Multi-age classes: fact sheet for parents and carers

What are multi-age classes?

Multi-age classes include students from more than one year-level. These classes may include students within one curriculum stage or from multiple curriculum stages.

The NSW curriculum is organised in the following stages:

Early Stage 1: Kindergarten

Stage 1: Year 1 and Year 2

Stage 2: Year 3 and Year 4

Stage 3: Year 5 and Year 6

Students learn from the curriculum stage relevant to them, whether they are in a multi-age or single-year class. For example, a Year 2 student in a Year 1/2 class, learns the Year 2 (Stage 1) curriculum, just as a Year 4 student in a Year 4/5/6 class learns the Year 4 (Stage 2) curriculum.

Why might my child's school have multi-age classes?

Multi-age classes are common in Australian schools and may be created because of:

- **Enrolment patterns** – year group sizes change from year to year. Multi-age classes help schools create balanced class sizes.
- **Educational benefits –** schools may use these class structures because of the learning and social benefits they can offer.
- **Small schools** – multi-age classes are common in small and rural schools, where they help to create full classes.

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How are students placed in a multi-age class?

Principals and teachers decide class placements by considering:

- Student learning and engagement.
- The mix of students across the school.
- A balance of strengths, interests and learning needs.
- Social wellbeing and friendships.
- Effective teaching of the curriculum
- The organisation of adjustments and supports across classes.

Class placements are made in students' best interests to support learning. Being placed in a multi-age class does **not** mean a student is above or below curriculum stage expectations.

What does learning look like in multi-age classes?

Teachers plan learning using the NSW curriculum and adjust their teaching to meet students' needs. This is called **differentiation** and happens in all classrooms because students learn at different rates.

In a multi-age class, teachers use a range of approaches to support students to progress their learning. This may include:

- teaching the whole class together for some activities
- working in small groups on specific learning activities
- differentiating learning to provide challenge or support
- adjusting activities, resources or ways students demonstrate their learning.

Your questions answered

Will my child get less attention from the teacher?

Class structure does not determine how much attention a student receives. Teachers plan lessons knowing students are at different learning stages, just as in single-year classes.

Will my child repeat work they have already done?

Teachers track student progress and plan their lessons accordingly. Students will continue learning from their relevant curriculum and will be supported to progress to new learning.

Will my child still see their friends?

Schools consider friendships when forming classes. Students are also able to interact with their friends during breaks and whole-school activities.

Will multi-age classes affect how my child is taught?

Teachers use explicit teaching and adjust instruction based on students' learning, assessment, strengths and needs. This happens in every class type.

Will my child have opportunities for enrichment or appropriate challenge?

All NSW public schools support students with high potential or gifted abilities under the department's High Potential and Gifted Education Policy. Teachers look for students' strengths and plan appropriate enrichment or extension to match. This happens in every class type. Being placed in a multi-age class does not limit these opportunities.

How are students with disability supported in a multi-age class?

Students with disability are supported to fully take part in learning in every class, including multi-age classes, whether in a mainstream or support class setting. Teachers get to know each student's strengths, needs and goals, and use differentiated teaching, reasonable adjustments and, where needed, a personalised learning and support plan to help them succeed. These decisions are made together with students where appropriate, and with parents, carers and relevant school staff. Being placed in a multi-age class does not change a student's individual support arrangements.

What does the research say?

High-quality teaching is a major in-school influence on student learning, having a greater impact than class size, composition, or other resources. Research indicates that students in multi-age classes achieve similar academic outcomes to students in single-year classes when teaching is well planned and students receive appropriate support. Multi-age classes can also support students to develop collaboration, empathy and positive relationships with peers of different ages and abilities.

Telephone interpreter service

If you would like more information, please call the school principal. If you need an interpreter to assist with your enquiry, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. Tell the operator the phone number you want to call and the operator will get an interpreter on the line to assist you with the conversation. You will not be charged for this service.