

Multi-Grade Class Policy

Introduction

Leixlip Educate Together National School is a developing school and as such its teacher allocation from the Department of Education is based on projected enrolment numbers. The number of teachers allocated to the school by the Department of Education may result in the necessity to combine or split class levels. Multi-grade classes are a feature of the Irish educational system and research has shown the benefits which such classes offer.

This policy was formulated in collaboration with the teaching staff and was ratified following consultation with the parents/guardians and the Board of Management of Leixlip ETNS.

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 grade classes in order to decrease our overall pupil-teacher ratio.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of classes
- To outline the criteria on which classes are selected to be mixed or split
- 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

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, the projected enrolment numbers and the number of teachers allocated to teach them. The principal will decide on how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

Criteria on which class groupings are selected to be mixed or straight classes

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible class groupings are drawn up. These will be determined by the number of pupils enrolled at each class level.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

Classes will be combined or split in such a way so as to maximise the learning outcomes for each child and the whole class group. When dividing a class into groups to be placed in

separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

At Infant level to 2nd Class, the main criteria used will be the age of the pupils. (This is a stage of development where age is a significant factor in terms of learning and social and emotional maturity). Other criteria that may be considered is as follows:

- Teachers' professional assessment
- Family considerations e.g. siblings
- Number of pupils at each grade level
- Classroom accommodation
- Other considerations which may arise at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the teaching staff and/or parents/guardians.

Primary School Curriculum

The primary curriculum (www.curriculumonline.ie) is *skills-based* rather than *content-based* and is spiral in nature, meaning that similar content is revisited at each level but the processes, approaches and information adopted reflect the needs of children at a particular time and at their various stages of readiness. Multi-grade classes allow for differentiation across all levels and for pupils to access the curriculum at their individual stage of learning enabling them to revise or extend their learning as appropriate.

The primary curriculum 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.

Why might 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 resource by the teacher. Different schools use different textbooks, and some teachers chose not to use any textbooks at all.

Although the class may be using one particular textbook as a resource, 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/guardians as the teacher, as the professional decides how the content and skills to be taught.

Explaining to parents/guardians why their child is in a split class.

The Department of Education allocates one teacher to each group of 25 pupils at present. This is known as the *teacher-pupil 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 Department of Education's 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.

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

The principal, the class teacher and Special Education Teacher (SET) will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed/split class. In some cases, the SET may work in the classroom with the class teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement or may withdraw small groups of children. All of these arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year and will be in line with the criteria outlined in the school's SET Policy.

Classes that have been split will come together regularly for learning activities and will also 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.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th June 2022

Signed:
Chairperson

Date: 16/6/2022

Signed:
Principal

Date: 16/06/2022

Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2023