**Kildimo National School Policy on Splitting Classes**

**Introduction:**This policy is the product of whole-staff collaboration in tandem with the Parent Body and Board of Management of Kildimo National School. The policy was reviewed during the 2020/2021 school year.

**Rationale:**At present the Department of Education and Skills sanctions 7 mainstream classroom teachers to Kildimo NS based on the number of children enrolled in the school. It is necessary to divide and combine class groups into multi-grade classes in line with the recommended pupil-teacher ratio.

**Aims and Objectives of this Policy:**
• To provide a framework for the splitting of classes
• To outline the criteria for placing children in particular mixed-class groups
• 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 looks at the projected enrolment in the school for that year and the number of mainstream class teachers available to teach them. S/he decides how best to organise classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children. The splitting of classes is reviewed on an annual basis. Depending on the enrolment figures, it may be possible in a particular year, to accommodate certain class groupings in a single class setting. Parents should be aware that, this is the exception rather than the norm.

 **Criteria for placing children in particular class groups:**
Children are grouped in such a way so as to maximise learning outcomes.

When dividing a class into groups the following are the criteria to be used:

* Children are allocated to classes using the criteria of age and gender balance. The oldest boys and girls are placed with the class ahead of them. The remainder of the class works with the class below.
* A positive and supportive attitude from parents is a key element in achieving a successful outcome in any new grouping.
* Recommendations by educational professionals that the needs of an older child would be better served working with a younger group will be considered.
This decision lies ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the overall needs of the class in question.
* Every effort is made to ensure that siblings are not placed in the same multi-grade class group. Where this is unavoidable, parents will be consulted.
* It is not always possible to keep friends together.
* Sometimes pupils move to or from the school without informing the school in advance. This is outside the control of the Principal.

Classes which are split reunite daily to play together on the playground during breaks so that they can maintain existing friendships, as well as make new friends in the new group. This increases their circle of friends and their ability to form new friendships. There are also opportunities for station teaching at particular class levels, and for classes to come together sometimes for lessons across the curriculum.

**Explaining to parents why their child is in a split class:**
The Department of Education and Skills allots one teacher to each group of 26 pupils at present. This is known as the pupil-teacher ratio. The ideal situation for teacher and pupil would be a single stream class at all class levels with no more than 20 pupils per class. 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 DES 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, the class teacher ensures that each pupil in his/her class works on the set of skills from the national curriculum for the correct class.

Parents are informed of their child’s class as soon as the decision on class splits is made. Information on teacher allocation is shared with parents through the school App, school newsletter and is also stated on each child’s end of year report.

**Why might one half of the class have a different booklist 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. For other subjects the content is menu-based and teachers can choose content suitable to their class. The teacher is a professional who is trained to tailor the curriculum and differentiate the content and expected outcomes to cater for the needs of each individual pupil.

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 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.

Teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that all children at each class level are covering the appropriate content for their class level.

**Supports which are made available to children and teachers in mixed classes**:
The Principal, Class Teacher and Support team consult on how best to organise the learning support for multi-grade classes. In some cases, the Support Teacher may work in the classroom with the Class Teacher, in a team-teaching arrangement. It is possible that the Support 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 support which may suit the class is for either the Class Teacher or the Support Teacher to withdraw small groups of children. All of these arrangements are considered on a class by class basis, from year to year.

**Enrolment of new children into split classes:**
Children can be enrolled in the school at any class level should a place be available.

**The allocation of teachers to mixed classes:**
It is the duty of the Principal as per Circular 16/73 to assign teachers and special needs assistants to classes.

**Review:**

This policy will be reviewed not later than April 2022.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**(Chairperson BOM Kildimo NS)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

