



Document name	BETNS Multi-Grade Class Policy
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Multi-Grade Class Policy

Introduction

In all national schools the teacher allocation from the Department of Education for a particular school year is based on the actual enrollment on the 30th of September of the previous year. The number of teachers allocated to the school by the Department of Education may result in the necessity to combine or split class levels. Multi-grade classes are a feature of the Irish educational system and research has shown the benefits which such classes offer.

This policy was formulated in collaboration with the teaching staff and was ratified by the Board of Management of Ballinteer ETNS. It will be implemented in consultation with parents/guardians.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all pupils, it may, from time to time, be necessary to divide and combine class groups into mixed grade classes.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of classes
- To outline the criteria on which classes are selected to be mixed or split
- To outline the criteria for placing children in particular mixed-grade groups
- To set out the supports which may be used to ensure the best learning outcomes for all children in multi-grade classes

Framework for the splitting of classes

At the time of planning the classes for the coming year, the principal in consultation with the In-School-Management team will consider the overall numbers in each year group, the projected enrollment numbers and the number of teachers allocated to teach them. The principal will decide on how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

Criteria on which class groupings are selected to be mixed or straight classes

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible class groupings are drawn up. These will be determined by the number of pupils enrolled at each class level.

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

Classes will be combined or split in such a way so as to maximise the learning outcomes for each child and the whole class group. When dividing a class into groups to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

Criteria that may be considered:

- Gender
- Balanced ability levels
- Range of Additional Educational Needs and Support Needs
- Balanced number of children learning English as an additional language
- Social and personal needs
- Friendships
- Number of pupils at each class level
- Other considerations which may arise at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the teaching staff and/or parents/guardians.

Primary School Curriculum

The primary curriculum (www.curriculumonline.ie) is skills-based rather than content-based and is spiral in nature, meaning that similar content is revisited at each level but the processes, approaches and information adopted reflect the needs of children at a particular time and at their various stages of readiness. Multi-grade classes allow for differentiation across all levels and for pupils to access the curriculum at their individual stage of learning enabling them to revise or extend their learning as appropriate.

The primary curriculum 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.

Why might 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 resource by the teacher. Different schools use different textbooks, and some teachers chose not to use any textbooks at all.

Although the class may be using one particular textbook as a resource, 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/guardians as the teacher, as the professional, decides on the content and skills to be taught.

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

The Department of Education publishes the pupil teacher ratio on an annual basis. The pupil-teacher ratio is dictated annually by the government budget and schools have no control over this. The Department of Education's objective is that class size should be as equitable as possible across all class levels.

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 teacher will ensure that each pupil will be working at an appropriate level for their ability.

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

The principal, the class teacher and relevant Support Teacher will consult on how best to organise the additional educational support for the multi-grade class. In some cases, the Support Teacher may work in the classroom with the class teacher in a team-teaching arrangement or may withdraw small groups of children. These arrangements must be considered on a class by class basis, from year to year and will be in line with the criteria outlined in the school's Special Education Policy.

Classes that have been split will come together regularly for learning activities and will also 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 the new group. This increases their circle of friends and their abilities to form new friendships.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

Contact details

Queries about this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance:

The Principal

Ballinteer Educate Together National School

Parkvale, Balally,

Dublin 16

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(01) 296 3017

info@ballinteeretns.ie

School Roll Number: 20400E

Ratification

This policy was ratified on the date below. The policy will be distributed to all individuals involved in the consultation process of its development. It will be available electronically on the school website for access at any time. It will be reviewed as necessary but no later than 2028.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson: Maeve McCarthy

Date: 20th October 2025



Ruth Brennan
Principal



Maeve McCarthy
Chairperson