



Scoil Sheosaimh Naofa

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Policy on Splitting Classes

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration.

Rationale

While it is our policy to keep split classes to a minimum, for practical and organisational reasons it is sometimes inevitable. Bearing in mind best educational practice, it is the policy of Scoil Sheosaimh Naofa, Ballinagar, in so far as is practicable, to maintain smaller numbers in junior classes.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of 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 try maintain class groupings at manageable levels.

Framework for the splitting of classes

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 26 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio*. The pupil-teacher ratio is dictated annually by the government budget and schools have no control over this. However, the teachers will ensure that each pupil in each class will be working on the set of skills from the national curriculum for the correct class.

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

Criteria on which class groups are split

School Year	Criterion Used
Year 1 (first time class is split)	<i>Age- based split</i> – following a decision on the number of pupils in each group, when the class in question needs to be split, the oldest pupils in the class will move to the more senior of the two receiving classes, taking gender balance into account.
Year 2 (second time class is split)	<i>Alphabetical order</i> (starting with surnames beginning with the letter ‘ A’) – the group beginning with the letter A will move to the more senior of the two receiving classes, taking gender balance into account.,
Year 3 (third time class is split)	<i>Alphabetical order</i> (starting with surnames beginning with the letter ‘Z’) - the group beginning with the letter Z will move to the more senior of the two receiving classes, taking gender balance into account.

This system will apply only when the same class is split two or more times during their primary school education.

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

The principal, the class teachers and special education team will consult on how best to organise the support teaching for the mixed classes. As a priority, the special education teachers will work in the classroom with the class teachers, in a team-teaching arrangement. At times, the special education teachers will work in the classroom supporting a small group of children, with the class teacher doing the main teaching of the lesson while another arrangement for special education which may suit the class is for either the class teacher or the special education teacher to withdraw small groups of children. All of these arrangements are considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. A positive and supportive attitude from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in the new groups. Classes that are split reunite daily to play together on the playground/sports field during breaks and also partake in other activities as a single class allowing them to maintain existing friendships as well as make new friends in the new class group. This increases their circle of friends and their abilities to form new friendships.

Enrolment of new children into split classes

The rationale behind this policy is for the formation of smaller classes within the recommended pupil-teacher ratio. The enrolment of new children into these classes will be considered very carefully. In this case, due regard must be given to the school's enrolment policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

When a year group is split, the teacher who was previously assigned to that class level, is now re-assigned. He/she will return to his/her original year group, if it becomes available in the 5 year cycle, as per the school's Class & Classroom Allocation Policy.

Reviewed & Ratified by Board of Management: April 13th 2016.

The policy was reviewed by In-School Management on May 7th 2019 and ratified by the Board of Management on May 14th 2019.

The policy was reviewed by In-School Management and ratified by the Board of Management in June 2020.