



## Policy on Reconstitution of Classes

### Introduction

This policy was the product of whole staff collaboration in tandem with the Parents and Board of Management of Monkstown Educate Together NS.

### Rationale

Principals and teachers are often concerned about the uneven mix that can sometimes occur in classes and which can have unsatisfactory consequences for everybody. It is also possible that, in a large school, children can go on to secondary school without ever having the opportunity of getting to know many of the children from their own year. The system of reconstitution has gained wide acceptance from Board Of Managements, children, parents and teachers. The process is time consuming, depends largely for its success on the teachers who designed it, but it is widely accepted to be very worthwhile on many fronts.

This method is suitable for multi-stream schools. It is probably most suitable for classes from second to sixth. The proposal should be put initially to the BOM for approval and the parent body should be consulted.

The following are the main benefits that flow from the annual reconstitution of classes:

- Children get the opportunity over the remaining years of meeting and getting to know all the children in their own year. It is very important for the social development of each child and links into the SPHE programme
- It is a good preparation for secondary school, as it helps the children to get used to change within a safe environment, and with the support of friends.
- When pupils move on to secondary school, they have a better chance of being in the same class as children they know well and from whom they can get support and, with whom they find it easy to form friendships.

The BOM has approved this policy and it will begin from June 2010

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

- To provide a framework for the reconstitution of classes
- To outline the criteria on which children are selected to be placed in re-constituted classes

### 2. Method for Reconstituting Classes

- Early in the second-term, the SPHE programme has a focus on 'Friendship' and teachers teach a series of lessons on the importance of friends and what friendship



means. At the end of this process every child fills in a personal 'Friendship Worksheet', where they write the names of their 'Best friends' and their 'Other Friends'. Teachers keep these worksheets in case questions arise later

- At the start of the third-term, a meeting takes place between all staff members associated with these Senior Infant classes; 2 Junior infant Teachers from previous years, 2 Senior Infant Teachers, RT/LS Teachers that have been involved with these classes, SNAs whom have been assigned to these classes, Principal.
- Using the worksheets and other relevant information, the class teacher divides their class into various co-operative learning groups of approximately 6/7 children. Each working group should have the following elements:
  - a) A good balance of abilities according to Standardised Tests/Class Tests/Teacher Observation
  - b) As good a gender balance as can be achieved
  - c) At least **one friend** for each child, with this information coming from the worksheet
  - d) A good balance of children with behavioural/emotional problems, special needs, age in different groups where possible, but always with some friends.
- The children work co-operatively in various groups during the last term. The teacher can make some changes to these groups initially if there is good reason, but the four elements listed above must be maintained.
- In June, the teachers come together for 'class formation' meetings. The new First classes are formed using the knowledge from these working groups. The teachers can spend a number of hours at this exercise as they debate which group will work best with which other group. It is important that the teachers from Senior Infants collaborate on this from their own professional experience and judgement. At this stage, the classes have not been allocated to any individual teacher, so it is in everybody's best interest to get it right.
- Class lists are finalised at the end of this process. Children, teachers and parents know their new classes by the end of the school year before they go on holidays
- Parents know that this process is carried out with great care and professionalism, and that the interests of every child carefully considered. Children adapt to it very easily, have become very open and flexible socially and we have only seen positive results.

The system should be evaluated annually by the teachers and changed slightly if this is seen to be necessary. The original method may change somewhat as fine-tuning takes place. It should be mentioned in the school information booklet so that parents are fully aware of the system when they enrol their child in the school.



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### **Criteria for placing children in particular class groups.**

- 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 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 the class
- It would be the intention that once a new class is formed, every effort would be made to keep that class together going forward.

#### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years or when necessary.

June 2010