

Multi-Grade Policy of St. Mary's National School

Rationale:

In the interest of providing the best education for all pupils, 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. Currently, there are four class teachers and eight class groupings in St. Mary's National School. Therefore, the school teaches multi-grade classes, similar to over 70% of children in Irish primary schools.

Aims and Objectives of this policy:

- To provide a framework for the division of multi-grade classes
- To outline the criteria for placing children in particular mixed-class groupings
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in mixed classes
- To set out the arrangement for books and schemes of work for multi-grade classes.

Framework for multi-grade 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. The Principal, in collaboration with the teachers, will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children. The arrangement of classes will differ from year to year; in some cases, there may be no need to divide any class in an academic year. A class division is put in place for one school year, numbers and staffing arrangements will dictate the arrangement in subsequent years.

In short, a class may be divided once, more than once during their time in primary school or perhaps not at all. These arrangements are made year to year. The divided class will be together on the same yard for break times.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups.

When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- Our policy is to form mixed-ability groups.

- 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.
- Classes will be split in an open and transparent manner, by random selection using Primary Online Data (POD) numbers, giving due consideration to gender balance. An equal, or as close as possible, number of boys and girls will be drawn from the class which is to be split.
- Parents of twins and siblings will be given the option of splitting their children or keeping them in the same group.
- Class divisions will be made known to parents and pupils before the summer holidays.
- If staffing allows, the divided class(es) will be together for a curricular area in the school week.

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

- The Principal, the class teachers and the Special Education Teachers will consult on how best to organise the support for the mixed class
- The Special Education Teacher may work in the classroom with the class teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement.
- The Special Education 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.
- The Special Education Teacher may withdraw a class or group for support teaching.
- These arrangements will be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

Arrangement for books and schemes of work for split classes.

- The prescribing of books and planning of schemes of work will be differentiated for the core subjects of Numeracy and Literacy thereby each class level will work from textbooks chosen by the class teacher, specific to the needs of each class.
- The class teacher will differentiate the remaining curricular subjects using the various methods of differentiation recommended in the Primary School Curriculum.

- Due to the nature of varying teaching styles, differing timetables etc. progression through the curriculum, the prescription of homework may differ between the groupings (split class(es)).
- All children will access the full curriculum.
- Where books are to be used by pupils, the class teacher will take due regard of the teaching and learning history of the class groupings to date, and the materials and schemes previously covered by their incoming class grouping.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes.

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

Timeframe for Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Ratification of Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20/06/2023