

SN Cnoc an Teampaill

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Policy on Combination Classes/Composite Classes for Knocktemple NS

Background and Rationale

The present policy is written to clarify the current situation in relation to combination/composite classes.

The allocation of mainstream teachers to a national school under the DES is dependent on the enrolment figure on 30th Sept. of the previous academic year.

This school is generally assigned 6 mainstream teachers. As our enrolment figure remains fairly static, this figure tends not to change – except in cases where the DES changes the pupil-teacher ratio.

We have 8 class levels, from Junior Infants to 6th Class and 6 mainstream teachers. This year with increased enrolment and classes with a great variance in class size, we must therefore combine classes to form combination classes to accommodate teaching in as near to pupil teacher ratio as is possible.

These arrangements are, we feel, the most fair and equitable means of organising the classes for the coming school year.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide better pupil/teacher ratio in each class.
- To provide a framework for the combination and division of classes.
- To outline the criteria on which pupils are selected for placement in combined or straight classes.
- To outline the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all pupils in all classes.

Framework for the Combination of Classes

The Principal has a central role in the decision-making process for the combination and division of classes (See Circular 16/73 and CPSMA Handbook).

In spring time each year, the Principal and staff examine the projected numbers in each class group for the following academic year. At the May/June Board of Management and staff

meetings the Principal outlines the projected numbers for staff and a final decision is made regarding where the composite/combination and division of classes will occur in the following school year.

This decision is influenced by the projected numbers.

Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in combination or straight classes

- Special consideration may be given to children with special needs and children with particular family/home circumstances – bereavement, health issues, ability, class size, resources, sibling (in the same classroom), attention to challenging behaviour, maturity and gender balance
- In the first instance, a class will be divided on the basis of age, with a view to gender balance
- Should the same class be divided for a second time over their school life they will then be divided according to mixed attainment levels based on standardised testing and informal observations by teaching staff
- On the occasion of a requirement of a third division of the same class over the course of the child's school life then at that point the children will be placed into classes in accordance to the alphabetical order of the child's surname as stated on the birth cert provided to the school and recorded on the school management system
- The older children will be combined with the older class/to a class of similar age
- After considering all of the above the Board of Management may use date of birth as a most open and transparent method of selecting classes.

While we realise that this is not an ideal situation to separate the class, please be assured that the children will follow the same curriculum and have the same opportunities. It is hoped that classes separated one year will be kept together next year in as far as possible keeping to DES Guidelines.

The Supports available to pupils and teachers in composite classes

The Principal, the Class teacher and Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the Learning Support for the combination classes according to best practice and Special Education Guidelines.

The Special Education team in the school is available to give additional support to the pupils in composite/combination classes. These arrangements are considered on an individual basis year on year.

Informing Parents

Parents are informed in June that combination classes will occur the following year.

Parents will be informed of the class allocations and teachers at the end of June.

Parents are reminded that the process of forming new friendships is an essential life skill which is important for all our pupils to develop and that a positive and supportive attitude from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in the new class groupings. It is appreciated that the necessity to have combination/composite classes may result in a change to the social dynamics of the class groupings and that the school/class teachers will continually monitor the impact of the combination/composite grouping on all the children and take appropriate steps where necessary to alleviate any situations which require attention.

Review: This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Ratified by:

This policy was formulated by the staff in collaboration with the Parents Association. A draft was communicated to the parents in May 2016. It was ratified by the Board of Management on 9th June 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seamus O'Shea', written over a horizontal line.

Seamus O' Shea

Chairperson

Board of Management

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. A. [unclear]', written over a horizontal line.

Principal

Date: 9th June 2016

Reviewed and updated by the BoM at a meeting on 20th May 2024.