



Hillside School – Composite Classes

Hillside School has engaged with a small focus group, comprising of pupils who have previously been a part of a composite class. As a group, the pupils were asked if they any questions or worries about moving into a composite class, how they could be supported with this transition and anything they were looking forward to.

The responses can be found below and might be some of the things you as parents/carers are hearing at home too. We hope this document can help you to answer some questions and support your child (if appropriate) with their transition.

'I was nervous because I thought the older ones might be scary.'

'Excited!'

'I was happy because I have been in a composite class before and I liked it.'

How I first felt when I found out I was in a composite class...

'Am I getting kept back?'

'I wasn't really that bothered.'



'I was looking forward to getting to know new friends.'

Some questions that were asked...

Why do we have composite classes?

Schools are staffed to agreed standards based on the total number of pupils within the school, not the number of pupils at each year group. Class Teachers and Senior Leaders then organise the classes to make best use of available staff and space. There are composite classes in most schools in Aberdeenshire.

Why do you have to change who you're with in a class?

Classes change each year depending on the number of pupils joining and leaving the school. This means we sometimes have straight or composite classes. Class Teachers. Supported by Senior Leaders, make the decisions about who goes into which class. Learning and teaching is the main factor, but social groups and other factors can also be considered.

Why am I not with my friends?

Pupils get to be with friends in the playground. A new class is an opportunity to make new friends. Learning and Teaching is the most important thing in the classroom and time spent with friends happens mainly in the playground and outside of school.

I'm in a higher maths group, does that mean I'll work with the P6s? (Pupil going into P5)

Pupils in all classes, whether straight or composite, will follow the curriculum programmes to help them progress at their own level. This may sometimes involve working with pupils in a different group but will always be whatever is best for your learning.

We work next door with our other P5 class just now, how will that work next year?

You may not be next door to a class that are working at the same stage to you but there are many shared areas within the school where you can meet and share learning together throughout the school year.

Will the work be at a younger level because I am in a composite class?

Pupils in all classes, whether straight or composite, will follow the curriculum programmes to help them progress at their own level. Within one straight class, of up to 33 children, there can be a wide spread of ability. Teachers are experienced in planning for groups of different abilities.

Will my friends still play with me outside if I'm in a different class?

Try to see this an opportunity to make new friends as well as maintaining the friendships you already have. Sometimes friendships can grow stronger when you are not together all the time and can help to avoid fall outs and arguments.

What can Hillside School do to support this transition?

How could people at home support this transition?

'Make break and lunch times together if possible.'

'Make sure everyone works together lots so we don't feel left out.'

'Keep listening and just be there if we have problems.'

'I liked meeting my new class and teacher before the holidays, I realised I had lots of friends that I didn't know were in that class.'


'If other classes are in a different zone, get to play in that zone sometimes too.'

'Talk with me about my new class.'

'Listen to my feelings.'

'Organise Play-dates so I can see my friends outside of school too.'

'Reassure me that everything is going to be fine.'



Below are some questions you as parents/carers might have.

Will my child's one to one time be reduced if the teacher has to teach two year groups?

Pupils are likely to receive similar support time. Composite classes are often smaller than straight classes. A composite class does not exceed 25 pupils whilst a straight class can be as many as 33. The exception to this is straight P1 classes which have a maximum of 25 and team-teaching classes where numbers can exceed the numbers above.

Why and how are composite classes formed?

Schools are staffed to agreed standards based on the total number of pupils within the school irrespective of the number of children in each year group. Head Teachers organise their classes to make best use of available staff, resources and space. Teaching Staff and The Senior Leadership Team will form classes using their professional judgement taking account of a **range of criteria** to best meet the educational and social and emotional needs of children. The range of criteria to be considered may include the following: Additional support needs, working groups, social groups, levels of attainment and achievement, family circumstances and gender balance.

Is my child being kept back by being placed in a composite class with pupils from a year group below him/her?

Your child is **not** being kept back by being in a composite class. Children will progress through learning experiences in line with their personal levels of attainment and achievement.

How is a teacher able to teach two or more year groups at once?

If your child is placed in a composite class, staff will provide appropriate learning and teaching opportunities suited to his or her individual needs. Your child will be working within a programme of locally and nationally agreed curricular policies and guidelines and the activities will be appropriate for his or her stage, aptitude and ability. In every class, whether straight or composite, there are pupils with different levels of ability and teachers plan accordingly.

Will the children in the composite class get the same opportunities as the children in the single year group class?

Children in all classes, whether composite or single year group, will follow educational programmes devised to help them progress at their own level. In addition, the school will make every effort to involve children of any one year group in activities which bring them all together. However, it is also important that the natural identity of each class is maintained.

Should I be concerned that the children in the composite class study different topics from the single year group class?

There is no need to be concerned. Class topics are used as a context for developing skills and all children will be developing the skills appropriate for their stage, ability and aptitude. Quality improvement procedures exist at school and education authority levels to ensure that your child is making appropriate progress within locally and nationally agreed curriculum guidelines.

What should I do if my child's friends are all in another class?

You should be assured that all teachers will be sensitive to the social and emotional needs of children in their classes and will be encouraging members of the class to develop good working relationships with each other. There will be many opportunities for your child to continue to be involved with his or her whole year group including a range of curricular and social activities which includes the playground.

Will I be informed about composite classes?

Hillside School will inform you of the arrangements for the allocation of all classes before the end of the current school session.

★ Comments from some parents of pupils in Composite Classes... ★

'My son noted being in a composite class together with the P5s this year has been a very positive and balancing experience for him.' P4/5 Parent

'It's nice having a smaller number of pupils in the class, I know it won't go over 25.' P4/5 Parent

'My daughter has really benefited from and enjoyed being in a composite class this year.' P3/4 Parent

'Being in a composite class has been great for my son, encouraging his confidence and making him feel like the 'older and more mature.' P6/7 Parent