

Split Grades at Cottesloe Primary School

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.

In years gone by composite classes were formed by placing talented students in the lower grade level with lower achievers in the higher grade. This concept has long been abandoned. All classes are formed by teachers and school leaders sitting and placing students with a range of information available (see our Class Placement Policy).

Why do you create split classes?

There will almost always be a need to run **composite classrooms** at Cottesloe Primary School. This is because of the way we are funded and the fact that we are a relatively small school. Funding is allocated to public schools on a per student basis and this is calculated by the number of students we have enrolled on the census date in March.

The size of each year's cohort can vary considerably depending on enrolments but we still only receive a total amount of funding for the overall number of students. This means that in order to ensure that all classes are an appropriate size, **composite** classes may need to be formed.

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 the needs throughout the whole school. The final decision is made by the **Principal**.

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, in order to cater for the different needs of students, teachers are consistently teaching above and below that year's curriculum requirements. A **composite** class requires more work from the teacher in order to make this happen effectively but 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. It helps them build social skills which has long term effects for building resiliency. Children in composite classes have nothing to fear but plenty to enjoy. Some parents are concerned that their child will lose friendships with the bulk of other students in their year group. Some students may choose to only play with

students from their class but there is no evidence that this has negative long term effects. Most children quickly adapt to new classes and reform friendships in subsequent years.

Excursions:

Excursions are generally organised by individual classes not by year groups. This is because excursions are related to class programs. Sometimes two classes will choose to coordinate aspects of their program and will plan excursions together. This does not mean that it is appropriate for all classes of that year level to attend as they may be engaged in a different program or theme unrelated to the other class's topic and excursion.

Some programs are offered to year groups rather than classes, for example sailing and canoeing, or Year 6 camp. These excursions will specify that these are offered to this year group rather than specific class/es.

School activities:

Some school activities will be offered to specific year groups. Examples of these include swimming lessons, sports carnival events, school councillor positions etc.

Assemblies are organised by classes not year groups. Again, some classes choose to combine, but it is still a class assembly not a year level one.

Christmas Assembly items will be in year groups.

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:

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/many-parents-dislike-composite-classes-but-the-evidence-does-not-support-their-anxiety-20150413-1mk4g9.html>

Professor John Hattie's research:

<https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement>