



Barley Fields Primary School

Class Organisation Policy

Date Issued to staff:	June 2020
Prepared by:	Head Teacher
Review date:	July 2022
Date Adopted by Governing Body:	October 2020

Class Organisation Policy and Procedure

The policy explains the long term strategy for class organisation and the principles we operate when children make the transition from one year group to the next:

Barley Fields Primary School is a three form entry school with 90 children in each year group. We also have a 78 place nursery. School is split into 4 phases and classes in school are organised as follows:

Early Years

- Nursery – 3 attendance options – mornings, afternoons and 2 ½ day attendance.
- Reception – 90 children are divided between three classes

Key Stage 1

- 90 children - 3x Year 1 classes
- 90 children - 3x Year 2 classes

Lower Key Stage 2

- 90 children - 3x Year 3 classes
- 90 children - 3x Year 4 classes

Upper Key Stage 2

- 90 children - 3x Year 5 classes
- 90 children - 3x Year 6 classes

In general children will move through each key stage phase every 2 years. It is our belief that pupils benefit greatly from working in mixed ability classes with some opportunities for accelerated learning or catch up offered through streaming when needed. Therefore the model set out in this policy is aimed to ensuring that teaching and learning is targeted and focused and that all children are able to engage in learning and achieve their best.

Classes are organised for the next academic year in the summer term, staff will use their professional judgement and take into account all that we know about the children before making a decision. Teachers are best placed to know the children, their academic needs and their friendship groups.

We adopt a policy of mixing the year group classes each year in order to benefit the learning experience of our pupils and promote social skill development. In drawing up class lists diligence is made to a number of complex factors including:

- Limiting class sizes to 30 (this will only be increased if the school is formally directed by the LA to admit children over the admission number)
- Equal numbers of boys and girls (if possible)
- Equal spread of ability
- Consideration of personality and compatibility between certain children / staff
- Taking into account a child's learning pathway - male teacher, to female teacher and new teacher to experienced teacher.
- Senior Leadership/ SENCO will make initial class allocations for vulnerable children. This allocation will link to individual child need, personality and teacher experience. Children typically in this group will include: SEND, LAC, adopted from care, special guardianship, behavioural needs and those for whom we have safeguarding concerns.
- All children will be given an opportunity to nominate 3 friends who they would like to be placed in a class with. We will endeavour to ensure children are with at least one child from this list.
- A similar commitment is made regarding twins/triplets. Some parents may prefer their children to be kept together and some would prefer their children to be taught separately. Their particular requirements will also be taken into consideration when class lists are drawn up although we do advise that twins are separated at some point during their time in KS2 in order to prepare children for secondary transition.

Sharing class allocations

All children will have a transition visit to their new teacher alongside their friends during the last week of the summer term. This allows children to meet their teacher and to be reassured that they are with at least one of their chosen friends. During this visit teachers will discuss the forthcoming year and the changes they can expect.

Children will then be given formal notification of class allocation and a transition booklet to take home to parents.

Transition

We have a tried and tested transition programme, planned to ensure that the children feel confident and secure about the move to their new class/school next year. This includes:

- Dedicated transition meetings between staff to ensure information regarding individual children is passed on.
- Attainment records, SEND records, Vulnerability records, medical records shared with new staff.
- Key books passed on to new teacher so that standards and expectations are maintained.
- Parent meetings with new/old teachers for children who are extremely vulnerable (facilitated by SENCO/DSL)
- PSHE lessons/circle times focusing on change, how this might make us feel and how to manage those feelings.
- Activities to express and deal with worries about change/uncertainty.
- Transition sessions such as the Class Swap where children have visits to get to know the staff in new year groups/classes.
- Extra visits/activities/resources arranged for any child who may find change particularly challenging

Class amendments

As we operate a large school and already consider a range of complex factors in organising classes, we do not permit class changes once the lists are finalised. Parents may contact the Head Teacher to discuss their concerns but addressing these will usually involve options such as increased transition and preparation. This is a non-negotiable policy.

Children may only be changed classes mid-year in very exceptional circumstances and if the Head Teacher believes it to be in the best and only interest of the child's wellbeing.

