



# Policy on Splitting Classes 2023 - 2028

## Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Board of Management of Scoil Diarmada

## Rationale

The pupil teacher ratio is dependent on the Staffing Schedule as issued by the Department of Education on a yearly basis. This schedule is based on the enrolment figures of the school on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September every year. Based on these numbers, it maybe 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. She 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 have experienced a split class grouping will not be in a split class grouping until every child in the class group has been in a split class.

## Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

We group the children in such a way so as to maximise the learning outcomes for *each child*. When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups
- Distribution of boys/girls in classes
- 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
- 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

This means it is not always possible to keep friends together but the teachers of each class to be split are consulted on the above issues and much work goes into the preparatory stage of the arrangement prior to the summer holidays. Sometimes pupils move to or from the school without informing the school in advance. This is outside the control of the principal. The children are asked to write a list of three friends and the school endeavours to ensure every child has a friend in their assigned class.

Classes that have been split 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.

During the preparation of children for religious sacraments, the teachers will ensure the children prepare and practice together.

Where possible, allowing for numbers on buses etc the class teacher will also ensure that the whole year group will travel together on end of year school tours.

### **Explaining to parents why their child is in a split class.**

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 28 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher 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 DES' 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 Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, the Learning Support Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the Learning 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 Learning Support which may suit the class is for either the Class Teacher or the Learning 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.

### **Numbers of children in a class**

In our school when organising the numbers of children in a split/ straight class grouping, the numbers of children in a straight class will be more than the amount of children in a mixed group.

### **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.

**Review**

This policy is due for renewal and review in 2028.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in November 2023.

Signed : Eugene Hall  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 28/11/23