

## **Bweeng National School** **Policy on Splitting classes**

### **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 on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight 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
- 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. She will decide how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

### **Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes**

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary, with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up.

### **Criteria for placing children in particular class groups**

We group the children in such a way as to maximise the learning outcome for each child. When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. A positive and supportive attitude from parents is key element in achieving a successful outcome in new groups

- Classes may be split in an open and transparent manner either by age or alphabetical order
- We will ensure that each child will have one other pupil from their class of the same gender
- It will not be possible to satisfy demands for groups of friends to be kept together. This decision will lie ultimately with the principal, who must consider the need of every child in the class
- The principal's decision will be final

- Children receiving resource teaching may be best suited to remain with their original class group. This will be at the discretion of the principal who will consult with class teacher and resource / learning support teacher

Classes that are split may 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 their new class groups. This increases their circle of friends and their abilities to form new friendships. They may also re-unite for some academic subjects. This will be at the discretion of the principal.

### **Explaining to parents why their child is in a split 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 double 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 curriculum 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. In Mathematics there is a separate set of content and skills for each individual.

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 mis-leading for parents, but actually it is the teacher, as the professional who decides how the content and skills are 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 the learning support which may suit the class is for either

the class teacher or the learning support teacher to withdraw small groups or full classes of children. Occasionally, especially in the case of Senior Infants / 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of Mathematics or reading is taken separately by the class teacher for one class and the learning support teacher for the other class. All these arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis from year to year.

### **Enrolment of new children into split classes**

The rationale behind this policy is for the formation of smaller classes within the recommended pupil teacher ratio. The enrolment of new pupils into these classes is to be avoided as much as possible. In this case, due regard must be given to the schools Enrolment Policy and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

### **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 in 2024