



Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore NS

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Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S. Class Splits Policy

Introduction

This policy is the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Board of Management of *Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S.*

Rationale

Given the demand for places in Junior Infants over the past number of years the school has admitted two classes of Junior Infants. These class sizes have been maintained at the recommended ratio of 1:20 (or below) to give all infants the best possible start to their schooling life. As a direct consequence of the above there is an inevitability that some children will experience a split learning class during their time in Rathmore NS as they move up the years.

Therefore, in the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine class groups into multi-grade classes, in line with the recommended *Department of Education and Skills* (DES) pupil-teacher ratio. A multi-grade class refers to a class that has two or more grade level of children in one classroom.

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 multi-grade or straight classes.
- To outline the criteria for placing children in particular multi-grade class groups.
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in multi-grade 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. The Principal 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

1. 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 to date have shown an ability to work independently, are considered better able to cope in a multi-grade class, where from time to time the classes are taught separately.
2. Children will be grouped 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 influence the dynamic of the new class should be taken into consideration when forming new groupings.
 - The needs of children and available supports will be central to any allocation.
3. 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. The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. The decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class. A positive and supportive attitude from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in the new groups.
 4. Every effort is made to ensure 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. The school plans for each class level groups and teachers plan collaboratively at each class level.

Explaining to parents why their child is in a Multi-Grade Class.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) allots one teacher to each group of 24 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 DES recommended ratio. 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 appropriate learning outcomes from the Primary Curriculum.

Parents will be informed of their child's class grouping as soon as all classes for the following school year have been decided in June.

The Supports which could be made available to children and teachers in Multi-Grade Classes

The Principal, the Class Teacher and the Learning Support team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the multi-grade 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.

Enrolment of new children into Multi-Grade Classes

Children can be enrolled in the school at any class level should a place be available. 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 multi-grade classes is to be avoided as much as possible. In this case, due regard must be given to the school's Admission Policy, and the terms of *Section 29 of the Education Act*. However, it should be borne in mind that DES recommended maximum number of pupils in multi-grade classes is 25.

The allocation of teachers to Multi-Grade Classes

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

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 7/12/21.

Signed:  _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in tandem with our Admissions Policy.