**Galbally National School**

**Split Class Policy**

**Introduction**

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in consultation with the Board of Management of Galbally NS.

**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 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

**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 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:

* It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups.
* 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.
* This decision for splitting the class will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class.
* Classes will be split in an open and transparent manner.

Classes that have been split 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. There will also be ample opportunities to reunite classes for certain curricular areas. Teacher collaboration will be essential in facilitating this process.

**Information for Parents as to Why their Child is in a Split Class.**

The DES allots one teacher to each group of 28 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio.* The ideal situation for teacher and pupil would be a single stream class at all class levels with no more than the ratio suggests. 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 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.

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

The Principal, the Class Teacher and SEN team will consult on how best to organise supports for the mixed class.

* Generally, one of the SEN team may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement.
* The SEN teacher may also provide in class support to small groups which have been created by the class teacher on the basis on continued observation and evaluation of progress.
* Every effort is made to provide opportunities for the split class to work together in certain curricular areas eg. Religion, SESE/Geography, History and Science
* Teachers work in close collaboration to ensure that curriculum objectives are being met at the appropriate class level.
* 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. If new children need to be enrolled into these classes, due regard must be given to the school’s enrolment policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the **Education Act.**

**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 of Management in May 2017 and will be reviewed in May 2020 or sooner if required.

Signed……………………………………………. ……………………………………

CHAIRPERSON PRINCIPAL

Date……………………………………………… ……………………………………

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