

## **COMPOSITE (SPLIT LEVEL) CLASSES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



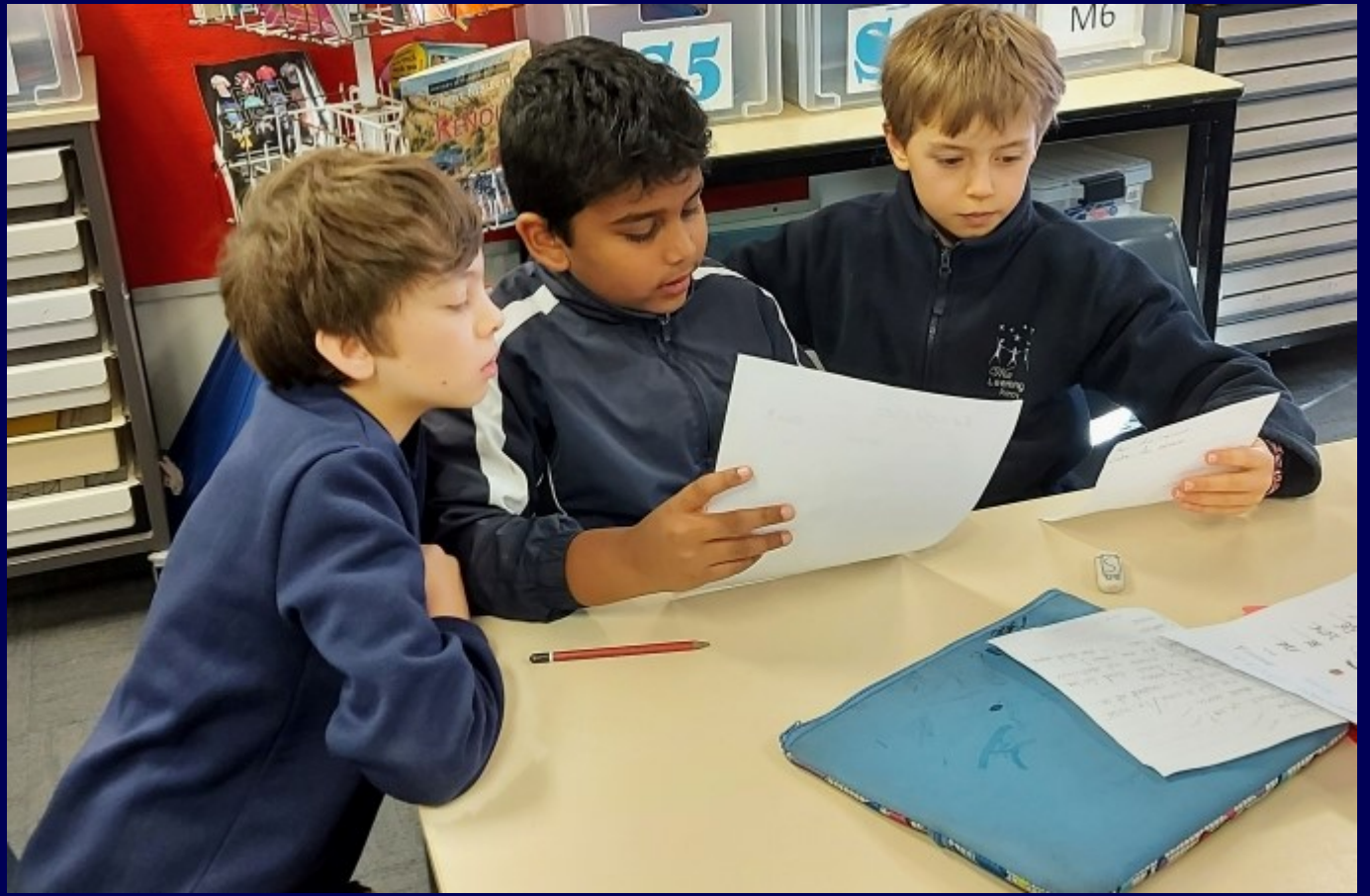
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### Why does West Leeming Primary School have composite classes?

