

St. Brigid's N.S.

Annacurra

Split Class Policy

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Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in consultation with the Board of Management and parents of St. Brigid's N.S. Annacurra.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio.

As our school currently has six mainstream classroom teachers and there are eight class levels in primary school it will be necessary in our school context to split classes to provide the best education for students

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of year groups/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

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 for placing children in particular class groups

Classes will be split in an open and transparent manner solely on the basis of age, with the younger children sharing a classroom with the class below them and older children sharing a classroom with the class above them. Gender balance and special educational needs of the group will also be taken into consideration. This means that 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.

Classes that have been split reunite daily to play together in the playground during breaks so that they can maintain existing friendships as well as make new friends in the new group. This increases their circle of friend and their ability to form new friendships.

While we realise that it is not the ideal situation to separate the class, please be assured that the children will follow the same curriculum and have the same opportunity.

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

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 27 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 the ratio suggests. 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 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.

Why does 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 guide by the teacher. The primary curriculum (www.curriculumonline.ie) is primarily *skills-based* rather than *content-based*. In Mathematics there is a separate set of content and skills for each individual class.

For other subjects the 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.

Although the class may be using a textbook as a guide, 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 as the teacher, as the professional decides how the content and skills to be taught.

The supports which could be made available to children and teachers in split 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. Occasionally, especially in the case of Senior Infants/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of Mathematics, Literacy and Irish is taken separately by the Class Teacher for one class and the Learning Support Teacher for the other class. The L/S teacher may take full responsibility for half the class and the class teacher may take the other half.

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

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.

The allocation of teachers to split classes

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

Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board on September 27th 2019 . Reviewed Sept 2020
and will be reviewed in September 2021 or sooner if required.

Chairperson: _____ **Date:** _____