

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Mixed Age Classes in Key Stage 1

I am writing to inform you of an important change to the structure of our Key Stage 1 classes, which will take effect from the start of the new academic year.

Across the UK, there has been a national decline in birth rates, which has impacted schools across the country and Appleton Academy is no exception. Over the past two years, we have seen a significant reduction in pupil numbers across our Reception and Year 1 cohorts. Lower pupil numbers have a significant impact on the school budget and as a result we can no longer sustain the structure in Key Stage 1, which currently consists of two Year 1 classes and two Year 2 classes.

This means that from September 2025, children in Year 1 and Year 2 will be taught in three mixed-age classes. We want to reassure you that this decision has been made after careful consideration and with the best interests of all our pupils at heart.

There are many proven benefits to mixed-age teaching, including:

- Enhanced social development: Younger children benefit from the example and support of older peers, while older children develop leadership and empathy skills.
- Improved emotional development: Mixed age classes promote co-operation, empathy and leadership in older children. They encourage confidence and resilience in their younger peers.
- Stronger sense of community and belonging: Children build relationships across age groups, fostering a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment.
- Individualised learning pace: Teachers continue to adapt planning to meet the needs of all. A wider range of resources and materials enable children to progress at their own rate rather than being restricted to age-based expectations.
- Realistic preparation for life: Mixed age classes reflect the diversity of abilities found in the real world, preparing children for mixed-ability teamwork in later life.
- Growth mindset development: They promote the idea that ability is not fixed and everyone can improve with effort and support.

Our teaching staff are already experienced in working with children of varying ages, abilities and needs. They are well-equipped to deliver a rich and engaging curriculum that ensures that every child is challenged and supported appropriately.

We understand that change can bring questions, and we are committed to working closely with you to ensure a smooth transition. With this in mind we have created some questions and answers that you may find useful.

1. What will the curriculum look like?

The Key Stage 1 curriculum has been reviewed not only to ensure the requirements of the National Curriculum are met but also to provide a curriculum that will excite and engage children. The National Curriculum is structured in Key Stages with the objectives set designed to be taught over two years, this ensures that children will not be repeating learning that has already taken place.

2. How will the children be taught English and maths?

Children will be taught separately for phonics in Year 1, with any Year 2 child requiring additional support with their phonics joining the lessons to consolidate learning and address any gaps in their phonetic knowledge. Year 2 will be taught the Little Wandle spelling programme, which builds on the Little Wandle phonics from Year 1.

English lessons will be planned to ensure that children are being taught the objectives for their year group.

In maths we follow White Rose Maths as our scheme of learning. This provides a structured plan for the teaching of Maths in mixed year classes, which our teachers will adapt for the specifics of the children in their class.

Key Stage 1 is about the securing of basic number facts and operations with lots of opportunities for reinforcement activities and increasing the size of numbers that children are expected to be able to calculate with. Discrete teaching of the fundamentals of Maths will take place during lessons with activities provided for children to practise independently or with small group support.

3. How will you address gaps between the year groups?

Throughout the year we have several assessment points, which we use to identify gaps in learning and amend and adapt plans to close these. This will continue across the mixed year groups. This is similar to the above question - all children develop at different rates and at different times, learning is not linear. This is something we consider in all classes and year groups and our whole team are really skilled at supporting a wide range of developmental needs.

4. Why are you not streaming the classes?

Research shows that streaming is not the most effective way to support learners of any ability. Our assessment cycle, planning, quality teaching and effective use of TAs and resources enable us to meet the needs of all children in all lessons.

4. How will the classes be split?

There will be 3 mixed Year 1/2 classes. They have been organised to ensure a balance of needs and attainment within each class including academic, social and emotional needs. We have matched this closely to the strengths in our teaching team.

5. Will my child always be in a mixed age class?

This is a longer-term decision that will be based on pupil numbers and government funding allocations.

Our Transition Day will take place on Wednesday 2 July 2025, when children will be spending the day in their new classes and meeting their teachers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Yours faithfully

J Clayton
Head of Primary