



Glenfield Intermediate School

Dear Parents / Caregivers

Glenfield Intermediate is exploring the option of introducing combined classrooms (Mixed Year 7/8) from 2017. We want to collect feedback from the community about this option before a final decision is made. This leaflet outlines the rationale for moving to combined classes, and includes information from educational research on the benefits of this approach. Please read the information before completing and returning the survey form.

There are four main reasons we believe the introduction of combined classrooms at Glenfield Intermediate is the right strategic decision.

1. 21st Century learning is about teaching to curriculum levels not students' ages
2. The NZ Curriculum has a vision that promotes young people being confident, connected, actively involved life-long learners which links to personalised learning
3. This change is the next step in the strategic direction of our school
4. This change will help us to manage roll growth and keep the integrity of the structure of the programmes we currently successfully implement

21st Century Learning as outlined on pg45 of the NZ Curriculum, sets out the learning in a two-year band (Level 4). Teachers' planning and teaching is a progression of Level 4 for both year groups. It is no longer a set of knowledge and skills to be taught at year groups but a learning journey over the two years that is organised to meet individual students' needs. Some students across both year groups may be working at Level 3 and/or Level 5 of the curriculum also.

Currently GIS students are taught skills, knowledge, attitudes, concepts, understandings and competencies as and when they need it. This is not determined by their age. We base this on the NZ Curriculum and the context framework which is a framework based on students' interest, curiosity, creativity and innovation. This is personalised learning. When the learning is personalised, the students know their next steps and can be supported to achieve them. When the learning context is relevant, students develop greater responsibility and engagement (student agency) and this enhances our vision for all learners. Combined classrooms enables us to continue with this highly successful modern learning framework in our school and addresses our planned roll growth and class sizes.

We will continue to deliver what parents come to expect from GIS with regard to students' achievement, varied learning opportunities and meeting the needs of the emerging adolescent. We are being proactive in developing an innovative teaching approach. Our move to combined classrooms is a natural next step in our development. We believe the adoption of the model will benefit all students.

We are looking forward to the opportunities that this structure provides and working with parents to provide a quality programme that meets the need of the emerging adolescent.

Mark Whitford
Principal



Glenfield Intermediate School

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a combined class?

- By “combined classes”, we mean putting two consecutive year-groups together in one class.
- All of our contributing primary schools operate Year 5/6 combined classes (also known as composite) so this is not a new concept for the local community..

2. Why are combined/composite classes formed?

- To respond to modern learning theory
- Combined classes provide a greater number of options to match the students with a teacher and teaching style that suits their particular learning needs.
- Encourages children to learn cooperatively.
- Provides a setting that is student-centred and rich in diverse learning styles, abilities, and points of view.
- Allows for peer teaching and flexible learning opportunities.
- More closely resembles real-life situations and encourages children to develop their own expertise while becoming skilled nurturers. Older students often assume the role of more knowledgeable, experienced, and responsible learners. In that role, they are continually reinforcing their own knowledge while being challenged to advance to a new level. Younger children in a mixed age group have opportunities to learn from their older peers and to teach their elders.
- Students can remain in the same class for two years and benefit greatly from being with a teacher who knows each child’s learning style, strengths and weaknesses.
- Parents are also provided with this continuity over two years and do not have to build a new relationship at the start of Year 8 as they will be interacting with the same teacher.
- Combined classes can also help assist with logistics of spreading the load of a higher roll in one cohort of the school, reducing teacher:student ratio.

3. My child is the oldest/youngest in the class. Will their learning be held back?

- NZ teachers are educated to cater for all levels of the NZ Curriculum, and teach to individual needs regardless of age.
- A combined class requires teachers to consider children as individuals, each with his or her own continuum of learning. Teachers use a variety of strategies to ensure all students receive equal instructional time and opportunities for practicing what has been taught. For example, students are grouped for instruction depending on their ability within the subject area. During the course of the week each group would have concentrated teaching times (with the teacher) in their small group as well as concentrated independent time and class reinforcement of concepts from the instructional group lessons.
- The NZC levels span across two-year levels. The Context Framework we deliver is a two-year programme so the transition to combined classes is not a major step and is where we want to be as a school.



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4. Will Year 8 students receive enough challenge in a combined class?

- The learning environment of a combined class is ideal for high achieving students. Instruction is personalised to students' stages of learning, rather than being confined to a class or age-level set of outcomes. The Curriculum is presented through contexts allowing students to explore specific aspects that interest them. Students develop independent work habits that give them the freedom to develop individual and collaborative inquiries. Older students are given ample opportunity for leadership roles.

5. Will some of the Year 7's be intimidated by the Year 8's in a two year combined class?

- This perception is one that causes much angst with parents and some students. From our reading and our experience it would appear that younger students in combined classes do not fear their older classmates. When younger students have the opportunity to get to know their older classmates in the safe environment of their classroom, they develop more open, trusting interactions with them. The development of a safe, supportive classroom climate is the key for any student in any class to feel safe.
- Year 7 students will know some of the Year 8 students from their primary schools. These Year 8 students will act as mentors for the Year 7 students.

6. Will combined students end up with gaps in the curriculum and not be prepared for secondary school?

- Our continual assessment processes ensure early identification of learning gaps which are addressed and reported on over the two years. Over the two years at Glenfield Intermediate you child will be exposed to knowledge, skills and understandings that they need to successfully transition to secondary school. We have a strong focus on developing competencies that will ensure success as learners in the future e.g. thinking, relating to others, participating and contributing, communicating and self-management.

7. What will happen if my child does not like the teacher?

- As always, we are open to discussing any challenges with teacher/student relationships. We do go to great lengths to collect as much data as we can before putting into classes together. We visit contributing schools and talk to current teachers. We try and make a 'best fit' for students taking into account learning styles of students and teaching styles of teachers. We check for class balance based on academic, social, friendships, gender, ethnicity, and leadership.

8. Why change now?

- The concept of combined classes is a natural next step for us. The proposal to implement this model in 2017 is a result of increased roll numbers in Year 7 and Year 8. The prospect of 34 students in a class is unmanageable and therefore this model will allow us to have smaller class sizes whilst continuing to provide quality learning outcomes. Combined classrooms gives us time and space to effectively manage growth.



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9. What is the school plan to handle the transition from age level classes to combined classrooms?

The following steps are what we would do to transition students at the beginning of the school year –

- The first week of school will involve activities that ensure friendships, class routines and learning expectations are clearly understood. This will include class and team activities to allow new students to associate with old and new friends and to feel safe and secure with their new classmates.
- The preparation of our current students to become mentors will happen in Term 4. Setting the right environment, developing class culture and setting the rules is very important for robust learning.
- The Health programme will be based on developing positive peer relationships during the first term. Ensuring that all students and parents know the support systems that are available, and where to get help, will assist us in identifying students who need additional support. Parents are always welcome to make an appointment with the classroom teacher to discuss any issue and share information about their child.
- Teacher professional development between now and the end of January 2017 will focus on the combined model.
- Near the end of Term One parent interviews will be held to discuss academic and social progress. There will also be an external evaluation of the combined model including student and parent surveys.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO GLENFIELD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL OFFICE

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Parent Name: _____ (optional)

My child is in		Please tick or circle the statement below that fits your feelings best	
Year 7	Year 8	I think combined classes are the way forward	
I have younger children that will attend GIS in the future		I would like to know more	
Yes	No	I disagree with combined classes	