



Class Formation & Reconstitution Policy

19800N

Milford Grange National School



'...ag foghlaim le chéile'

Milford National School

Introduction

The Milford Grange N.S. Class Formation and Reconstitution Policy has been developed through consultation with the Teaching Staff and the Board of Management of the school. The Board of Management and staff of Milford Grange N.S. firmly believe that reconstituting classes offers significant benefits to all children from a social, developmental, behavioural, and academic perspective. Our school is committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to make new friends throughout their primary school journey within a secure and nurturing environment.

Class reconstitution will typically occur at the end of Senior Infants, 3rd Class and 5th Class resulting in new class groupings for 1st Class, 4th Class pupils and 6th Class pupils.

Please note that the Principal and Board of Management, in collaboration with the Staff, may also decide to reconstitute classes at other levels (e.g., at the end of 1st, 2nd, 4th classes) if deemed to be in the best interests of the pupils. Should such a circumstance arise, the decision will be made towards the end of the second term and communicated to parents in term three.

It is also important to note that class reconstitution may be necessary at other times, depending on teacher allocation from the Department of Education and Skills.

In accordance with the Department of Education and Skills, the organisation of pupils and classes falls under the remit of the Principal, as outlined in Circular 16/1973: "The Principal Teacher and Organisation":

In consultation with the staff, the Principal should decide on the organisation of pupils for teaching purposes.

Rationale

In alignment with the Milford Grange N.S. Mission Statement, We, in Milford Grange National School, dedicate ourselves to providing a holistic education for our children, where potential and uniqueness of mind, heart, body and spirit are fostered and celebrated. In achieving this ideal we aim to promote self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence and a sense of belonging to our School Community. It is our goal to provide a culturally rich and multi-faceted education, striving for academic excellence, while mindful of the diverse learning needs of all our children. It is within this framework that we emphasise the importance of fostering positive relationships and equipping pupils with the skills necessary to form and maintain friendships with their peers.

While most of our pupils are content in school and have friends to play with, feeling rarely left out or alone, this is not always the case. We have observed that as pupils advance through the school, distinct groups can form, potentially leading to a sense of isolation for some children who may not have the opportunity to forge new friendships. Such stagnation can negatively impact a child's happiness and, consequently, their learning. It is often more distressing for a child to feel excluded or isolated by a group for an unclear reason than when the opportunity to make new friends is presented through class reconstitution.

Reconstitution of classes also helps children further develop their social skills and expand their friendship circles. Classes will continue to interact extensively during yard time, school tours, sports events, and through collaborative work on various aspects of school life.

Aims

The principal aims of reconstituting classes are:

- To maximise the learning outcomes for each child.
- To develop children's social skills and better equip them to form friendships.
- To ensure that each child has the opportunity to mix with a larger number of their peers.
- To facilitate mixed-ability groups.
- To minimise tensions where difficult relationships exist.

Criteria

In the formation or realignment of classes, the following criteria may be considered:

- Mixed ability
- Teacher knowledge of pupils
- Teachers' professional opinion
- Gender balance
- Individual needs of children
- Classroom dynamics and relationships
- Age
- Maturity (including social, emotional, physical, and interpersonal skills)
- Family considerations (e.g., twins, siblings, cousins, other family relationships)
- Teacher Allocation (as per Department of Education)
- Pre-school information and friendships (for incoming Junior Infants only)

Other Considerations:

- It is considered best practice to form mixed-ability groups.
- The dynamics of the class must be carefully considered. Emotional, behavioural, and social factors that could disrupt the dynamic of the new class will be taken into consideration when forming new groupings.
- All classes should be balanced in terms of pupils' special educational needs.
- The needs of pupils with SNA (Special Needs Assistant) access will be central to any allocation.
- The previous composition of classes (if applicable) will be reviewed when forming new groupings.

Benefits of Reconstituting Classes:

- Pupils may achieve better academic outcomes, as classes are balanced in terms of gender, academic ability, special educational needs, language development, social skills, and behaviour.
- Children are given the opportunity, over the years, to meet and get to know a wide range of children of similar age. This is crucial for their social development and aligns with the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) programme.
- It contributes to the development of each child's sense of self and self-identity.
- It serves as good preparation for secondary school, helping children become familiar with change within a safe environment and with the support of friends.

