



**Marlborough Primary Academy School**  
**Rationale for Mixed Aged Classes**  
**(2022-2023)**

**Context:**

Marlborough Primary Academy School is a much smaller school than the average size and is located in the Devonport ward of Plymouth City. 50% of pupils are disadvantaged and the proportion of pupils who leave and join the school partway through the year is higher than average. There are currently 110 pupils on roll at the school as a result of declining numbers across the city.

**Description:**

Due to the small number of pupils on roll, pupils are taught in mixed-age classrooms to allow the school to deliver the best educational outcomes in the most efficient way. Seven age groups, ranging from reception to Year 6 are divided into four classes; with YR and Y1, Years 2 and 3, Y4, and Years 5 and 6 sharing a classroom. Children are exposed to a wide range of benefits that come with being part of a small school and taught in mixed age classrooms.

**Staff Structure and Quality:**

There are 5.2 full time equivalent teaching staff at Marlborough. This is made up of 4 full time teachers, a part-time SENDCO (0.6) and a part-time Headteacher (0.5). The part-time Headteacher has a further role within the Trust as Deputy Director of Education and is often present within the school beyond the 0.5 allocated to the Headteacher role. As the Headteacher is part-time there is a Senior Leadership Team made up of the Deputy Headteacher and the Leader for EYFS/KS1.

Levels of SEND are higher than national consequently the school has a number of experienced and skilled teaching assistants who are led by the SENDCo. There is generally a teaching assistant per class, however, they are deployed to provide a range of specific, time bound interventions across the school.

Staff at the school work as a team where they feel valued, equal and accountable for their own performance. They are questioning, very outward looking and support each other. There are fixed communication systems, including: two-week board in the staffroom, weekly Ht bulletin and two-week timetable sent out electronically each week. However, most of the communication between staff happens informally but very regularly, in the form of discussions in staff meetings and spreading information by word of mouth; this reflects the close community culture of the school and allows teachers to focus primarily on the children and quality first teaching.

**Teaching in Mixed Age Classrooms:**

In the current class structure at Marlborough children are taught in classes of two age groups with the exception of Y4. Children in the current Year 4 are taught as one single class as they are a cohort of 28. Teachers at the school recognise that mixed-age teaching is a challenge where they must constantly adapt their approach. A high level of flexibility and organisation in lesson planning is required to ensure that teaching caters to both age groups and all abilities within the class. The small size of the school means that teachers know most children personally and can learn about their

individual needs easily. The overall curriculum map is built to transition the school into a two-year rolling programme once the Y4 cohort have gone through the school. The curriculum map ensures that children do not repeat units of learning and regular continuous professional development allows teachers to refresh themselves.

In order to ensure that high quality teaching and learning take place we have:

- An established and agreed ethos for learning (Quality First Teaching at Marlborough)
- Effective methods of planning and provision to suit the needs of a wider range of ages and of abilities and interests than in a single age class
- Differentiated play-based opportunities which offer challenge across two age ranges notably in Willows class (YR/Y1)
- Adults who are very clear on a wide range of age-related expectations, as well as having high expectations of the children
- Assessment - this is rigorous and needs to respond to the learning needs of ALL the class
- A learning environment, both inside and outside is adapted to the children as they mature and progress across a year
- Effective use of adult time across the year to support all learners

### **Impact:**

#### **The benefits of mixed age teaching:**

- In a mixed-age class children stay with the same teacher for a couple of years. This allows the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of a pupil's strengths and needs, and puts them in a better position to support their learning. In the second year of being with the same teacher children at the school gain extra teaching time as the teacher does not have to spend the early weeks in the school year getting to know each child. Less review of prior instruction is needed before proceeding with new content and the children feel more comfortable and ready to learn.
- Mixed-age teaching at the school ensures that teachers view children as unique individuals and pay more attention to their needs. As a result, teachers focus on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths.
- Socially, children enjoy being taught in mixed-age classes and love growing in stature across the two years. Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles and younger children are able to accomplish tasks they could not do without the assistance of older children. Children develop a better sense of familiarity with their classmates and learn to mix with a wide range of age groups from a young age.

#### **Monitoring the impact of mixed age classes:**

- Teachers regularly assess children, both informally (from day to day) and formally (with tests and other assessments). Where pupils need extra support, we work to support this through

individual Education Plans (IEPs). The support provided could be in class or through access to a time bound intervention.

- Teachers regularly compare books across the team to compare outcomes and ensure consistency between classes.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team monitor lessons, look at books and speak to the children. Where things could be improved, staff are supported in this.
- Regular Pupil Progress Meetings are held which focus on monitoring assessment information and ensuring that pupils are making the progress we expect and want them to achieve. Information from these meetings is shared with Governors and with the Director of Education/Deputy Director for Reach South Multi-Academy Trust.
- Staff appraisals are linked to pupil outcomes, progress over time and progress towards targets.

#### Outcome of mixed age classes:

- The KS2 results for 2022 show that improvements from 2019 were achieved in reading, writing and maths at expected level with the gap closing against national outcomes.