

Monaleen National School Policy on the

Re-arrangement of Classes

Introduction

This policy was formulated by the staff and middle and senior management team of Monaleen National School, in collaboration with the Board of Management.

In the interests of providing the best possible education for all students, it has been agreed to;

1. Re-arrange the five Senior Infant Classes into four First Classes, each year, by mixing the class groupings.
2. Re-arrange the four Third Classes into four new Fourth Classes, each year, by mixing the class groupings.

This policy initially came into practice for the academic year 2014/2015 and will be applied each year, henceforth, for the aforementioned class groupings.

Aims

- To layout the rationale for this policy.
- To outline the criteria on which children will be re-arranged.
- To detail the procedures that will be followed when classes are being re-arranged.

Rationale

- Re-arranging classes will broaden and extend children's friendships and social skills through providing them with the opportunity to interact with and bond with a greater number of children, whilst still being enabled to maintain their previous friendships during recreational activities.
- Re-arranging classes will have the effect of nurturing and building the confidence and self-esteem of the pupil who may feel different/excluded from those around him/her in the current class. Sometimes, children find it difficult to infiltrate the main class group, often feeling that they are 'on the fringes' and cannot escape from this. These children may find that they fit better into another class group, wherein pupils may find like-minded individuals. Staff will be cognisant of this when assigning new classes.
- The re-arrangement will equip all children with the ability to be able to cope with transition and change. These are invaluable life-skills. It is widely documented that the transition from primary to post-primary school can be a source of much stress for pupils. One of the main reasons for this, as cited by pupils, is the fear of being separated from their friends. Experiences of this change/transition during primary school years will, therefore, serve a dual purpose in this regard; it will enhance children's confidence about their ability to integrate into a new setting and reduce their anxiety about separating from their class-group.

- The re-arrangement will promote and support a fresh start for every child in the class. This may have the added benefit of giving some children the opportunity to ‘re-invent’ themselves as they are placed in a different peer group. It is often the case that in-class stereotyping can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A new class allows children to shake off negative labels.
- Re-arranging classes will enhance classroom dynamics through catering for an even spread of personality types across the classes. When children begin school in Junior Infants, they are randomly assigned to a class. At this stage, there is no way of knowing the personalities of the children. This will emerge, naturally, as children spend a period of time in the school.
- The re-arrangement should serve to ensure as fair and equitable a gender balance as possible in all classes.
- The re-arrangement will also enable the staff to ensure that all classes are mixed ability, which is the optimal learning environment, as espoused by the Department of Education and Skills. The rationale for this is that children in mixed-ability groups can all contribute at their own level of understanding. Mixed ability teaching provides opportunities for the child with more developed understanding to explain their strategies to their peers, thus strengthening and re-enforcing their own thinking and conceptual understanding. Moreover, children who have less understanding can be scaffolded by their peers. In this way, both parties benefit from the teaching and learning experience. Again, there is no way of knowing children’s ability levels when placing them in Junior Infants.
- The re-arrangement will aid staff in ensuring that there is a balance in all classes, in terms of children with special educational needs (S.E.N.) This will ensure that the class teacher is in a position to devote the requisite time and energies required to meet the specific learning needs of the children, through the provision of a suitably tailored and differentiated curriculum. Truly inclusive education means ensuring that the system adjusts to meet children’s needs, rather than merely expecting children to fit into the system. When a disproportionate level of S.E.N. exists in a classroom, inclusion becomes an ideal, not a reality.
- Re-arranging classes will provide opportunities for and inspire children to become more aware of, tolerant of, understanding of and accepting of the various and varying learning and social needs of others.

Criteria

The following criteria will be taken into consideration when being classes are being re-arranged;

- Gender balance
- Mixed-ability classes
- Distribution of children with S.E.N.
- Class dynamics

Procedure

1. A letter will be sent to parents during the month of May, explaining the school's policy on the re-arrangement of classes.
2. The aforementioned criteria will be used to determine the composition of the new class groupings.
3. The new class groupings will be determined by the teachers of the current classes, previous teachers and the Special Educational Needs Team. The process will be overseen by the Principal.
4. A list of the new class groupings will be issued to all the relevant parties with the end of school year reports, in the middle of June.
5. An **Induction Day** for each new class will be organised during the month of June. Teachers will facilitate 'ice-breaker' and 'getting to know you' activities on this day to support the transition for all pupils.
6. The decision of the school in relation to the composition of the new classes is final.

Communication

Initially, this policy was sent to the parents of all children in Monaleen N.S in May 2015, as it constituted a change to previous school policy. From 2016 onwards, parents of the cohort of children involved (Senior Infant and Third Classes) will receive a copy of the policy.

Review

This policy is to be reviewed on a regular basis.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Monaleen National School at a meeting held in February 2017.

Dr. Patrick Connolly

Tony Cahill

Chairperson

Principal

Board of Management