

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to our recent survey regarding the class structure for September 2026. We are extremely grateful for your thoughtful, honest, and detailed feedback. It is clear how deeply you care about your children's wellbeing, friendships, and school experience.

We have carefully reviewed all responses and identified several key themes. Below, we have provided answers to the most frequently raised questions.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Why are we moving to a mixed-age class structure?

This change has been carefully considered for the following reasons:

- Maintain balanced class sizes across the school
- Provide flexibility in meeting children's academic and pastoral needs
- Create opportunities for peer support, leadership, and independence
- Support teacher workload and wellbeing as the structure increases opportunities to share planning and collaborate with colleagues both at Dartington and in our wider Trust family.
- Financial constraints on school budgets nationally. As many of you will be aware, Devon has experienced several years of low birth rates, which has had a significant impact on pupil numbers across local schools. As schools are funded primarily based on the number of pupils that they have in the school, challenges with pupil numbers have resulted in schools adapting how their classes are structured.

We recognise that this represents a shift in the school structure and we are committed to implementing it thoughtfully and transparently.

### **Why are Year 5 and Year 6 being split across three classes?**

Our aim is to:

- Ensure all children receive high-quality teaching tailored to their age and stage
- Provide pastoral support for transition to secondary school



**Dartington C of E Academy**  
Shinners Bridge, Dartington, Totnes  
Devon, TQ9 6JU  
**T:** 01803 862357 **E:** [dartington@lapsw.org](mailto:dartington@lapsw.org)  
**W:** [dartington-lap.co.uk](http://dartington-lap.co.uk)

## **FLOURISHING FUTURES**

Although Year 6 pupils will be in mixed classes, they will:

- Be taught as a Year 6 group for key curriculum areas and preparation for statutory assessments where appropriate.
- Have dedicated transition and “Year 6 experience” opportunities
- Come together regularly as a whole cohort for key events, celebrations, and preparation for secondary school

### **Will Year 6 still feel like a special and important year?**

Yes. We fully recognise that Year 6 is a milestone year.

We will ensure:

- Whole-cohort events (e.g. productions, trips, leavers’ celebrations)
- Dedicated transition support
- Opportunities to strengthen friendships across the entire year group

Our intention is that children still feel part of a united Year 6 cohort, even if they are taught in smaller groups.

### **How will friendships be considered?**

We know that friendships are incredibly important.

When organising classes, we will:

- Carefully consider social dynamics and existing friendships
- Ensure every child is placed with familiar peers
- Aim to build positive new relationships alongside existing ones
- Give each child the opportunity to let us know which peers they would like to be in a class with.

While it is not always possible to keep entire friendship groups together, we will prioritise children’s wellbeing and sense of belonging.

### **Can parents contribute to class placements?**

We appreciate requests for more involvement in this process.

While final decisions must remain with the school to ensure fairness and balance, we:

- Take parental insights into account where appropriate
- Use detailed knowledge from teachers who know the children well
- Consult your child about which peers they would like to share a class with

### **Will children know their classes earlier?**

We understand that uncertainty can cause anxiety.

We will:

- Provide opportunities for children to meet their teachers and classmates before the summer holidays as part of our transition day next week.

### **How will Reception and Year 1 mixed classes work?**

You raised important questions about differing needs.

In these classes:

- Teaching is carefully structured to meet each year group's developmental stage
- Continuous provision supports Reception children
- Targeted teaching ensures Year 1 pupils are appropriately challenged

Staff are experienced in managing these transitions and ensuring both groups thrive.

### **Will mixed classes affect academic progress?**

All children will:

- Follow the full curriculum for their year group
- Receive appropriately differentiated teaching
- Be monitored closely to ensure strong progress



Mixed-age teaching is a well-established model and, when implemented well, supports both academic and personal development.

### **Will teachers be supported with workload?**

Yes.

We are providing:

- Collaborative planning structures across year groups
- Shared curriculum approaches (including rolling programmes where appropriate)
- Ongoing professional development and leadership support
- Access to planning and training from our Trust Family of schools

### **Will children stay in mixed classes for more than one year?**

Class structures may vary year to year depending on cohort sizes and needs.

Our intention is:

- To ensure fairness and balance across the school

### **Can changes be made if a placement isn't working?**

We will:

- Closely monitor children's wellbeing, progress, and social adjustment
- Work with families where concerns arise
- In some circumstances, adjustments may be considered where it is in the child's best interest.

### **How will success of the new structure be measured?**

We will regularly review:

- Academic progress
- Pupil wellbeing and engagement
- Feedback from staff, pupils, and parents

This will enable us to refine and improve the approach where needed.



We recognise that many of you feel strongly—particularly about Year 6—and we want to reassure you that:

- Your concerns have been heard
- Children’s wellbeing and experience remain our top priority
- We are committed to getting this right

Our next steps will involve working closely with staff across the school, considering children’s views, to allocate pupils to their new classes. We will then organise transition opportunities and carefully explain the new class structure to the children, including how they will be supported throughout the process.

We will continue to gather pupils’ views on what will help them feel confident and settled in their new classes, ensuring their voices inform our approach. Class allocations will be shared with families alongside information about your child’s new teacher.

Finally, we will continue to monitor how the new class structure is working in practice and make any necessary adjustments to ensure the best possible experience for all children.

To provide further information and answer questions, there will be a parent / carer meeting on 8.7.26 at 2.45pm we will be joined by teachers from the 5/6 team for 2026/27 so they can support

Thank you again for your support and honesty.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Katie Coombe**

Headteacher