



Class Placement Information

At the end of each year class structures are set up based on the enrolment numbers of students and the projected funding we will be allocated. There are recommended numbers of students that can be in classes based on year level (these are suggested numbers only and current research indicates that the number of students in a class has no impact on student improvement, however we do aim to stay at the suggested numbers) and these numbers are provided to classroom teachers.

Our classes are diverse and all classes are similar in composition, that is, we do not create 'smart classes, special needs classes, EALD classes etc. All classes have a range of students taking into consideration;

- Social and emotional development
- Academic performance
- English as a Second language
- Male and female
- Date of birth
- Additional needs e.g. learning difficulties, extension, disability, behavioural needs
- Dynamics of personalities

Our teachers spend many hours creating classes and consider each and every child and where they will be placed to ensure they can reach their personal best across all areas. They know how your child learns and who they work well with in a classroom setting. Following the creation of the class groups by teachers the administration team look over the lists and discuss any queries about placement with the teachers.

Consideration is given to friendships during the composition of classes, however every opportunity should be provided to children to develop the skills to meet new friends and sustain new friendships and for this reason we ask that parents do not request their children be placed in a class based on friendship. We will always ensure students have at least 1 or 2 students that have been in their class previously, however they may not be their closest friends. There are times when close friends spend more time distracting each other during class time than focusing on their learning. We provide many opportunities for friends to spend time together i.e. during outdoor play time, eating lunch and afternoon tea and at times during work time.

All of our teachers at Southern Grove have high level teaching skills and the ability to teach across year levels. The administration team chooses the teacher that will be allocated for each class, following the composition of classes, with careful consideration and we ask that you trust us in this process and do not request specific teachers for your child.

Settling in to new classes

At the start of the year it is very common for children to take 2-3 weeks to settle into their new class and routine. During this time, it is important that you remain very positive with your child and reassure them that they will be ok. Our teachers monitor these situations very closely and use many different strategies to ensure students settle as quickly as possible. We will always contact you if your child is very distressed and we cannot calm them. We want the best for your child.

Composite/Split Classes

It is necessary in schools to maximise the use of our resources and that means there may be some composite (split) classes in certain years. Read below for answers to the questions you may have in regard to composite classes.

How do you cater for all students in a composite (split) class?

Teachers in composite, as well as those in straight classes, are very conscious of learning as a lifelong, continuous process. They develop a knowledge and understanding of each student's development. Programs are planned with individual outcomes in mind. Activities are open ended, allowing for different outcomes, depending on the stage of development of each student.

For example, a study of frogs in a composite 2/3 class may result in the younger members of the group being able to draw an accurate representation of a frog; others would be expected to draw and label the frog; some would be required to add a description of the frog, its habitat and so forth, while the talented student may be expected to write a short report about a particular type of frog. Teachers accept that students work at their appropriate level of development and plan programs that will extend and support the learning of all in the group.

How will students cover the Curriculum?

"Covering the work", is an idea which comes from the early days of public schooling. It is based on a belief that there is only so much knowledge in the world, and if people keep learning long enough, they will know it all. There is no list of facts that students must learn each year of their schooling. They do not "pass" Pre-Primary, or Year 4. They do however, pass through stages, such as beginning reader, early reader and advanced reader. They pass at different rates, reaching each "mile stone" at different times, according to their own individual differences.

Nor does this take into account other, just as important, lessons to be learnt in the learning environment; how to learn; how to find information; how to present information; how to get on with other people. Knowledge, understandings, skills, attitudes and values are all part of our curriculum.

Do younger students get lost or are the older ones held back?

The simple answer is no. Students are extended at their own individual rates, regardless of whether they are in a straight or composite class. Through teachers effective programming, students will be provided with learning opportunities appropriate to their stages of development, no matter what kind of class they are in.

My child is bright and I believe he/she will be better extended by being with older students.

The concept of extending students depends on the provision of effective learning opportunities appropriate to the developmental stage of each child in the class. Whether a child is part of the younger or the older group of a split class, their individual educational needs will be catered for by the class teacher.

What does the research show about the academic levels of students in composite classes?

Research has shown that students in composite (multi-age) classrooms are at least as successful academically as their typical school peers. Professor Barbara Pavan's October 1992 article for Educational Leadership pp.22-24 titled "The Benefits of Non-Graded Schools," reviewed 64 research studies on non-graded (multi-age) schools. Pavan found that 58% of those students in multi-age classes performed better than their peers on measures of academic achievement. 33% performed as well as their peers, and only 9% did worse than their peers. Pavan also found that students in multi-age settings were more likely than their peers to have positive self-concepts, high self-esteem, and good attitudes toward school. Her review of the research also indicates that benefits to students increase the longer they are in a non-graded setting, and that "underachieving" students also benefit from being in multi-age classrooms.

What else does the research say about the benefits of composite classes?

Older students provide a model of intellectual development as well as of appropriate behaviour for the younger students. Interaction between less and more advanced students, benefits all individuals both academically and socially. Younger students are able to seek help from a wider range of people rather than relying on the teacher to help them all the time. Older students are able to practice the skills they learn by teaching them to the younger students. There are less behaviour problems because younger students integrate quickly into established class routines as older students model appropriate behaviour.

Students are more confident, can operate better as part of a group, are more assertive, develop a greater respect for individual differences, become more independent learners and better problem-solvers. They also make friends outside of their standard age-groups. Older students can benefit from helping younger students in cooperative learning situations. Composite classes build self-esteem and personal competence and provide opportunities to build social skills in a context more reflective of the social interactions within families and the community.

Changing the focus of learning from achieving a certain grade to individual personal best, alters the nature of the learning experience to lead children to value learning and the learning process. Students experience a wider range of roles including leadership and responsibility within a composite learning environment. Although a student might be chronologically a year older or younger in a composite class, and the learning path may be different, the destination of achieving their full potential will be the same.

Getting the facts at Southern Grove Primary School

We understand that it is natural to discuss your child's schooling with other parents, your friends or via social media. We also know that on many occasions the information you are receiving or sharing is incorrect and is someone else's interpretation of the situation.

We ask that if you have any concerns or questions you ask your child's teacher directly or come into administration and speak to one of the deputies or the principal to ensure you are being given the correct information. Engaging in 'carpark gossip' can lead to unnecessary angst for parents, students and staff. We are always happy to answer your questions or discuss any concerns you have. There is always a solution or compromise and if small issues are nipped in the bud quickly we can prevent them from turning into large problems.

We care! At Southern Grove all staff genuinely care about your children and every decision we make is based around '*what is best for the student*'. There will be times when you may not understand or agree with a decision we have made. During these times please come and have a discussion with your child's teacher or an admin member.

Together we grow...