

# **Scoil Íosagáin**

## **Procedure for Splitting Classes**

# Policy/Procedure on Splitting Classes

## Introduction

This policy was formulated as a result of a collaborative approach between the Principal, the Staff, the Parents and the Board of Management of Scoil Íosagáin, Upperchurch NS.

## Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide class groups into split classes.

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 pupil-teacher ratio is dictated annually by the government budget and schools have no control over this.

## 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 split classes
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in split 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. It will be decided how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best learning opportunities for all children. In May/June the teachers and Principal will attend class formation meetings. In line with the criteria set out for splitting classes, they will draw up a list of pupils for each class grouping. Class lists are finalised in June and the pupils and parents will be informed of their new class by their current class teacher before the start of the school holidays.

## Informing Parents

As it is not practicable to contact all parents of pupils whose class will be split at the same time, the class teacher will generally make contact only with the parents of pupils in the side of the split that is remaining in the same classroom. This will be determined by the particular circumstances that are presented on a yearly basis and especially if there is a change in arrangements/make up of class groupings from the previous year.

## General points to note:

- Classes may have to be split for organisational purposes and due to class numbers.
- Whenever the situation arises whereby a class may have to be split, we endeavour to position a child within a class group where we feel he/she shall benefit most.
- A child positioned in the side of a split which shares a room with a younger class shall receive the same opportunities as a child positioned in the other side of the

split sharing a room with an older class. All children in either side of a split class shall receive equal opportunities regarding curriculum objectives, participation in sports, games, projects, Christmas Concert, tours/trips etc...

- No matter what side of a split a child is positioned, he/she shall receive fair and equal opportunity regarding all aspects of daily school life.

### **Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in split classes.**

In consultation with the class teacher, and where applicable with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up. When dividing a class into groups to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration.

- Children are grouped in such a way so as to maximise the learning outcomes for *each child*.
- Children who to date have shown an ability to work independently and competently are considered able to cope better in a split class in the older classroom e.g. Senior Infants with 1<sup>st</sup> Class, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class with 4<sup>th</sup> class, 5<sup>th</sup> Class with 6<sup>th</sup> Class etc...Where from time to time the classes are taught separately.
- Children who work less independently and are dependent on more guidance in a classroom learning situation are considered to benefit more from a younger class grouping.
- Formal/Informal assessment such as Teacher observation, Standardised tests e.g. Micra/Sigma T where applicable, teacher designed tasks, work samples from copies may be used to help give an overall picture of which side of a split class pupils will cope best and benefit most.
- The dynamics of the class grouping are considered. Emotional, behavioural and social development are taken into consideration when forming new class groupings.
- Even distribution of boys/girls in classes in so far as is practicable is considered.

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. They also reunite for subjects and activities such as Maths, Phonics, Lift-Off to Literacy, Stay Safe, RSE, Swimming etc where appropriate. This increases their circle of friends and their abilities to form new friendships. The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. It will seldom be possible for all groups of friends to be kept together. A positive & supportive attitude from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in the new groups.

### **Curriculum Content**

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](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)) is primarily *skills-based* rather than *content-based* e.g. 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 differentiates the content of the curriculum and expected outcomes to cater for the needs of each individual pupil. Although the class may be using a textbook as a guide, the teacher is dealing with each child as an individual

learner. 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 of split classes**

The Principal, the Class Teacher and Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the split 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 a class or small groups of children. Occasionally, it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of e.g. Mathematics or Phonics is taken separately by the Class Teacher for one class and the Learning Support Teacher for the other class.

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

**Implementation and Review:**

This policy will be implemented in 2016 and will be reviewed every 3 years.

**Ratification and Communication:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2016.

Signed P.J. Harrington  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> May '16

Signed Alma Quinn  
Principal

Date: 3.5.16