

**Scoil Mhuire, Broadway,
Our Lady's Island, Co. Wexford.
Roll No. 19741A**



Class Splitting Policy

Introduction

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

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it is necessary to divide and combine class groups into mixed classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio. Numbers will dictate whether or not classes have to be split and classes will be split with the view to creating a good working group of pupils. Our experience has shown us that by splitting classes our students are encouraged to form new friendships. 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

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 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. The Principal will consult with the In School Management Team, as well as the staff as to 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

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up.

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, the specific needs of individual children will be taken into account. The following list of general criteria will be taken into consideration to form the class groupings:

- Mixed- Ability groups
- Gender balance
- Familial groupings
- Class dynamics (Emotional, Behavioural and Social factors)
- Teacher input, taking into account all or any additional needs of children
- Classroom accommodation/ resources
- Classes may also be split in an open and transparent manner such as alphabetically or by age.

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.

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

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 28 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio*. The ideal situation for teacher and pupil would be a single stream class at all class levels with no more than 20 pupils per class. However, the current system does not allow for this 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. However, the teacher will ensure that each pupil in each class will be working on the set of skills from the national curriculum for the correct class.

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 level. 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.

For other subjects 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. The smaller the class group, the more effectively the teacher will be able to do this.

Although the class may be using a textbook as a guide, the teacher is dealing with each child as an individual learner. Pupils are not aware of this as it is carried out in a seamless manner by a skilled professional. Teachers choose the books and adapt them. Publishers sometimes put numbers or names of classes on books as a guide. This may be misleading for parents as the teacher, as the professional decides how the content and skills are to be taught.

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

The Principal, the Class Teacher and SEN (Special Education Needs) team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, the SET (Special Education Teacher) may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the SET may work in the classroom supporting one child or a small group of children, with the Class Teacher doing the main teaching of the lesson. Another arrangement for the SEN team which may suit the class is for either the Class Teacher or the SET to withdraw small groups of children. All of these arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

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 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.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

It is the duty of the Principal as per Circular 16/73 to assign teaching duties. The Principal will initially decide on class splits following consultation with the In-School Management team and teaching staff. Following this teachers will then be asked to fill out a class preference sheet for the following year, giving their first, second and third choices. The principal will in turn discuss and notify the teacher of their duties for the following year.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire on 19/05/2021.

Chairperson: *Jim Cogley*

Principal: *Thomas Cousins*

Fr. Jim Cogley

Tom Cousins