Children arriving midyear

If the school has capacity to admit mid-year (e.g. classes are not at 30 pupils), the new entrant will be accommodated where a vacancy exists. No existing pupils should be moved out of an established group to accommodate the arrival of a new entrant.

Anxiety and concerns – supporting parents

Advice can be given to children/parents who express concerns about transition.

- Start talking to your child about the fact that they will be moving to a new class. Keep the conversation casual and focused on the positives.
- Talk about change as a positive, exciting opportunity.
- Avoid expressing your own doubts, negative thoughts or anxieties to your child.
- Remember that if we try to provide too much certainty and comfort, we are getting in the way of children being able to develop their own problem-solving skills. Overprotecting children from difficult or uncomfortable situations only fuels their anxiety
- If children tell you they are anxious/worried, normalise their feelings. Talk about how you sometimes feel this way too and that it's ok to feel this way. Help your child to develop resilience by talking through strategies to manage their worries. Help them to challenge negative thinking. (For example, you might remind them of how they made new friends last year or talk through how to ask someone to play etc.)
- Remind them that feelings are like clouds. They come and go. We can't stop them coming but we can choose how we look at them.
- Give your child opportunities to share their feelings about their new class/school by drawing pictures or writing messages to a family member or to a favourite toy.
- Prepare your child (and yourself) for the routines for getting to school and back home: tell them what the plan is clearly, including childcare arrangements.

Appendix 1 – Sample parents letter

Dear Parents/Carers,

Class arrangements

It's hard to believe that it is almost the end of the school year and we are preparing for the children to move on to the next stage in their learning journey. The staff have been busy completing their end of year Teacher Assessments and writing your child's report, all of which will be sent to you towards the end of term.

We recently finalised our classes and staffing arrangements for next year with some new teachers being appointed to replace the ones that are leaving/have left. We make decisions based on our professional judgement about what would be most beneficial for each year group overall and a great deal of thought and time is put into this process.

Our primary focus is, of course, that all children are able to engage in learning and achieve their best. To this end we have gathered information about who their friendship groups are by observing children's interactions in class and at playtimes and asking them to select three children who they may like to be with (we will endeavour to ensure children are with at least one of these children). This information is used alongside assessment data and ensuring classes are balanced in terms of ability, gender etc. Please be assured that children's emotional wellbeing is part of this decision making.

Change of course is, and will always be, a normal part of life and our role is to enable children to build resilience. We pride ourselves on our family ethos and encourage the children to see the whole school as one community they are part of. We often work in mixed class groups to enable children to develop wider groups of friends and learn to work with different people in different contexts.

Preparing for change

We have a well tried and tested transition programme, planned to ensure that the children feel confident and secure about the move to their new class/school next year. This includes:

- PSHE lessons/circle times focusing on change, how this might make us feel and how to manage feelings.
- Activities to express and deal with worries about change/uncertainty.
- Transition sessions such as the Class Swap where children have visits to get to know the staff in new year groups/classes.
- Extra visits/activities/resources arranged for any child who may find change particularly challenging

How can I prepare my child for moving on?

- Start talking to your child about the fact that they will be moving to a new class or school now if your haven't already
- Keep the conversation casual and focused on the positives. Talk about change as a positive, exciting opportunity
- Avoid expressing your own doubts, negative thoughts or anxieties to your child.
- Remember that if we try to provide too much certainty and comfort, we are getting in the way of children being able to develop their own problem-solving skills. Overprotecting children from difficult or uncomfortable situations only fuels their anxiety
- If children tell you they are anxious/worried, normalise their feelings. Talk about how you sometimes feel this way too and that it's ok to feel this way. Help your child to develop resilience by talking through strategies to manage their worries. Help them to challenge negative thinking. (For example, you might remind them of how they made new friends last year or talk through how to ask someone to play etc.)
- Remind them that feelings are like clouds. They come and go. We can't stop them coming but we can choose how we look at them.
- Give your child opportunities to share their feelings about their new class/school by drawing pictures or writing messages to a family member or to a favourite toy.
- Prepare your child (and yourself) for the routines for getting to school and back home: tell them what the plan is clearly, including childcare arrangements.

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring your children have a smooth transition to their new class.