

ST.FELIM'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

SN Leiter, Coill an Chollaigh, Co. Cabhain

Roll No. 18564W

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Class Formation Policy

Introduction

This policy was formulated by the staff of St. Felim's N.S., in collaboration with parents and the Board of Management in January 2016.

Rationale

St. Felim's N.S. currently has a pupil cohort of 192 and seven mainstream class teachers. As we have eight levels and seven mainstream class teachers, it is inevitable that we will have a mixed-class situation in some of our classrooms. As a result it may be necessary to reform a class or classes in a given year.

(For example: Some pupils from fourth class go with third class and some with fifth class or some pupils from first class go with senior infants and some with first class)

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the reforming of 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 reforming 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. The Principal following consultation with the staff 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

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 multi-class settings, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups
- Age of children will be considered
- 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
- Classes may also be divided in an open and transparent manner such as alphabetically or by age, if deemed most appropriate.

Please note: 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.

Classes that have been divided reunite daily to play together on the playground 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.

Explaining to parents why their child is in a reformed 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 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.

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.

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 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. Occasionally, especially in the case of Senior Infants/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of Mathematics is taken separately by the Class Teacher for one class and the Learning Support Teacher for the other class, with the class teacher maintaining overall responsibility for the class.

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

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

Policy Ratification

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Felim's N.S. on 10th February 2016



Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management.

Date: 10th February 2016



Signed: _____

Date: 10th February 2016

Principal.

Date to be reviewed: November 2017