Schools are staffed based on enrolment numbers. Composite classes are usually formed because of the uneven pattern of enrolments at the schools and differing suggested class sizes per year group. Department guidelines recommend the following class sizes where possible:

- Kindergarten           20 students
- Pre-Primary           27 students
- Years 1-3               24 students
- Years 4-6               32 students



### Why do composite classes occur in public schools?

- They ensure class sizes remain within recommended limits where possible;
- They provide flexibility to cater for the requirements of individual children and cohorts including academic, social and emotional needs.

Grouping students of various ages into classes is not new. Primary schools and in particular smaller schools, have traditionally used this organisational arrangement to ensure equity in class sizes and as a strategy to support children's learning.

The terms 'split classes', 'multi-age groups', 'composite classes', 'mixed classes' or 'vertical groups' are names used to describe these class arrangements



### **What are the positive social aspects of a composite class?**

Placement in a composite class can allow children to develop a wider group of friends outside of their year group. This often gives them more friendship options in the playground, greater connections throughout the school and can also benefit them when engaging in activities in the wider community. In addition to assisting in the development of social skills, for some children composite classes can also help in building resiliency. For example, younger children within a composite class generally aspire to emulate older children in their work, and older children enjoy the leadership and mentoring opportunities that can lift their self-esteem. Students in composite classes are given opportunities to join their same year level peers in both social and learning situations whilst at school. This includes lunchtime eating, some class learning activities as well as whole school, phase of learning (K-2, 3-6) and year level events.

Teachers at West Leeming work collaboratively to plan their teaching and learning programs, ensuring that students in composite classes are provided with the same content as all students in their year level. Staff who have prior teaching experience in the year groups involved are often selected to work in composite classes. Composite class teachers have proven classroom management strategies and have expertise in working collaboratively across multi-year levels.

Evidence shows that most students quickly adapt to new classroom situations, expanding their social connections whilst being provided with the opportunity to continue existing friendships.

### **What is the impact on academic achievement?**

Research shows that composite classes make no difference to the academic outcomes of student learning. The factor that has the most significant influence by a very large margin is the knowledge, skills and expertise of the teacher, sometimes referred to as teacher quality. Research also indicates that composite classes can actually enhance the development of some children as it provides opportunities for them to bolster independent learning skills and develop confidence and assertiveness as they operate as part of a class group.



## Student Placement Considerations

Our teachers make decisions about which students are best suited for composite classes. They take the whole child into consideration and look at factors such as social and emotional maturity, independent working skills, behavioural needs, cohort dynamics, siblings, gender balance, existing relationships and previous class placements.

## Transition

At West Leeming Primary School we support students to transition to their new year level in Term 4 each year. One morning is dedicated to students from Kindergarten to Year 5 visiting the current next year's classrooms and teachers. Year 6 students visit the local high school on this day. During this time we ensure children are mixed across all classes from that year group to encourage further socialisation.

West Leeming, where possible, releases probable class structures and student placement lists before the end of term 4. This allows students to establish connections with other students who will be in their class the following year and for parents to arrange catch-ups over the December holidays.

## Further Reading

<https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>

<https://www.smh.com.au/education/many-parents-dislike-composite-classes-but-the-evidence-does-not-support-their-anxiety-20150413-1mk4g9.html>

[https://www.kidspot.com.au/parenting/primary-school/the-parents-guide-to-composite-classes/news-story/31a65e6c0fb57afc8cd242ddd2e88d1?](https://www.kidspot.com.au/parenting/primary-school/the-parents-guide-to-composite-classes/news-story/31a65e6c0fb57afc8cd242ddd2e88d1?utm_source=SEM&utm_medium=PPC)

[utm\\_source=SEM&utm\\_medium=PPC](https://www.kidspot.com.au/parenting/primary-school/the-parents-guide-to-composite-classes/news-story/31a65e6c0fb57afc8cd242ddd2e88d1?utm_source=SEM&utm_medium=PPC)

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<https://australianeducationalservices.com.au/surprising-truths-about-composite-classes/>

