

Scoil Mhuire Na nGael



Policy on Merging Classes

Rationale

The allocation and distribution of classes and pupils are conducted in accordance with the annual staffing schedules. As a school with an allocation of 26 mainstream classes, we have adopted an approach that prioritises early years' intervention and the establishment of strong educational foundations at the early years' level. We believe that a strong foundation in the Infant stage is crucial for future learning, helping to develop essential literacy, numeracy, and social skills. Smaller class sizes at this level allow for more individual attention, enabling teachers to identify and address learning strengths and needs early, fostering confidence and long-term success. This policy ensures that class distribution is carried out in a fair, balanced, and educationally beneficial manner.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the merging of classes
- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in classes
- To limit the enrolment of new children into classes, subject to Section 29 of the Education Act.
- To allocate pupils to classes in a manner that ensures an optimal learning environment.
- To promote early intervention strategies that support long-term educational success.
- To maintain gender balance and equitable distribution of pupils within year groups.
- To consider additional needs within each year group to support inclusive education.
- To encourage social development and resilience through new class groupings.
- To acknowledge and address parental concerns while prioritising educational outcomes.

Framework for the merging of classes

The framework for merging classes will be concentrated around pupils in Senior Infants only (where practical and possible). Due to the staffing allocation of 26 mainstream teachers and to avoid the scenario of multi-grade classes, pupils enrolling in the school for Junior Infants will be divided among four classes. These four classes will remain together for the Infant cycle (Junior and Senior Infants). From 1st class onwards the pupils will be merged into 3 classes. The pupil will remain in their designated class for the remainder of the primary school education (unless staffing arrangements change).

Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in a class (where possible and practical)

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.

- Efforts will be made to achieve a balanced distribution of boys and girls across classes.
- Pupils will be allocated based on their birthdates to ensure an even spread of ages and developmental stages.
- Consideration will be given to pupils with additional educational needs to ensure appropriate support structures are in place.
- The dynamics of the class must be considered. Emotional, behavioural and social factors which could upset the dynamic of the new class should be taken into consideration when forming new groupings.
- All efforts will be made to ensure that the allocation of classes is both transparent, fair and reflective of the overall interest of the pupil/pupils. However, all decisions on the allocation of class places, at school level, will be final.

Friendships

Due to the allocation criteria, it will not always possible to keep friends together. A positive and supportive attitude from parents regarding friendship groups is key to a successful outcome for all children in their new groups. The process of forming new friends and friendship groups is a life skill which is important to develop resilience. Children in merged classes will be able to maintain existing friendships as well as make new friends in a new group, increasing both their circle of friends and their ability to form new friendships. All pupils will continue to integrate with one another during playtimes and whole-year group/school activities. This increases their circle of friends and their ability to form new friendships.

Acknowledgement of Parental Concerns

We understand that the changes to classes may cause distress for some parents. However, the primary goal of this process is to ensure that every pupil receives the best possible educational experience and opportunities during their primary school

years (in accordance with the annual staffing schedule). Our approach is designed to support all children in their academic, social, and emotional development while fostering a sense of belonging within the school community throughout their entire primary school education. It is very important to our school that our pupils in the Infants classes are provided with the best foundational

The allocation of teachers to classes

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

Review and Ratification

This policy will be reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on the 1st of May 2025.

Signed: Proinsias O'Leary

Chairperson of the Board of Management