- When moving to secondary school, children are more likely to be in the same class as children they already know well and from whom they can seek support, which also facilitates new friendship formation.

Method for Reconstituting Classes

Quite a number of factors go into the forming of a new class. We endeavour to balance the classes in relation to gender, ability, additional learning needs, friendships, pupil behaviour patterns and how they interact with one another. Teachers consult with the staff who have worked with the children and also take into account the feedback from pupil surveys that have been carried out throughout the year. Teachers also organise playdates in the younger classes to see how the children interact with each other in different learning environments. Our experience of reconstituting classes continues to be very positive. While apprehensive on the first day of school, our experience to date is that pupils settle into their new class formation relatively quickly. They also continue to play with some pupils from their 'old class' on the yard along with their new classmates.

During the third term, the staff members associated with the classes to be reconstituted meet on several occasions to identify possible class formations. Teachers observe how new combinations of pupil groupings engage with each other during interclass play dates, workshops and PE lessons. Mainstream teachers, SEN teachers and members of the in-school leadership team will collaborate to devise the new class groupings. Professional experience and best judgment will guide this process. Class lists are finalised at the end of this process.

During the third term, teachers deliver a series of lessons on change and making new friendships. Lessons will also be designed to address pupil concerns of entering a new class with the primary aim of alleviating any worries pupils may have of reconstituting their class.

The final decision rests with the Principal, who must prioritise the needs of every pupil in the school.

Role of Parents

The process of forming new friendships is a vital life skill for children to develop. Your positive and supportive attitude is a key element in achieving a successful outcome for the new class group. Your primary concern will naturally be your child's happiness. Please refer to Appendix A for further guidelines.

Conclusion

This policy has been formulated to ensure that class formation and reconstitution are carried out in the best interests of all pupils.

Parents can be assured that this process is handled with great care and professionalism, and that the interests of each and every child are carefully considered. Children typically adapt very easily and become open and flexible in their social interactions with their new classmates. We have observed positive results from previous class reconstitutions.

Once class lists have been finalised, it is really only in exceptional circumstances that the school may be able to facilitate a change of class for a pupil.

Communication, Monitoring and Review

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subjected to regular review. In accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in Milford Grange National School, it will be reviewed initially after one year and then every three years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier.

Ratified by the Board of Management, Milford Grange National School, Castletroy, Co. Limerick

Scheduled for review: June 2026

Signed: Liam de Búrca

Date: 09/06/2025

Chairperson

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

What if my child is separated from his/her friends?

Please bear in mind that there are four classes to be reconstituted. Your child will be with some of their classmates from their original class. We will endeavour to place your child with at least one friend from their friendship group.

But my child is no longer with his/her best friend?

Perhaps not, but while your child is engaged in learning in the class, they will be mixing with new friends and can play with whoever they choose in the yard and after school. Parents can continue to organise play dates with original friends and some new friends too.

Will the school be grouping the classes according to ability?

No, we will not. All classes will remain mixed ability.

How will I know who my child's new classmates and their parents will be?

During the summer holidays, each parent will receive an Aladdin message with details of the Class Teacher and classroom for the coming September. Unfortunately, due to GDPR regulations, we are unable to send full class lists to parents.

My child will be very upset and worried if they do not find out their new class before school ends in June?

We have tried a number of ways of announcing the new classes in the past and it still leads to upset for children during their last day(s) of term. We would like the pupils to finish out the school year on a happy note and to celebrate the achievements that they have had with their class.

Also, there are always a number of staff vacancies that need to be filled in advance of September. The timeline involved in the recruitment process means it is very unlikely for schools to fill their vacant posts in advance of the school closing in June. Our preference is to let all parents know their child's teacher at the same time, as opposed to publishing blank spaces for some classes, SNAs and SETs. We endeavour to inform parents of the new class formations and staffing arrangements as soon as possible.