Orchard Lea Federation Class Mixing Policy
Date agreed: July 2026
Date for renewal: July 2029

Every Child, Every Day

Background

Orchard Lea Federation is committed to ensuring an effective learning environment for all pupils. The balance of pupil characteristics and needs in each class across the two classes in a year group can have a profound impact on the progress and happiness of each child. Our Federation has a continuous enrolment policy; as a result, the school takes in children throughout the year, placing them in classes where places are available. By the end of an academic year, with children joining and leaving the class, classes can become quite unbalanced in terms of gender, educational, language, personal, social needs, maturity and friendships.

The policy at Orchard Lea Federation for mixing up the two classes across a cohort at key transition points is in place in order to maintain balanced classes throughout. Mixing up of classes may happen at the end of any academic year in readiness for the next year based on the needs of the cohort.

Rationale for Class Mixing

- To create opportunities for children to learn and play with a wide variety of peers.
- To develop relationships with a wider group of friends.
- To further develop children's collaborative skills for learning.
- To enable improved social interaction and the development of social skills between different sets of pupils as they move up through the school.
- To ensure that classes remain balanced in response to pupil transfer (mobility); transition between phases and year groups and changes to individual needs within each class.
- To prepare children for a change in the stage of education, for example, transfer to secondary school where they will be taught in different classes throughout the day.
- To ensure a balanced number of pupils in each class and in the case of the infant school, adherence to legislation limiting the maximum number of pupils in a class to 30.
- To support pupils to be able to manage and experience change.
- To provide a fresh start where needed.
- To account for the fact that pupils change and develop in different ways as they mature.

Principles

A professional decision will be made at transition points to mix classes should the schools deem this to be necessary. The arrangements for class mixing are based on the professional judgements of class teachers, and the Senior Leadership Team (and not in response to parental choice).

- The schools will always consider what is in the best interests of the classes and cohort as a whole when making decisions.
- The schools will communicate the criteria for class mixing in an open and transparent way.

- The schools will always consider the happiness and welfare of children and may take into consideration existing friendship groups when creating new classes.
- The schools believe that the professional adults are best positioned to decide on class placements and they will be responsible for these decisions.
- Pupils will always have the opportunity to mix with peers outside their classes through playtimes, curriculum enhancements such as trips and after school clubs.

Process

- Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants observe the children's friendships at work and play.
- Class Teachers meet together to plan new classes to ensure a good balance of friendships, range of educational, social and personal needs, gender and maturity are represented in each class.
- Class Teachers will consider the list of friends that children have nominated.
- Our pastoral staff will consider the proposed lists considering the needs of the pupils they work with.
- Senior Leadership Team meet with Class Teachers to discuss and finalise groupings.
- Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team meet and approve classes.
- New classes are shared with parents and children prior to transition day.

Criteria for Class Mixing

Classes will be mixed to achieve a good balance according to the following criteria:

- Term of birth
- Gender
- Attainment levels
- Range of special educational and learning support needs
- Stage of learning English as an additional language
- Social and personal needs
- Friendships*

*Friendships: Over the course of their Primary years, children will have a range of friendship experiences. We find that with children some friendships can be very fluid, whilst others can stand the test of time. Taking this into account, when the school prepares to draw up the class lists, children's relationships with their peers both in the classroom and in the playground will be considered. Once class lists have been agreed and shared, changes will not be possible as this would make the process unmanageable. The new class lists will be based on the professional judgements of our team, with the best interests of our children at heart.

Requesting a Class Move

While we appreciate that parents know their own child the best, when considering the needs of a whole cohort, the staff are best placed to make decisions about class lists. We endeavour to create class lists that all children and parents will be happy with, however at times this may not always be the case. In our experience of mixing classes, it is often the unknown or historic events that cause children or parents to be uncertain about a new class and usually children settle very quickly into their new class without a problem. We will therefore not move a child from one class to another based on parent request if the child has not had time to experience the class. The child will need to engage with transition and have time to settle into the class. If a parent still has a concern about their child and their class, after a period of time to settle, the parent can ask to meet the class teacher to discuss the matter.

Following this, the schools will provide pastoral support and advice to parents and pupils. After that, parents/carers will need to refer to the parent communication policy or complaints policy to explore next steps.

Occasionally, mid-year class moves do occur as a last resort. The decision to do so, is at the discretion of the Headteacher.