

Parteen National School

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Policy on Splitting Classes

Introduction

This policy is the product of whole-staff collaboration.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to regroup, divide and/or combine class groups into new class groupings or mixed classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio. Sometimes this situation is brought about by a reduction in pupil numbers which has a knock on effect on class allocations and the number of teachers provided to the school to teach mainstream classes. On other occasions the school may decide to regroup children where there are 2 of a specific class grouping - for example when the children move from the Junior end of the school to the Senior end of the school - for example in 3rd class.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting/regrouping of classes
- To outline the criteria for placing children in particular mixed-class group or a regrouped class

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 class group and the number of teachers available to teach them. The Principal will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children and lowest possible class numbers.

Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in particular mixed-class groups.

- It is universally considered to be best practice to form mixed-ability groups
- Consideration of children with specific needs such as behavioural, learning or occupational needs

- Where possible a balance of boys and girls will be maintained
- The dynamic of the class must be considered. Emotional, behavioural and social factors which could upset the dynamic of the new class will be taken into consideration when forming new groupings.
- Teachers' judgements, knowledge and understanding of the children will be taken into consideration.
- This decision will ultimately lie with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class and thoroughly explore all groupings with middle-management, teachers and special needs assistants (where appropriate).
- It will not be possible to satisfy demands for groups of friends to be kept together. Where possible we will try to ensure that at least one friend is in the same class as your child.
- **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 new groups.**
- *Once the class groupings have been decided upon, it will not be possible to change or alter them, as any changes would undermine the policy.*

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

The Principal, the Class Teacher and Special Education Teachers will consult on how best to organise the support for mixed classes. In some cases, the Special Education Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the Support Teacher 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 support which may suit the class is for the Special Education Teacher to withdraw small groups of children. All of these arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

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

The Department of Education allots one teacher to each group of 26 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 26 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 Department of Education's 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 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 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. 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. The teacher decides how the content and skills should be taught.

Curriculum

It is important for parents to note that the teachers follow the same curriculum. Regardless of your child being in a straight class or a split class both teachers will follow the same curriculum ensuring your child will continue to receive a high standard of education.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

Reviewed

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management:

Signed: *Deirdre Goode*

Date: 20th May 2022