**Composite Classes: No Better. No Worse.**

**Information for Parents, Carers and Families**

Ask any school principal - if there’s one issue that will create angst among parents, it’s when children are allocated into a composite class.

This is because parents often believe their child will be disadvantaged in some way, either by being ‘held back’ if they are in the higher year level, or finding it hard to ‘keep up’ if they are in the lower year level.

**Every Class is a Composite Class**

In reality, every class is a composite class. This is because children’s development – physical, cognitive, social and spiritual – happens in stages and children move through these stages at different rates.

Think of it this way. If twenty-five Year 1 students are put into a ‘straight’ year level class, what will we have? We will have twenty-five individuals with needs that reflect these variations in development. All six-year-olds don’t develop and learn at the same pace. All seven-year-olds don’t, and so on.

Contemporary teaching and learning strategies are designed to cater to the individual needs of every student, whether those students are in a straight year level class or a composite class.

Importantly, research has shown that children in composite classes do no better or worse academically than their peers in straight year level classes.

**Schools are Social Environments**

Schools are social environments and multi-age groupings like composite classes, buddy classes and vertical learning groups provide opportunities for social-emotional development across age groups. There are benefits for younger and older children in terms of ‘learning to learn’ important capabilities like how to be confident, how to manage their emotions and how to make friends outside of their age group.

*In the Australian Curriculum, students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others and manage their relationships and learning more effectively. Personal and social capability supports students to become creative and confident learners and to form and maintain healthy relationships.*

**Schools and Teachers Consider Many Things**

Teachers and school leaders consider many things when deciding what class structures will be put in place and which classes students will be allocated to. These include the academic and social needs of students (including friendships groups), and their stage of physical development.

Schools also need to consider enrolment numbers in each year level to make sure class sizes are in line with enterprise agreements and their annual budget can be managed.

They also consider parent input about the specific needs of their children.

With all these things to consider, deciding class structures and allocating students is never a simple task.

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**What You Can Do**

* Meet with the teacher or principal to discuss any concerns you have about composite classes and respond positively to any invitations to contribute information about your child which will inform their class placement.
* Talk with the teacher about what is expected of children in your child’s year level to find out if your expectations are realistic.
* Share with the teacher things you know about your child that may help or hinder their learning.
* Be positive in your conversations with your child and with other parents. If your child knows you are unhappy or worried about their placement in a composite class, this will affect their attitude.
* Have regular contact with the teacher throughout the year so you know how your child is progressing and what you can do at home to help them in their learning.
* Keep informed by participating in information sessions, workshops and other events your school offers to parents.

***As partners in the education of their children, parents:***

*Work collaboratively with teachers and staff*

*Respect the skills, knowledge and experience of school leaders and teachers*

*Access information and resources provided by the school to support them in their role as the primary educators of their children*

*Charter for Parents in Catholic Schools*

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