

St. Colman's National School



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Ballindaggin,
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Policy on Splitting Classes

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Parents and Board of Management of St. Colman's National School, Ballindaggin.

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. He will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

Criteria on which Children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up. Children who to date have shown an ability to work independently are considered able to cope better in a split class, where from time to time the classes are taught separately. Children who have special learning needs, at either end of the learning spectrum, will be considered on an individual case basis.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in split 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 split 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
- 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

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- 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 split class is formed, every effort would be made to give as many opportunities as practicable during the school week for the children to re unite and work as a whole class group
- Parents are welcome to discuss the particular needs of their children in the allocation and can ask the Principal to consider the decision.

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. Occasionally, especially in the case of Senior Infants/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of Mathematics is taken separately by the Class Teacher for one class and the Support Teacher for the other class.

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 of split classes will be facilitated to allow time to plan together.

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. However it should be borne in mind that the recommended maximum number of pupils in mixed classes is 25.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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