

Policy on the Allocation of Classes and Rooms.

Introductory Statement:

This policy was formulated as a result of a collaborative approach between the Principal and Teaching Staff. It evolved over the years and has been recently redrafted due to the growth of the school, which has resulted in split classes and more Special Education teachers. It has been completed over a number of Teachers' Meetings.

Link to School Ethos:

Scoil Mhuire is committed to enabling children grow and develop into confident, mature adults with high self-esteem. We also strive to ensure children maximise their academic and social potential. This policy is geared towards those aims through offering all children exposure to a variety of teaching methodologies and skills.

Rationale:

This policy ensures that teachers get the opportunity to expand their skills through teaching a range of different ages and topics. It also offers the teaching staff and children flexibility within the system and there is provision in the policy for children to have access to teachers with specific skills in particular subjects.

Aims and Objectives:

*The policy also facilitates the allocation of rooms suitable to the needs of the children;

- To facilitate the smooth, efficient running of the school
- To enable the teaching staff to professionally develop themselves through exposure to different age groups and curricula
- To maximise the learning opportunities of the children through prudent class allocation which utilises to the optimum, the range of individual teaching skills within the staff
- To be fair to teachers in the way they are offered a mainstream class and especially a split class

Policy Content

Class Allocation:

The allocation of teaching duties within the school is a matter for the Principal.

However, it is the policy of the school to reach collective agreement and consensus when distributing teaching duties. The Principal facilitates this process in a fair and equitable way. *“The Principal is responsible for the creation, together with the Board, parents of students and the teachers, of a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students and which promotes the professional development of the teachers”*. (Education Act – Section 23)

We have five Bands :-

- Junior and Senior Infants
- First and Second Classes
- Third and Fourth Classes
- Fifth and Sixth Classes
- Learning Support and Resource (Special Education Teachers)

Mainstream Education Team

Scoil Mhuire has 11 mainstream classes and consequently there are different arrangements each year regarding split classes. (We would need to reach 307 pupils to get the 12th teacher and we are at approximately 297-300 for some years now)

Teachers have *the right* to be moved from a particular mainstream Band after 3 years and the Principal may also move a Teacher from a mainstream band after 3 years. It is not envisioned that every teacher has a right to teach every class but has the right to be moved from a Mainstream band after 3 years.

Special Education Team

Teachers in the Special Education Team (SET) will be responsible for Learning Support under the General Allocation Model, i.e. Children with High Incidence Requirements, English as an additional language and Resource teaching which deals with children who have Low Incidence requirements. Both Learning Support and Resource duties are now in the one post.

- The Special Education Team teacher has the option of spending 5 years in SE pending suitability after the first year, and a further option of 5 years should they indicate such a preference. At least 3 years would be expected in Special Education.
- After 10 years it would be envisioned that the SE teacher would return to a Mainstream post unless the Principal does not have an experienced SE teacher to manage the SE team.
- The Special Education Team teacher has the option of returning to mainstream after 5 years.
- Teachers are encouraged to apply for all bands in Scoil Mhuire, including Special Education. If a mainstream teacher indicates a desire to join the Special Education Team, this wish may be facilitated if in line with current policy.
 - It is expected that if a teacher does wish to have a post in the Special Education Team that he or she would provide that expression of interest in writing to the Principal before the 1st of February to be considered for the following September.

