

Ballindaggin NS

Policy on Allocating Classes

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Board of Management of Ballindaggin 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 formation of mixed 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 mixed classes, subject to Section 29 of the Education Act.

Framework for the allocating 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. They will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children. It is generally accepted that a lower pupil teacher ratio results in more quality teaching and learning. The current staff allocation allows for a pupil teacher ratio of 1:23. In reality this is not always possible. Due to numbers in our school the Principal and Board of Management in consultation with staff agreed that keeping class sizes as close to 30 pupils where possible suits our current school needs.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

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

- It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups
- It is considered best practice to mix the class group to form equal age and gender groups as far as is practicable
- The dynamics of the class must be considered. Emotional, behavioural and social factors which could upset the dynamic of the new class should be taken into consideration when forming new groupings
- It is important that each child would have at least one friend in their group (children are given an opportunity to provide the names of three friends they would like in their class when classes need to be divided. At least one of these will be in the class.)
- 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

- It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together. This decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class
- It would be the intention that once a class is formed, every effort would be made to give as many opportunities as practicable during the school year for the children to reunite and play, work or go on school trips together.

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

The principal, the class teacher and support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, a support 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 either the class teacher or the support teacher to withdraw small groups of children.

All of these arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

In an effort to ensure consistency in teaching and planning teachers may be facilitated to allow time to plan together where practicable.

Enrolment of new children

The rationale behind this policy is for the formation of smaller classes within the recommended pupil-teacher ratio. 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 classes

The allocation of teaching duties within the school is a matter for the Principal. However, it is the policy of the school to reach collective agreement and consensus when distributing teaching duties where possible. The Principal facilitates this process in a fair and equitable way. *“The Principal is responsible for the creation, together with the Board, parents of students and the teachers, of a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students and which promotes the professional development of the teachers”*. (Education Act – Section 23)

- Ballindaggin National School has six mainstream classes. It is school policy to rotate every 3 years **or as is necessary**.
- The Special Education Team has the option of returning to mainstream after 5 years, should they indicate such a preference. Alternatively, they may wish to remain in Special Education for a further 5 years. Should a mainstream teacher indicate a desire to join the Special Education Team, this wish may be facilitated if a Special Education Teacher has asked for a move in the opposite direction. If not, collective agreement is sought with options such as deferring a move for a year being put on the table. Courses completed in Special Education will also have a significant bearing on allocation. **Staff rotation may occur as is necessary in SET too.**
- Teachers will be asked to complete a class preference form during the final school term listing their preferences. The Principal will allocate classes according to the class preference form completed by the teaching staff. However, it is important to note that this does not guarantee your top preference. The Principal will also take other factors into account when making these decisions such as;

- Experience
 - Contribution to overall school policy development in relation to teaching and learning
 - Range of classes already taught / not taught
 - Motivation
 - Personality
 - Domestic and social situations
 - Special talents
 - Opportunities for development such as Special Education, shared teaching etc.
 - Commitment to continuous professional development.
- Some teachers may have larger classes than colleagues. This normally ‘evens itself out’ over a number of years, so that an equitable workload is achieved
 - Class allocation relies heavily on compromise and consensus. If this is not possible to reach, the Principal will make an informed decision based on suitability, experience (whether a particular teacher has had the class before), special talents, courses taken and what is in the best interests of the children concerned. An interview is not held.
 - Class allocation is completed in May of every year if possible. There is no special exemption for teachers in relation to First Communion and Confirmation classes. Special arrangements are put in place if a teacher’s religious beliefs preclude preparing children for religious ceremonies.

This policy was first ratified in the 2017/18 school year.

It was reviewed and ratified on 24.05.2023

Signature of Chairperson: _____

Date: _____