

Ballybay Central National School

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Class Division Policy

Background

As outlined on Circular 20/07, the number of mainstream class teachers appropriate to a school shall be determined by reference to the school's valid enrolment on 30 September, of the previous school year. Posts allocated on the basis of this schedule are specifically for mainstream classes and should be deployed accordingly. School authorities are requested to ensure that the number of pupils in any class is kept as low as possible, taking all relevant contextual factors into account (e.g. classroom accommodation, fluctuating enrolment). In particular, school authorities should ensure that there is an equitable distribution of pupils in mainstream classes and that the differential between the largest and smallest classes is kept to a minimum. The allocation of teaching duties within the school is a matter for the principal.

The Education Act (1998) Section 22 (2) (d) (i) states that, subject to the terms of any applicable collective agreement and their contract of employment, teachers shall carry out those duties that are assigned to them by or at the discretion of the principal.

Circular 16/73 number 13: he/she should arrange a fair distribution of teaching duties among the staff, taking into account the needs of the pupils and the abilities, experience, personality and preference of each teacher. He/she should utilise the services of staff with special qualifications or aptitudes in an organising or advisory capacity (Board of Management Handbook, p.52)

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 creating multi-grade classes.

- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes.
- To set the supports which may be used, to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in multi-grade classes.
- To handle the enrolment of new children into multi-grade 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 in consultation with the staff how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children. The preferred choice is to maintain single stream classes. If a particular year group is significantly large, it may need to be divided to ensure the quality of education. The year group will be divided in line with the method outline below.

It would be the intention that once a new class is formed; every effort would be made to keep that class together going forward, unless through a reduction in numbers that is not possible.

Where feasible, classes that have been split may be reunited daily to play together on the playground during breaks, so they can maintain existing friendships as well as make new friends in the new group.

Division of Classes – Criteria Considered

Classes will be divided/split in consideration of some or all of the following criteria. These criteria are not listed in order of importance.

- *Gender considerations*- Due consideration is always given to having a mixed gender and on the basis of a fair ratio of boys to girls.
- *Age and ability*- Multi-grade class groups will be of mixed age
- Teachers' professional opinion and classroom dynamics
- The number of pupils with special educational needs
- Every effort will be made to ensure each child will have one friend in their class.
- Where it's a case that a class is divided for the first time, parents of twins will be given the option of keeping them together or separating them into different classes.
- Classroom accommodation
- Other considerations which may arise at the discretion of the principal

Supports 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 multi-grade class:

- A Support Teacher may team-teach in the classroom with the Class Teacher.
- A Support Teacher may work in the classroom supporting one child or a small group.
- A Support Teacher may take a group of pupils separately and teach lessons — while the remaining group is taught concurrently by the Class Teacher who has responsibility ultimately for the class.

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

Notification

The final class splits are decided by the Principal and are considered non-negotiable.

Parents will be notified about the division of classes by the middle of June. No parent will receive special consideration outside the school's stated procedures. Any place swapping could be deemed as favouritism, or an attempt to interfere with the smooth working of the school. The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. A positive and supportive approach from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome. The school principal has the final say, and is fully supported by the board in this matter.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management and staff, will be reviewed again as per the school's policy review plan.

Signed Marin Reid Chairperson

Date 16.2.2021