

# **Milborne St Andrew First School**

## **Frequently asked questions: Mixed age teaching**

### **1. Why we are having a mixed age class?**

- This is a decision based on the funding, numbers and resources available to the school
- Many schools in Dorset have mixed age classes when the numbers fluctuate, and some maintain the mixed class even when numbers allow for single classes

### **1. Why have we chosen to have the mix in Year 3 and Year 4?**

- It is likely that the numbers in Year 3/4 will be 30. In Key Stage 2 the 30 children limit is lifted. This means that if new children move to the school it won't be a problem.
- Year 3 and Year 4 already work very closely together and are often taught together in topic in the afternoon.
- The non core curriculum is skills based and not specific to year groups particularly.
- Writing curriculum has closely linked objectives for Year 3 and Year 4
- Maths is planned and taught to match the children's current next steps so this doesn't change as in a single class there would be a range of groups.

### **2. Will my child miss out by being in a Year3 /4 mix?**

- No. The Year 4 children will continue to have special jobs
- When Year 4 children have special events such as DASP music concert, Hooke Court, the year 3 will have targeted time in the classroom.
- In fact, the year 3 children may well benefit from being in a mix as they may be able to access some things which they would not have accessed until Year 4 such as brass instruments
- Where historically Year 3 children appear to dip in learning nationally this appears not to happen when the children are part of a mix

### **3. How will this affect my child's learning?**

- We have looked at the curriculum and planned a two year programme so that children won't repeat topics they have already done.
- We look at children's individual targets and plan from those so children, irrelevant of what year group they are in, progress from where they are.
- Staff in the school have a thorough grasp of where children are and systems are in place to monitor progress of individually formally each term and informally all the time.
- This class will have full time Teaching Assistant support, not just in the mornings

- In MSA improving quality of teaching has been part of School Improvement plan for the last two years. Much time has been spent on improving quality First teaching in the classrooms and staff are skilled at teaching groups, differentiating and teaching next steps to pupils
  - Pupils are also taking more responsibility for knowing what they need to do to improve and further challenge themselves
4. **My child will be going to Middle school next year. Will it hold him/her back by being with the Year 3 class?**
- Transition arrangements will continue to take place as usual for all Year 4 children.
  - All the activities we plan with the Middle schools will still take place
  - Being with Year 3 children will NOT disadvantage the children. They learn in groups with younger and older children and benefit from working with a wider range of children
  - Being part of a larger class will help children prepare for Middle school
5. **My child will be going into Year 3 next year and is emotionally immature. Will they find it more difficult being with an older class?**
- We will invest time into transition arrangements and ensure that the new group get to bond with each other
6. **How will children who have a specific Special Educational need and those who are more able be supported?**
- We are able to maintain our current provision for support both in and out of classes. We have thought carefully about TA support and matched TA to year groups meaning that children will have some consistency as they move up from Year 2.
  - We group children of similar ability within the class anyway and this does not change in a mixed year grouping, teachers plan from where that group is for their next steps.
7. **Have you done this before? What was the impact?**
- Yes, I have done this before. Parents had most of the concerns raised above but actually when we did it, the feedback from parents was very positive.
  - In previous school, when numbers increased staff and Governors chose to maintain the mixed groups as they had been so successful
  - The biggest difference tends to be for the parents! Typically the children form a new class forgetting whether they are Year 3 or Year 4 and just get on and learn
  - It has helped provide a new network of friends for some children and that can come at a time when some relationships may have reached saturation point!

- It is only for recently that the school has run Year 3 and Year 4 as separate year groups. Many of you will remember mixed age Y3/Y4 classes going back about 15 years.

*By making these changes, I believe that we can maintain and build upon existing good practice. We can continue to improve the attainment of all our children and ensure that our resources are aimed at and used to support and help all children at Milborne St. Andrew.*