

Rationale for “Stage” Not “Age” Grouping

The Headlands ARC Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP)

We are of the view that grouping students in our Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP) based on their developmental and academic stage rather than their chronological age can be the most effective and inclusive approach for some of our students.

This rationale is grounded in the principles of an individualised approach to education, adapting the curriculum, and maximising the progress and well-being of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Students within The ARC often have significant and varied learning difficulties, meaning their developmental trajectories differ greatly from their mainstream peers and from each other within the provision. Stage grouping allows us to closely match the curriculum content, teaching methodology, and learning environment to the students' current skill set. This ensures that every teaching lesson is meaningful and accessible.

In a stage-based group, the range of needs is significantly narrower, which improves teaching quality and use of resources.

- **Effective adaptation:** Teachers can plan and deliver a more focused and deeply adapted curriculum. Teachers can concentrate on providing highly tailored activities and support centered on a common learning objective relevant to that stage and the particular needs of individuals based on Section F of their EHCP.
- **Resource Allocation:** Resources, equipment and skilled staff can be concentrated in groups where they will have the greatest impact, ensuring resources are used efficiently to support development.

A stage based approach can foster peer interaction and social development. While chronological age provides a standardised social context in mainstream settings, in an ERP, the developmental age is the more critical factor for positive peer interaction.

Students grouped by stage are more likely to share similar social maturity, communication skills, and interests related to their cognitive level. This facilitates more meaningful peer-to-peer learning and social development.

Another advantage of stage grouping removes the pressure of comparing oneself to chronologically similar peers who may be at vastly different developmental levels. This creates a safer, low-anxiety learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and celebrating their steps of progress.

In conclusion, adopting a “stage” not “age” grouping model in The ARC is an educational imperative. It shifts the focus from administrative convenience to pedagogical excellence, ensuring that every student receives a highly relevant, challenging, and supportive education that accelerates their progress toward their full potential.