



POLICY ON SPLITTING CLASSES FOR TANG N.S.

Introduction

This policy was the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Board of Management of Tang N.S.

Rationale

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it is necessary from time to time to divide and combine class groups into mixed classes, which are smaller in size, offer a better pupil-teacher ratio and consider the needs of all children within those class groupings. The class groupings are based on enrolment figures and a staffing allocation of 5 mainstream classes (principal plus 4).

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the splitting of classes
- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in mixed or straight 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
- To limit the enrolment of new children into split classes, subject to Section 29 of the Education Act.

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. She will decide, in consultation with staff, how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

A class split is put in place for one school year. Numbers and staffing arrangements will dictate the arrangement in subsequent years. In short, a class may be split once, more than once during their time in primary school or perhaps not at all. These arrangements are made year to year. Unless public health advice prevents mixing of class bubbles, the split class will be together on the same yard for break times. Every effort will also be made to bring the split class together for playful teaching and learning opportunities e.g. maths trails, nature trails, PE lessons, SPHE well-being group activities, SESE practical learning activities (where staffing and public health allows).

Criteria for placing children in particular class groups

When dividing a class into groups, to be placed in separate classes, there are certain criteria to be taken into consideration:

- Age – to include a gender balance. Where a split requires 8 children to form a mixed class with the class group ahead of them e.g. Senior Infants and 1st class, then the 8 children from senior infants to join with the first class grouping will be made up of the 4 oldest girls and the 4 oldest boys. Not necessarily the 8 oldest children from a given class grouping. (See * Below)
- In so far as is possible while maintaining optimal class sizes, classes will be split 50-50 or in half, with the oldest gender balanced half joining the class group above them and the youngest gender balanced half joining the class group below for the new academic year.
- It is considered best to form mixed-ability groups.
- 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.
- The needs of children with SNA access will be central to any allocation or class split decisions.
- 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
- It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together. This decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in every class.
- Where a class group has previously been split according to age, additional criteria above will be considered together with a lottery system to form the split in subsequent years.

* In the majority of cases it will be the policy of Tang National School to split classes on age. Only where deemed necessary will any other criteria be used.

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

In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up. Children who to date have shown an ability to work independently are considered able to cope better in a mixed class, where from time to time the classes are taught separately. Children who have special learning needs, at either end of the learning spectrum are generally deemed to be better left in a straight class, all other things being equal. Due to pressures of numbers and of space in a small school this may not always be possible. *When splitting due to numbers, it is the policy of our school to split according to age, oldest children (and allowing for gender balance) moving to higher class or vice versa.

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

The Principal, the Class Teacher and the Special Education team will consult on how best to organise the learning support for the mixed class. In some cases, the Special Education (S.E.) Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the S.E. 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 S.E. which may suit the class is for either the Class Teacher or the S.E. Teacher to withdraw small groups of children. All of 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, in particular from Junior Infants to Second class as advised. 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 Admission policy, and the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.

Informing and consulting with parents

Parents will be informed of their child's class and allocated teacher at least one week before the end of the school year.

Teachers of split classes plan collaboratively to ensure that all children at each class level are covering the same content at the same time, even though they may be using different text books.

The allocation of teachers to mixed classes

It is the duty of the Principal as per Circular 16/73 to assign teaching duties. Teacher allocation will be shared at least one week before the end of the school year.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as necessary.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Tang N.S. at its meeting on 19th March 2024.

Signed: John Burke

Date: 19th March 2024

Signed: Caitriona Behan

Date: 19th March 2024