



Freshwater Bay Primary School

Class Placements Information for Parents

Sometimes parents express concerns when their child has been allocated to a split grade (composite) class and believe that it may be a disadvantage to their child. It is important that you, as parents, are aware that contrary to these beliefs there is no disadvantage to a student being in a composite class.

Why do you create split classes?

As staffing is dependent upon the enrolment in each year level, multi-aged or combined classes may occur. This practice is well supported by research and our beliefs about how children learn. It is also often a practical necessity with our enrolment numbers. The class distribution will be considered based on student numbers. The distribution for the class numbers may change each year according to numbers in the school and the effects of different numbers in each class or year group.

How does the school decide the classes each year?

The principal and the staff take into consideration the student numbers and individual needs in each year group, the recommended class sizes for each year group and the total number of staff the budget can afford. Various scenarios are examined by staff and evaluated based on needs throughout the whole school. The final decision is made by the Principal.

Why is class placement in the hands of the teaching staff?

As professional educators we strive to make the right choices, considering all the information we have to hand. While it is certainly true that parents know their own children the best, when a parent requests a specific placement for their child, they do not have all the relevant information. Teachers, on the other hand, have the academic and social information about all children in a particular year level.

How are students taught in a composite class?

In any class, there is a range of abilities and one of the challenges of teaching is to cater for individual differences. Teachers work in a variety of ways, sometimes with the whole class, perhaps for a class story, discussion or sharing time but more often they tend to work with small groups or individuals. As well, in the process of learning, children use resources and materials to explore, plan and design, experiment, talk, share, question and record their investigations and achievements. Throughout this process, teachers monitor children's learning and record it in a variety of ways and plan future learning from the judgements they make about what the student has achieved. This planning, teaching, and evaluating process occurs whether a teacher has a straight or composite class.

How do teachers cater academically for more than one grade in a class?

Teachers are skilled at delivering the required curriculum. In addition, teachers must adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of individual learners within the classroom. A split grade class generally has very little extra variation in the needs of learners than a straight grade. Each year the curriculum builds on the curriculum from the year before so, to cater for the different needs of

students, teachers are consistently teaching above and below that year's curriculum requirements. In this regard, a composite class does not disadvantage students in any way. Research by Professor John Hattie into the effect sizes of factors that influence achievement show that composite classes make no difference to the academic outcomes of students. In fact, the factor that has the largest influence by a very large margin is teacher quality.

What about socially?

Children benefit enormously from having friends outside of their year group. It allows them to develop a wider group of friends which gives them more options in the playground, greater connections across the school and can benefit them within the wider community. Teachers work collaboratively to plan their programs ensuring children in composite classes are provided regular opportunities to join their 'same age' peers in various learning situations. Consequently, students form wider friendship groups than would normally occur in a straight class. Evidence shows that most children quickly adapt to new classroom situations, developing new social connections while being provided opportunity to continue existing friendships. This opportunity helps build long term social skills while also assisting in building resiliency.

Will my child miss out on any work or repeat similar work again, because of being in a composite class?

When children move from class to class, they continue to work at their own rate with support and direct instruction from the classroom teacher and program. There are times when children 'revisit' particular topics or concepts as part of learning even in a straight class. This enables them to develop their creative and critical thinking, build on previous knowledge and explore other possibilities.

Still have concerns?

If you still have concerns, talk to your child's teacher about the program they are offering and how your child will be catered for. Thank you for your understanding and ongoing partnership in your child's learning development.

Below are links to further reading:

Article from the Sydney Herald addressing this issue for parents:

[Many parents dislike composite classes but the evidence does not support their anxiety \(smh.com.au\)](https://www.smh.com.au/news/education/many-parents-dislike-composite-classes-but-the-evidence-does-not-support-their-anxiety-20180614-4541113.html)

Professor John Hattie's research: <https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement>