

Multigrade Classes Policy

Scoil na Coróine Mhuire, Ashford



Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Parents and Board of Management of Scoil na Coróine Mhuire, Ashford.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine class groups into mixed classes. We will endeavour to keep these classes smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of classes
- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes
- To outline the criteria for placing children in particular mixed-class groups
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in mixed classes
- To limit the enrolment of new children into split classes, subject to Section 29 of the Education Act.

Framework for the splitting of classes

At the time of planning the classes for the coming year, the Principal will look at the overall numbers in each year group and the number of teachers available to teach them. He/She will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes

The BoM will assess the suite of criteria and set out the priority needs of the children and the school at the time. The board will facilitate adequate time to allow for draft lists to be drawn up in consultation with the class teacher, support teachers, previous teachers of the classes involved and where possible the teacher of the class for the upcoming year. These lists are forwarded to the In School Management Team and final decisions rest with the Principal

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

We group the children in such a way so as to maximise the learning outcomes for *each child*. When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration. These are in no particular order as the needs of the school and the children evolve.

- It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups
- Distribution of boys/girls in classes
- The dynamics of the class must be considered. Emotional, behavioural and social factors which could upset the dynamic of the new class should be taken into consideration when forming new groupings
- The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. While in-class friendships will be taken into consideration it will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together. This decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class
- It's very likely a Pupil will have more than one split in his/her time in Scoil na Coróine Mhuire. Decisions on if & when splits take place are at the Board of Managements discretion. We will endeavour to be mindful of the pupil's previous split when reconstituting a class
- Classes may also be split in an open and transparent manner such as alphabetically or by age.

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This means it is not always possible to keep friends together but the teachers of each class to be split are consulted on the above issues and much work goes into the preparatory stage of the arrangement prior to the summer holidays. Sometimes pupils move to or from the school without informing the school in advance. This is outside the control of the principal.

Classes that have been split reunite daily to play together on the playground/sports field during breaks so they can maintain existing friendships as well as make new friends in the new group. This increases their circle of friends and their abilities to form new friendships.

Explaining to parents why their child is in a split class.

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 25 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio*. However, the current system, which has allocated us 13 teachers does not allow for equal spreads of single stream classes across the school and the principal has overall responsibility for grouping or splitting the classes where numbers would otherwise be too big or too small in one class. The DES' objective is that class size should be as equitable as possible across all class levels. The pupil-teacher ratio is dictated annually by the government budget and schools have no control over this.

Why does one half of the class have a different booklist to the other?

Classroom teaching is based on the curricular objectives for each class band i.e. each class is part of a two year curriculum cycle. It's important to remember that the Pupil is learning a curriculum & that pupil textbooks are used merely as a guide by the teacher. The primary curriculum (www.curriculumonline.ie) is primarily *skills-based* rather than *content-based*. In Mathematics there is a separate set of content and skills for each individual class.

In some subjects there are designated content & skills for each class band and for others the content is menu-based and teachers can choose content suitable to their class. The teacher is a professional who is trained to tailor the curriculum and differentiate the content and expected outcomes to cater for the needs of each individual pupil. To effectively deliver this curriculum to all of our children in our school context Scoil na Coróine Mhuire has devised a two year Year A/Year B plan. The whole school regardless of multigrade class or other works off the same plan and switches to the alternate plan the following year. While a child will always be using a resource pitched at his/her class band it may not necessarily be at his/her specific class level. This may be misleading for parents as the teacher, as the professional decides how the content and skills to be taught.

The supports which could be made available to children and teachers in mixed classes

The Principal, the Class Teacher and SEN team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. The Class Teacher may choose in-class support, team teaching, parallel teaching and/or withdrawal depending on the needs of the class c.f. Scoil na Coróine Mhuire SEN Policy.

Enrolment of new children into split classes

The rationale behind this policy is to manage and regulate class sizes aspiring to get as close to the recommended pupil-teacher ratio. The enrolment of new children into these classes is to be avoided as much as possible. In this case, due regard must be given to the school's enrolment policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

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The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

It is the duty of the Principal as per Circular 16/73 to assign teaching duties.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in Spring 2023