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## POLICY ON CLASS DIVISION & MULTI-GRADE CLASSES

### Background:

(Circular 0013/2013)

*The number of mainstream class teachers appropriate to a school shall be determined by reference to the school's valid enrolment on 30 September, [of the previous school year].*

*Posts allocated on the basis of this schedule are specifically for mainstream classes and should be deployed accordingly. School authorities are requested to ensure that the number of pupils in any class is kept as low as possible, taking all relevant contextual factors into account (e.g. classroom accommodation, fluctuating enrolment). However, school authorities should, where possible, use their autonomy under the staffing schedule to implement smaller class sizes for junior classes.*

The allocation of teaching duties within the school is a matter for the principal:

**The Education Act (1998) Section 22 (2) (d) (i) states that ... subject to the terms of any applicable collective agreement and their contract of employment [teachers shall] carry out those duties that... are assigned to them by or at the discretion of the principal...**

**Circular 16/73 number 13:** *...he/she should arrange a fair distribution of teaching duties among the staff, taking into account the needs of the pupils and the abilities, experience, personality and preference of each teacher. He/she should utilise the services of staff with special qualifications or aptitudes in an organising or advisory capacity.* (Board of Management Handbook, p.52)

**What do we understand by 'MULTI-GRADE CLASSES" in the context of this school?**

- Division of a class grouping, so as to keep the class average size as small as possible while operating within the staffing granted by the Department of Education for the duration of the school year.

**Who is affected by this issue? In what way(s)?**

- Pupils
- Teaching staff
- Parents – e.g. their concerns as to which classes will be split, the learning of the child in such situations, the time at which parents will be notified about such groupings etc.

**Rewards of multi-grade classes**

- Younger children learn a lot from older ones, even without it being planned.
- Older children get constant reinforcement of what they have learned in previous year(s).
- Children become independent learners by the nature of the classroom needs.

- Co-operative discipline evolves through necessity as children learn personal and group responsibility from early on.
- Children's social skills mature earlier in multi-grade classes.
- The multi-grade classroom, by its very make up, is more receptive and suitable to the curriculum, i.e. child centred, activity based, discovery methods, group work, thematic approach, integrated curriculum etc.
- The multi-grade classroom is a natural extension from the child's experience at home, i.e. there are multiple ages, needs and abilities in the one grouping.
- Children find their own level easier in a multi-grade class; they are less likely to feel different than in a single age 'single-ability' class.

### **Difficulties of multi-grade classes**

- Teacher must plan for teaching two curricula.
- Pupils are expected to become independent workers and self-disciplined.
- A wide variety of ability levels in two classes can increase the difficulty for the teacher

### **Procedures**

A class division becomes necessary either because of large individual classes or because of teacher numbers assigned by the DES to the school.

- The process of class division for the following September will commence in May each year.
- Children will be divided according to their date of birth.

Certain factors may be considered at the discretion of the principal. These include -

- Gender considerations.
- Fluctuating enrolment / demand for places
- Classroom accommodation
- Other considerations which may arise at the discretion of the Principal
- Consideration will also be given to the placement of siblings who fall within the same multi-grade class grouping.
- Learning Support/Resource: Best placement for children with Resource or Assessed Specific Learning Difficulties will be considered.
- Parents will be notified about the division of classes before the school term commences.

**No parent will receive special consideration outside the schools stated procedures otherwise all parents would be entitled to the same consideration leaving the task of dividing the group impossible.**

**Ratification:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on **30<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

Signed: *Níall Sloane*

**Chairperson BOM**