

Composite Classes – Information for parents

What if my child is in a composite class?

Every class is a composite class filled with students with different learning needs, rates of learning, interests, and strengths at different points in terms of their progress and achievement depending on what they are learning.

Is a composite class a “smart class” or a “low” class?

No. 'Streaming' students (i.e. forming classes by perceived ability) is not supported by the research nor at Peakhurst West Public School. Nor would we create a composite class consisting of advanced younger students and place them with older students needing remediation. These practices are outdated and not supported by the research and can have a negative impact on student engagement and academic achievement.

Why not have all single year classes at Peakhurst West Public School?

Staffing is allocated using the formula (below). Children in the early years receive a higher allocation so fewer students are required to be entitled to a full-time teacher.

K x 0.0513 20 students = 1 teacher
Y1 x 0.0435 22 students – 1 teacher
Y2 x 0.0400 24 students – 1 teacher
Y3-6 x 0.0333 30 students – 1 teacher

However, staffing is calculated on the **TOTAL** number of enrolments in the school, not the number of students in a particular year. For example, a school with the following enrolments is not able to form straight classes because the numbers simply do not allow for it.

Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
32	44	52	40	39	31	41
1 x 20 + 12 over	2 x 22	2 x 24 + 4 over	1 x 30 + 10 over	1 x 30 + 9 over	1 x 30 + 1 over	1 x 30 + 11 over

Based on our numbers this year we have been allocated funding for 11 class teachers.

In many schools composite classes are the preferred model because they support a stage based view of learning rather than an age based approach. When we focus on the age or class year group some students will find their work too hard and some too easy. Our curriculum is designed to be delivered with a stage-based approach.

How does the teacher cater for different year groups in the same class?

The curriculum is based on stages of learning from kindergarten to year 10. Each stage builds on the next stage. Curriculum content is organised around key concepts and skills. Students revisit the same concepts every year, but it is expected that over time students will develop deeper understandings and greater proficiency and competence in applying the skills and processes.

What if my child needs support or extension in literacy and numeracy?

Teachers cater for different instructional needs in the key disciplinary areas by using the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions. These progressions can be used from K-10 and designed to ensure all students develop strong foundations in literacy and numeracy. Learning progressions describe the developmental sequence of learning in a particular domain. We can think of them like learning maps. These maps help students, teachers, and parents to better understand where the student is now and the next steps in learning. This process assists all students to be challenged and supported in their learning regardless of their year group or stage of learning. Learning progressions are not the curriculum. They are not a checklist. The diagram below shows how teachers can use the learning progressions in conjunction with the syllabus in the context of the teaching and learning cycle.

Why is my child in the composite class?

Teachers spend a lot of time considering class placement. They use their extensive training, experience, and knowledge to put students in the best possible place for their academic, social, and emotional success. Staff consider each individual student's needs, their academic ability, support required, friendship groups and clashes as well as teacher suitability. We ask for parent input at the end of each year to help guide this decision making. Moving individual children can often have significant knock-on effects for both classes involved in the move.

How will being placed in a composite impact on my child?

Research shows there is no discernible difference between composite and 'straight' year group classes in terms of academic performance because every class is a composite class. Some children take longer to settle but this can be due to factors other than being placed in a composite class.

What are the evidenced based practices that research show improves student learning?

For the most part, it is the quality of teaching, combined with student interest and engagement that has a greater impact on learning than on class organisational structures. Often students are better placed in classes without all their close friends as this provides them with opportunity to make new friends in their new class well as focus on their learning. Sometimes close friends do not work well together in the classroom. It is helpful if parents support this idea and talk to their children about the fact that the classroom is for learning and all children play together in the playground before school and during break times.

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Stage	Concept - Continuity & change
ES1	in their own lifetime & that of their families
1	in family life & the local community over time
2	due to British colonisation of Australia
3	in Australian society over time

Stage	Comprehension: chronology, terms & concepts	Analysis & use of sources	Perspectives & interpretations	Empathetic understanding	Research	Explanation & communication
2	*respond, read & write to show understanding of historical matters *sequence familiar people & events *use historical terms	*locate relevant information from sources provided	*identify different points of view within an historical context	*explain how & why people in the past may have lived & behaved differently from today	*pose a range of questions about the past *plan an historical inquiry	*develop texts, particularly narratives *use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) & digital technologies

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Some parents feel that they would not like their child to be in a composite class. They think the teaching might be somehow scrambled and their child would not be receiving a good education. The truth is just the opposite. Within a composite class the range of achievement is usually less. In a normal Year 5 class some children might be working at Year 7 level and some children at Year 3 level. Within a composite class the range would be smaller because the children would have been chosen for that composite class.

If parents find they are still worried there are many articles on the Internet on the subject, and of course they can talk to other parents. There is always the opportunity for parents to talk through their worries with the staff at the school.