**Class Dividing Policy Scoil Aonghusa CNS**

**Policy to divide and combine/merge classes**

It should be noted that

* Currently there are five mainstream class teachers for 8 class streams in Scoil Aonghusa CNS therefore split classes are an inevitable consequence.
* Findings from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) indicate that multi-grade classes afford pupils an excellent opportunity for continuity of teaching, exposure to more advanced material, revision of older material, independent learning and social development.
* Multi-grade classrooms also provide opportunities to make new friends and old friends will have plenty of opportunities to see each other at activities such as yard time/ swimming/ tours etc.
* The school reserves the right to place a child with Special Educational Needs in the group most appropriate to that child’s needs.

**Rationale**

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine 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 year groups/classes
* To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in classes
* To set out the resources 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 in consultation with 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 year group/class, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

* Classes will be split based on date of birth, taking into account gender balance
* Children with SEN will be placed by the Principal and Support Teachers in consultation with staff.
* Children enrolling during the summer holidays will be placed in the smaller class grouping at the start of the new school term.
* Children enrolling during the school year will be placed in the smaller class grouping at the time of enrolment.
* Class divisions will be made known to parents and pupils before 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.
* 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
* The decision for splitting the class will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class

**Explaining to parents why their child is in a split class.**

The Department of Education allocates one teacher to each group of 25 pupils at present. This is known as the pupil-teacher ratio. 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 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 their level.

**Why does one class grouping 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. 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 are to be taught. Teachers of the same class level will confer on a regular basis while planning their schemes of work in line with the School Plan.

**Supports and Resources**

The principal, the class teacher and special education team will consult on how best to organise the support teaching for the mixed class. In some cases, the special education teacher may work in the classroom with the class teacher, in a team-teaching or station teaching arrangement. It is possible that the special education teacher may work in the classroom supporting a small group of children, with the class teacher doing the main teaching of the lesson. Another arrangement for special education which may suit the class is for either the class teacher or the special education teacher to withdraw small groups of children.

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

**The allocation of teachers to split classes**

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

**Ratification and Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board in May 2021 and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Chairperson, Board of Management Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_