



Presentation Primary School
Greenside South, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary



Class Groupings Policy

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with Parent representatives and Board of Management of Presentation Primary School Carrick-on-Suir. It was reviewed in November 2025 by Ms. Breffni Quinlan and staff.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to reconstitute, split and/or combine class groups, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio. The overall picture of all class sizes throughout the entire school will be accounted for when doing so.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting/amalgamation and/or reconstitution of classes
- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in multigrade or straight classes
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in multi-grade classes

Class Size:

Teachers are appointed to *Presentation Primary School* in accordance with the DES Staffing Schedule in place at the time.

It is the policy in *Presentation Primary School*, in accordance with the terms of the most recent Staffing Circular 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, age of pupils, additional needs). In particular, the Principal will try to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of pupils in mainstream classes and that the differential between the largest and smallest classes is kept to a minimum. Class groups will generally be kept smaller from Junior Infants to 1st Classes. This coincides with the fact that DEIS 1 Urban school pupil teacher ratios are as follows: DEIS 1 Junior School (J.I. - 2nd) is 1:17, DEIS 1 Senior School (3rd - 6th) is 1:21 and DEIS 1 Vertical School (J.I. - 6th) is 1:19. When the boys leave after 1st class, classes may become slightly bigger, however the school sees this as being acceptable given that the children in these classes are older.

Section 1: Multi-grade 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. He/She 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 class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration.

Criteria for splitting a class:

- **Teacher input (Past and Present Teachers)** - taking special needs, emotional/behavioural/social factors and class dynamics into account. It is considered best to form mixed ability groups where possible.
- **Maturity and gender balance** – equally weighted when possible.
- **Parent/Student input** – taking friendships and siblings into account. It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together, however, the parents/students/teachers of each class to be split are consulted on friendships and much work goes into the preparatory stage of the arrangement prior to the summer holidays. It should be remembered that 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.
- **Fluctuating enrolment** - Sometimes pupils move to or from the school without informing the school in advance. This is outside the control of the principal.
- **Classroom accommodation** - space available in particular classrooms.

It would be the intention that once a new class is formed, every effort would be made to keep that class together going forward.

In certain instances, classes may also be split in other ways such as alphabetically or by age if deemed appropriate.

Classes that have been split reunite daily to play together on the playground 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 decision on forming multi-grade classes will ultimately lie with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class and indeed in the entire school.

Explaining to parents why their child is in a split class:

The DES allots one teacher to each group of **19** pupils at present in our Urban DEIS 1 vertical school. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio*. The school aims to have single grade classes

Presentation Primary School: Class Groupings Policy

when possible, while also trying to stay close to the recommended pupil teacher ratio. However, the current system does not allow for an exactly equal distribution of pupils nor to have the exact pupil teacher ratio in each class and therefore the principal has overall responsibility for grouping or splitting the classes in order to stay as close as possible (within reason) to the recommended pupil teacher ratio. In order to achieve this balance, multi grade classes are sometimes necessary 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 while taking the factors mentioned already in the school policy into consideration. The pupil-teacher ratio is dictated annually by the government budget and schools have no control over this. It is important to remember that even when a child is in a multi grade class, 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 level.

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. 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*. 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 are to be taught.

Please be assured that the children will follow the same curriculum, use the same learning materials, and have the same opportunities.

The supports which could be made available to children and teachers in multi-grade classes:

The Principal, the Class Teacher and 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. Occasionally, especially in the case of Senior Infants/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th it may suit the classes better, if the teaching of Mathematics is taken separately by the Class Teacher for one class and the Learning Support Teacher for the other class.

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

Presentation Primary School: Class Groupings Policy

Enrolment of new children into Multi-Grade Classes:

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 classes is to be avoided as much as possible. In this case, due regard must be given to the school's admissions policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act. However it should be borne in mind that the recommended maximum number of pupils in mixed classes is less than that in straight classes.

Section 2: Reconstitution of Classes (Where multi-grade classes are not being formed)

Principals and teachers are often concerned about the uneven mix that can sometimes occur in classes and which can have unsatisfactory consequences for everybody. Added to this, in Presentation Primary School our male students leave after 1st class. Sometimes this can leave us with a small or a large number of female pupils moving into 2nd class. Also it must be considered that enrolments in certain classes often fluctuate due to unexpected admissions or due to children having to leave the school for various reasons such as attending special classes/schools/units or moving to live elsewhere.

It is also possible that, in a large school, children can go on to secondary school without ever having the opportunity of getting to know many of the children from their own year. The Principal and staff in consultation with parents in our school, will work together to reconstitute classes when required. The process is time consuming but has proven to have obvious benefits for the students.

The following are the main benefits that would flow from the reconstitution of classes:

- Children would get the opportunity of meeting and getting to know other children in their own year. It is very important for the social development of each child and links into the SPHE programme.
- It would be good preparation for their next school, as it would help the children to get used to change within a safe environment. They would have a better chance of being in the same class as children they knew well and from whom they could get support and with whom they would find it easy to form friendships.

Method for Reconstituting Classes:

- In the second/third term, the SPHE programme has a focus on 'Friendship' and teachers teach a series of lessons on the importance of friends and what friendship means. At the end of this process every child fills in a personal 'Friendship Worksheet', where they write the names of some of their friends. Parents will also be asked for their input when the children take these worksheets home and then return them to the class teacher. Teachers keep these worksheets to help with the process.

Presentation Primary School: Class Groupings Policy

- During the third-term, using the worksheets which were completed by the students with the help of their parents and the information from the standardised test results (if applicable), each teacher divides their class into three or four (depending on number of classes to be formed) mixed ability cooperative learning groups of children. We will consider the following elements for each working group:
 - A good balance of abilities according to MicraT/SigmaT/Drumcondra Standardised Tests (where applicable)
 - As good a gender balance as can be achieved (if in the lower classes)
 - At least **one friend** for each child, with this information coming from the worksheet
 - Children with behavioural/emotional problems in different groups where possible, but always with some friends.
- The reconstitution of classes is always carried out with the best interests of the children as the central focus, however it must be noted that even though the school will do it's best, it will not always be possible to ensure children are with all of their friends.
- The children work cooperatively in these groups for a number of weeks in the third term, get to know each other and get used to working together. The teacher can make some changes to these groups initially if there is good reason, but the four elements listed above must be maintained
- In June, the teachers come together for 'class formation' meetings. The first new class is formed by taking one/two working groups from each of the classes and putting them together. The teachers can spend a number of hours at this exercise as they debate which group will work best with which other group. Teachers know best from their own professional experience and judgement. At this stage, the classes have not been allocated to any individual teacher, so it is in everybody's best interest to get it right
- Class lists are finalised at the end of this process. Children and teachers know their new classes by the end of the school year before they go on holidays
- Parents know that this process is carried out with great care and professionalism, and that the interests of every child have been carefully considered.

From time to time, there may be a number of children who leave the school from one particular class for various reasons, thereby reducing the numbers in that particular class to a level which is too low to create a productive working/sociable atmosphere in the room. In such a case, it may be deemed appropriate to only split that class between the other two classes. In other words, it may be appropriate to just split one of the three classes as opposed to reconstituting all of the classes at that level.

Presentation Primary School: Class Groupings Policy

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 19th of November 2025.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson

Signed: _____ Date; _____
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