

Policy: Splitting Classes

Rationale:

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

Currently, there are five class teachers and eight class groupings in Knockainey National School.

Therefore split classes are an inevitable consequence at some stage. However, it should be noted that over 70% of children in Irish primary schools are taught in split 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 groupings
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in mixed classes
- To set out the arrangement for books and schemes of work for split classes

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.

- The arrangement of classes will differ from year to year; in some cases there may be no need to split any class in an academic year. A class split is put in place for one school year, numbers and staffing arrangements will dictate the arrangement in subsequent years. In short, a class may be split once, more than once during their time in primary school or perhaps not at all. These arrangements are made year to year.
- The split class will be together on the same yard for break times.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- Our policy is to form mixed-ability groups.
- 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 will be split in an open and transparent manner, by random selection, giving due consideration to gender balance. An equal, or as close as possible, number of boys and girls will be drawn from the class which is to be split.
- Parents of twins and siblings will be given the option of splitting their children or keeping them in the same group.
- Class divisions will be made known to parents and pupils before the summer holidays.
- The drawing of names by random selection for each class grouping will be carried out by the Principal and witnessed by the Chairperson of the B.O.M. and a representative of the Parents' Association. Parents from the class which is to be split will also be invited to attend.
- If staffing allows the split class will be together for a curricular area in the school week.
- SEN children and SNA's will be allocated to the class groupings at the discretion of the Board of Management.

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

The Principal, the class teacher and the Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class

- The Learning Support Teacher may work in the classroom with the class teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement.
- The Learning 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.

These arrangements will be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

Arrangement for books and schemes of work for split classes.

- The prescribing of books and planning of schemes of work will be differentiated for the core subjects of Numeracy and Literacy thereby each class level will work from textbooks specific to their class level.
- The class teacher will differentiate the remaining curricular subjects using the various methods of differentiation recommended in the Primary School Curriculum (NCCA: 1999)
- Due to the nature of varying teaching styles, differing timetables etc. progression through the curriculum and the prescription of homework may differ between the two groupings (split class). All children will access the full curriculum.
- Where books are to be bought/used by pupils the class teacher will take due regard of the history of the class groupings to date and the materials and schemes previously covered by their incoming class grouping.

The allocation of teachers to split/mixed classes.

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