

What is a 'Relative Age' group?

Students in our Year 7 will be grouped for learning in what we call 'Relative Age Groups'

The thinking behind this is explained in the next section but in simple terms it is about recognizing the different learning characteristics that are often present in learners born at certain times within the school year.

Researchers call these characteristics the 'Relative Age effect'.

At Rawmarsh School our Year 7 Personal Tutor groups will be formed by taking account of relative age. The thing to remember is that this effect is about **learner confidence and self-perception, it is not about ability**. We will see the same cross-section of ability in every tutor group.



The Research

For the last two years we have been working with researchers from Leeds Metropolitan University on a study about the positive effects of grouping students so that they learn with those other students in their year group with similar dates of birth, (within 3 months).

- The research has been carried out with Rawmarsh students, students in other schools in the United Kingdom and schools in Canada. The results show very strong evidence that using a child's relative age within their year group as a factor in grouping aids effective learning.
- This is not about ability; children born at every point in the year show that same mix of ability to learn with which we are entirely familiar.
- What the research does tell us is that from a very early age children compare themselves with others and form views about their own ability.
- These sub-conscious comparisons can lead to a lack of confidence in a child's perception of themselves as a successful learner – especially when those comparisons are made against another child that could be as much as a year older, but still being taught in the same year group.

This, in simple terms, is the basis of the research findings about the 'Relative Age Effect'.

What will it be like for my child?

Our first concern is that we ensure that your child is a successful learner.

To achieve this we will group them for learning in a variety of ways, within their relative age Tutor Groups.

All of our learning strategies are designed to help your child learn in the most appropriate and most successful way.



Every child is unique and we will take account of the different ways in which your child can learn.

For example - some children learn most effectively through 'doing', some are better at 'listening' and some learn best through 'looking'. In practice, of course every one of us will learn through a combination of these preferred 'learning styles'.

What about working with friends?

Our grouping decisions are based upon how each child will learn best. Planning groupings for effective learning includes deciding the best group size and mix of students within each group.

- **Friendship groups:** can be secure and unthreatening but don't always allow for the best methods of targeting individual learning needs.
- **Ability groups:** enable work to be pitched at the appropriate level of challenge.
- **Structured mixed ability groups:** ensure a range of views and are especially suitable for tasks which might require varied approaches. They encourage a child to experience working with different partners, developing good cooperative skills as well as learning through seeing things from new perspectives.
- **Single sex groups:** can be socially more comfortable for children and can be useful in situations where one sex seems to dominate.



Friendship Time

We know that being with friends is important - especially at such a crucial time as when transferring from primary to secondary school.

Your child may be with some of their friends whilst they are learning, but it is very important that they learn how to work with others in their group.

We are building in 'Friendship Time' for every student in Y7 - a 20 minute period in every day, during Term 1. This is time that each child can share with their friends, old and new.

Break periods can also be spent with friends and, in addition, we also have our 'Target Tutor Time' when every child has the opportunity to share their experiences with a trusted adult and 3 or 4 of their fellow students.

For further information on grouping, please contact your child's Student Learning and Success Leader or their Personal Tutor.

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A Parent Information Leaflet
for parents of Year 6
students transferring into
Year 7

