

Information about Split Classes at Clifton Hills Primary School

Composite classes, or split classes, most often consist of one class containing at least two years of schooling. Extensive research shows it makes no difference to performance whether students are in a straight or split class. It is the teacher and their relationship with the students that plays a key role and is significant in the development of students. Strong teacher student relationships shape the way children think and act in school. When a student has a good relationship with their teachers, they are more likely to feel positive about class and about school in general. They are also more willing to have a go at hard work, to risk making mistakes, and to ask for help when they need it.

There is evidence to suggest that splits enhance self-esteem, decrease behavioural problems, reduce the impact of labelling, encourage the formation of positive communities and lead to social growth. At Clifton Hills Primary School, we have highly dedicated teachers who maximise the learning potential of all students in their class regardless of the class structure.

Reasons for a Split Class

Split classes are a practical response to the problem of uneven year level enrolments; for example, when there are too many students to form one 'straight' grade but not enough to form two. Combining students in this way is often an administrative solution that not only allows schools to ensure more consistent class sizes, but more easily match teachers to student need; maximise school and teacher funding and resources; and cope with declining or increasing enrolments. At Clifton Hills Primary School we have and will continue to incorporate split classes within a school year.

How Split Classes are determined at Clifton Hills Primary School

At Clifton Hills Primary, we see positive relationships as our priority and from this, our class structures are determined. There are other factors such as peer relationships, gender balance, inclusivity and academic diversity that also guide class placements.

Teaching in a Split Class

Despite much positive research regarding student growth in split classrooms, negative perceptions persist, particularly among parents.

Aligned with current research, at Clifton Hills Primary School we believe education is not only about academic achievement and that a child's development is not determined by their age. Wide-ranging student abilities exist in children of the same age, and not just in split classes. Multiple studies conclude it makes no difference to performance whether students are in a straight or split class. Experts agree the most important factor in determining how well a student does is the quality of the teacher and providing a 'differentiated' curriculum caters to all children as individuals, according to their needs. Differentiation describes a concept being taught universally to all students within a class and creating related tasks at varying levels of complexity. When differentiating instruction in this way, teachers are providing for the needs of students at multiple levels of understanding at the same time which in turn allows students to see clearly not only where they are at, but where they are going. Differentiation occurs in every classroom at Clifton Hills Primary School and children are taught in accordance with their individual learning needs.

What about socially?

Children benefit enormously from having friends outside of their year group. It allows them to develop a wider group of friends which gives them more options in the playground, greater connections across the school and can benefit them within the wider community. It helps them build social skills which has long term effects for building resiliency. Children in split classes have nothing to fear but plenty to enjoy. Some parents are concerned that their child will lose friendships with the bulk of other students in their year group. Some students may choose to only play with students from their class but there is no evidence that this has negative long-term effects. Most children quickly adapt to new classes and re-form friendships in subsequent years.

Still have concerns?

Please make an appointment to discuss with the principal.