievements.

To ensure as many pupils as possible achieve the age related standards, teachers will need to challenge all learners by providing materials and tasks on a particular concept at varied levels of difficulty with varying degrees of scaffolding. In essence, when working in class, the children will be taught their own year group skills, so if they are in split classes, they will be taught the same curriculum.

As we want to give the children the best learning opportunities and start with their education, there maybe some children whose exceptional learning needs are best met by being in their current class and in these circumstances, there will be particular consultation arranged with parents. This would still allow children with SEN to have their needs flexibly assessed in accordance with the Accessibility Policy.

If parents disagree with the school's decision, they are invited to discuss their concerns with the Senior Leadership Team. If, following these discussions, parents remain keen for their child to move to the next class, we ask that the child remains in their allocated class for the first two terms. At the end of this period, the Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the parents, will review the child's progress and make a decision on whether it is in the child's best interests to remain in their current class or move to the next one.

## Mixing Classes – Frequently Asked Questions

Mixed age classes are common in schools and pupils are not at a disadvantage if they are in a mixed age class. Below you will find some frequently asked questions and our response to them.

**What is a mixed age and split year group class?**

A mixed age class is defined to be a class in which there are children who are from more than one year group of the primary school.

**Will this apply to all year groups?**

We are a five-class school with seven-year groups. So our classes are made up of mixed year groups:

Nightingale – Reception and Year 1 mix

Einstein – Year 1 and Year 2 mix

Shakespeare – Year 2 and Year 3 mix

Rosa Parks – Year 4 and Year 5 mix

Malala – Year 5 and Year 6 mix

**Will my child be held back if she/he is placed in mixed age or split year groups?**

No.

The ways in which learning and teaching are organised in primary schools means that the teaching and work are tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. Our staff are experienced in planning and delivering work that matches the needs of the individual learner and this is no different to the normal class provision. All teachers provide challenge and support for children, regardless of year group. Our curriculum at St Joseph & St Teresa's has been designed to be taught in a 2 year rolling programme which means that children will not be repeating work or topics. The National Curriculum clearly sets out what children should cover by the end of the Key Stage; this is supportive of those schools where it is necessary to teach children in classes of more than one year group.

**Will being in a mixed age class be detrimental to my child?**

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a mixed age class has any detrimental effect on the education of children in that class. Performance data of children at the end of KS1 and KS2 suggests that being placed in a mixed age class 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 with children of their own abilities. Children who find aspects of the curriculum more challenging will be supported in the same way they have been in single year classes. Children working above the expected standard will be provided with work which both deepens their understanding and moves them onto explore new concepts.

**How will two-year groups be taught alongside each other in one classroom?**

All children develop at different rates. It isn't automatic that the oldest child in a class will achieve better than the youngest child. Children will be taught to their individual academic needs and not simply to their age. All classes in the school have a large range of abilities. Teachers will choose work appropriate to the level a child is working at, ensuring that all needs are catered for.

**Will this mean my child's friendship group is being broken up?**

Extra care has been taken in allocating pupils to classes. Your child's teacher has used their considerable knowledge of your child's needs in school to place them in their new class, ensuring their social needs are supported. We also know that it is good for children to experience classes with different classmates in order that their circle of friends can be extended in a safe and supportive way. Whenever new classes are formed, opportunities are created beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to maintain contact with friends who have been allocated to other classes.

**How will a mixed year group affect my child emotionally and socially?**

Children learn to form wider friendships and relate broader groups of children, creating a classroom atmosphere where children are encouraged to help others and seek support from their older peers rather than simply relying on adult support. Socially, pupils enjoy being taught in mixed-class groups and love growing in stature across the two years. Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles and younger pupils are able to accomplish tasks they could not do without the assistance of older children. Pupils develop a better sense of familiarity with their classmates and learn to mix with a wide range of age groups from a young age.

St Joseph & St Teresa Catholic Primary School
Lover's Walk, Wells, Somerset, BA5 2QL
T 01749 678791
F 01749 670682
E stjosephandstteresa@educ.somerset.gov.uk
www.stjosephandstteresa.co.uk