

CLAREGALWAY EDUCATE TOGETHER N.S.

Policy on Splitting Classes

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The policy on splitting classes was established by the whole school community - teachers, parents and Board of Management and reflects the Ethos of the School.

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Parents Association and Board of Management of Claregalway Educate Together N.S. in 2009.

Rationale

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 mixed classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of classes.
- To outline the criteria for splitting classes.
- 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. The Principal will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

Criteria for splitting classes

When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration. In the event that a class has to be split for a second/third time alternative criteria to previously employed may apply.

- Children's age
- Gender balance
- Alphabetical by surname
- Mixed ability
- Consideration of Special Educational Needs
- Classroom accommodation
- In a situation where a class e.g. 3rd are to be split between a 2nd and 4th. The eldest from 3rd class will go to 4th class, the 2nd eldest in 3rd will go to 2nd class, the 3rd eldest in 3rd will go to 4th class, the 4th eldest in 3rd will go to 2nd class and this pattern will repeat itself until all children have been divided into classes.
- Teacher input
- Parents of twins or triplets will be given the option (once only) of keeping the siblings together or separating them into different classes

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Emotional Wellbeing is of utmost importance in Claregalway Educate Together. If a class is being split on the basis of one of the above criteria parents will be asked to send in 5 names of their child's closest friends. When the teachers involved sit down to plan for the split these names will be taken into consideration. No child will get all of the 5 friends in their selection but every effort will be made to ensure some of the 5 are in the grouping.

Claregalway Educate Together N.S. sees differentiation as playing a vital role in day-to-day classroom management and teaching. Therefore, the needs of each child will always be individually catered for.

Parents will be notified about the division of classes. It is not possible for any parent to receive special consideration outside of the school's stated procedures otherwise all parents would be entitled to the same consideration leaving the task of dividing the group impossible.

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. 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 will be taught.

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

The Principal, the Class teacher and Support team will consult on how best to organise support for the mixed class. In some cases the Support teacher may work in the classroom with the class teacher in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the 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 support which may suit the class is for either the class teacher or the Support teacher to withdraw small groups of children. Occasionally it may suit the classes better if the teaching of a particular subject is done separately by the class teacher for one class group and the Support teacher for another class group. 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.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as the need arises.