



**Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Fheargus,
An Gleann,
Co. Luimnigh.**

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Policy on Splitting Classes - March 2026

Introduction

This policy was the product of staff collaboration in tandem with the Board of Management and parent body of St. Fergus' National School. We are now reviewing this policy in March 2026. It reflects current best practice, inclusion, wellbeing and effective school organisation.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine class groups into mixed classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio. It may also happen that due to a change in pupil numbers and staff allocation, some pupils may be taught in a single or multi-stream setting. This arrangement of classes is dependent on enrolment numbers and pupil:teacher ratio as laid out by the DoFE and on feedback from School Inspections.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of groups/classes
- To ensure fairness, transparency and consistency
- To outline the criteria on which children may be 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 and Deputy Principal will look at the overall numbers in each class group and the number of teachers available to teach them. They will prepare a maximum of three options for class groupings for the following school year, having regard for the best interests of all children.

Criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight classes

When dividing a year group/class, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- ✓ Classes will be split in an open and transparent manner namely; alphabetically according to surname. A record of the class splits will be retained for future reference.
- ✓ Allowing input from staff when looking at the proposed class groupings, the Board of Management will give consideration to:
 - Balanced range of abilities (so both teachers can plan at similar levels),
 - Even distribution of pupils with additional or behavioural needs,
 - Room allocation will be determined by pupil numbers, age cohorts and identified pupil needs, in line with effective school organisation.
 - Friendships where possible.
 - Integration of pupils from Autism classes.

All adjustments are recorded in the Principal's file, noting that they were made for social, emotional, or educational balance.

- ✓ Classes will be split based on a combination of factors, including class size, social and emotional considerations, and academic balance, while ensuring transparency. Although alphabetical order may be used as a guideline, exceptions may be made by the Board of Management, following consultation with the Principal, to support the educational and emotional needs of students.
- ✓ The final decision regarding the splitting and organisation of classes rests with the Board of Management. The Board will consider recommendations from the Principal and staff with the best interests, well being and educational needs of all children as the paramount consideration.

The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. A positive and supportive attitude from parents and staff is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in the new groups.

Parents and guardians will receive clear communication regarding the class-splitting process.

Classes that have been split reunite daily to play together in 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.

Pupils from Autism Classes will be integrated into mainstream classes based on decisions taken by the Principal in consultation with Autism Class Teachers and relevant Classroom Teachers.

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

The DoEY allots one teacher to each group of 23 pupils at present. This is known as the *pupil-teacher ratio*. The Programme for Government 2025 proposes a reduction of this number to 1:19 over the lifetime of this Government.

The ideal situation for teachers and pupils would be a single-stream class at all class levels. 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 DoEY 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, regardless of the numbers in the room, 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.

Why does one group of the split class have a different book list 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. This will continue with the continuing implementation of a play-based curriculum reform currently being undertaken in Primary Education.

For other subjects teachers can choose content suitable to their class based on the ongoing and evolving processes which teachers engage in.

As per DoE guidance in Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools

" individual teachers' preparation for teaching and learning involves invisible, visible and recorded preparation which can take place at the same time as well as before, during and after teaching and learning. Teachers are recognised as committed, skilled and agentic professionals. Teachers make key decisions every day about teaching and learning in their school, including decisions about what children learn, the sequence in which they learn, the pace at which they learn, and the activities and experiences through which they learn. These decisions are shaped by key pillars which include:

- ✓ ***the teacher's knowledge of the children and their prior learning;***
- ✓ ***their knowledge of the curriculum;***
- ✓ ***and their knowledge of pedagogy.***

Decisions are also underpinned by high- quality assessment practice which are used to inform teaching and learning"

The teacher is a professional who is trained to tailor the curriculum and differentiate the content and expected outcomes to cater to 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 and parents may not be 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 to be taught.

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

The Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher and Special Education Team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, the Special Education Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement.

The Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, and Special Education Team will collaborate on structured learning support strategies for mixed classes. This may include team teaching; small-group interventions; professional development for teachers.

Alternatively, the School may prioritise a learning intervention with a class group, where teachers believe that this is warranted, e.g. Spelling Initiative. All of these arrangements and more 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 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 enrolment policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act. Where it is necessary for a pupil to be enrolled into a split class after the decisions around arrangements have been made, the Senior Management will review the class lists, the needs of the child enrolling and make a decision based on this.

Late enrolments into split classes will be reviewed by Senior Management in consultation with the class teacher and the Special Education Team. Decisions will prioritise: equitable class sizes; the distribution of learning needs; and minimising disruption to established class structures.

Siblings in a Split Class

In some cases, siblings may be enrolled in the class group to be split, e.g., twins, triplets, etc. The final decision regarding the placement of siblings will rest with the Principal and will be made in the best interests of the children in question, taking into account the smooth running of the classes and the School.

Where siblings, such as twins or triplets, are placed in a class that is due to be split, their placement will be carefully considered, with sensitivity to their individual needs. The school will engage in consultation with class teachers and special

education staff (if applicable) to determine the most supportive arrangement for each child.

The final decision will be made by the Principal, prioritising the children's social, emotional, and educational well-being while ensuring balanced class groupings and the smooth operation of the school.

Pupil Wellbeing

St. Fergus' National School is dedicated to fostering a school environment in which the wellbeing of all students is prioritised, in keeping with our Wellbeing Policy and Bí Cineálta Policy.

The process of splitting classes will be carried out with sensitivity, ensuring that pupils feel secure, supported, and valued within their new group. Recognising that transitions and changes can be challenging, we will implement proactive measures to promote emotional wellbeing, including peer support, structured social integration activities, and open communication with parents and guardians.

Our school will continue to embed a whole-school approach to wellbeing, emphasising resilience, kindness, and inclusion, while ensuring that children have access to a trusted adult and feel comfortable expressing any concerns they may have. Through positive reinforcement, mindfulness initiatives, and a focus on building friendships and a sense of belonging, we aim to nurture a school culture where every child can thrive both academically and emotionally.

Equality, Inclusion, and Accessibility

St. Fergus' National School is committed to ensuring that all pupils, regardless of ability, background, or learning needs, have equitable access to high-quality education in a supportive and inclusive environment. When splitting classes, every effort will be made to ensure that all children feel valued, included, and supported in their learning journey.

Consideration will be given to the diverse needs of pupils, including those with additional educational needs, those from minority backgrounds, and those integrating from our Autism Classes. Decisions regarding class placement will be made in a manner that fosters an inclusive and accessible learning environment, where each child is given the opportunity to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. The school will also work closely with parents, guardians, and support staff to facilitate a smooth transition for all children, ensuring their individual needs are met within the new class structure.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

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

Ratification and Review

This policy is being reviewed now in March 2026 and will be reviewed in 2028 or sooner if necessary. The Principal will be responsible for initiating this review process.

Ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of 6th May 2026.

Signed:

Fr Liam Enright
CHAIRPERSON, Board of Management

Date: _____