

# **St. Joseph's National School**



## **Splitting Classes Policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the staff and Board of Management of St. Joseph's National school.

### **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, which are 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. She will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

### **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.

- Initial split of the classes will be based on age. The oldest boys and girls will be asked to form the split class.
- It is considered best to form gender balanced groups. Therefore, there may be some amendment to the age based rule to help maintain a gender balanced class.
- It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together.
- It would be the intention that once a new class is formed, every effort would be made to keep that class together going forward.
- This decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class.

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. They will also meet daily for English and Maths lessons. Each teacher teaches two class streams for Maths and English. They will also meet once a week for SPHE .

### **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](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)) is primarily *skills-based* rather than *content-based*. 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 to be taught.

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

The Principal, the Class Teacher and Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, the Learning Support Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that 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. The Learning support teacher will continue to teach English and Maths to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes. 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.

### **Success Criteria**

The success of this policy will be assessed at the end of each school year by the teaching staff. The Parents' Association will be consulted regularly.

### **Roles and Responsibility.**

Teaching Staff

Board of Management

**Review Date:** June 2020

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Date \_\_\_\_\_