- Advance planning is very necessary in order to minimise the risk of disappointment if more than the required number of teachers wish to join the SET team. Interviews will not be held.
- Courses completed or to be completed in Special Education will also have a significant bearing on allocation
- If not, collective agreement is sought and consultation between the teachers and the Principal will be the first step and if this is not satisfactory, then consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management will follow.
- Each year the Principal issues a Preference Form directly around Easter or as close to that time as possible.
- Teachers are asked to record the last 3 classes they have taught and to provide their first, second and third choices for the coming year.
- The Principal will endeavour to give teachers their first choice when possible, but this is not always the case.
- The teachers have agreed that if a teacher's first choice is 4th and second choice is 5th and s/he gets a split class with 3rd and 4th or 4th and 5th that they have actually got their preference.
- The Principal must take other factors into account when making these decisions such as:
 - Experience
 - Range of classes already taught
 - Range of classes not taught
 - Contribution to overall school policy development in relation to teaching and learning
 - A clear understanding of the teamwork and sequence, the teaching and learning journey of a Primary School child and that each teacher must understand that the next teacher for this group of children is depending on them to have covered the agreed programme of Scoil Mhuire
 - Special talents
 - Opportunities for development such as Special Education, shared teaching etc.
- Some teachers may have larger classes than colleagues. This normally 'evens itself out' over a number of years, so that an equitable workload is achieved
- Class allocation relies heavily on compromise and consensus. If this is not possible to reach, the Principal will make an informed decision based on suitability, experience (whether a particular teacher has had the class before), special talents, courses taken and what is in the best interests of the children concerned. An interview is not held.
- Class allocation is completed by the end of the first week in May if not before.

Split Classes – *This section will need to be reviewed annually depending on the number of pupils each year.*

Each teacher *may* be expected to teach a Split Class once in 4 years. The teacher may choose to teach a Split class for a second consecutive year but will not be expected to do so.

Depending on the size of the cohort each year in Junior Infants, the following decisions are made:

- Approximately 30 children will mean one class

- 58 children will mean 2 classes
- Approximately 30 and up to a maximum of 48 will mean one class plus a Split Class (See Split Class Policy)

Special Education Team: *This section will need to be reviewed annually.*

Our current allocation which should last for 2 years is as follows: 70 hours and 30 minutes or 2.8 teachers

Based on qualifications and experience we currently have a Senior Learning Support Teacher and we then provide a second LS teacher who gives 5 hours per week in another school, which could mean any type of Primary School, including Gaelscoileanna.

(Clusters are not permanent, but on annual review. Should it arise that we are clustered with a Gaelsoil, we need to note that teachers who have trained in Ireland are expected to be able to teach in a Gaelscoil without any added qualification in Gaeilge. There are restrictions in the first year for those who train outside of Ireland until they are probated. Teachers who have trained abroad must sit the Department examinations for Gaeilge and once probated are expected to do the same. There is no case to be made for refusing to teach in a Gaelscoil despite anecdotes from colleges or other sources – teachers and Boards of Management are bound by the Department of Education and Skills.)

***Classroom Allocation:**

- Junior and Senior Infant classes are allocated in the Blue and Yellow corridors
- Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Classes are now located in the new corridor because different chairs had to be purchased to suit the Marmoleum floors in those rooms. It is not the policy of the school to move classes from specific rooms unless in exceptional circumstances such as teacher request, physical damage to room or health and safety issues
- The remaining classes are located in the Red and Green Corridors.
- All classrooms have similar digital equipment.

Roles & Responsibilities:

All staff, under the guidance of the Principal participate in and contribute to the implementation of an effective and equitable class allocation policy.

Grievances are dealt with at a Principal/teacher level, i.e.- informal level, and will only escalate to the Board if a compromise cannot be reached.

Success Criteria:

The school evaluates the success of the policy through;

- a) Participation of all staff in the policy
- b) Smooth hand over of classes
- c) Feedback from all staff
- d) Staff satisfaction
- e) Parental satisfaction

Timetable for Review:

A review will be conducted based on the success criteria outlined, or where consensus and compromise is not achieved. There will be an annual check based on the numbers coming in to the school and the number of split classes that may entail.

Ratification and Implementation:

The original policy was ratified by the Board of Management in 2009 but required urgent review to reflect the changing school numbers and split classes and also the growth of the SET.

This policy was ratified by the Board on the 4th April 2017 and will be reviewed as required and/or as Department of Education and Skills guidelines change.

Signed: *Barry Fitzpatrick*

Date: 04- 04- 2017

Barry Fitzpatrick, Chairperson

References

Education Act 1998 – Sections 22 and 23

Circular 16/73

CPSMA - Board Members handbook p.234

Teaching Council Code of Behaviour for Teachers

Guidelines for Learning Support.