**Merlin Woods Primary School**

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Roll No. 20350P

**Pilot Policy on Reconstitution of Classes**

**Introduction**

This policy was devised by Merlin Woods Primary School as a pilot policy prior to the initial reconstitution of classes. We, the Board of Management and staff of Merlin Woods Primary School believe that reconstituting classes benefits all children from a social, developmental, behavioural and academic point of view. All children should be afforded the opportunity to make new friends throughout their primary school life, all in the secure and nurturing environment of our school.

Reconstitution of classes will take place at the end of Senior infants, 2nd Class and 4th Class meaning our pupils will have a new class grouping for 1st Class, 3rd Class and 5th class.

In accordance with the Department of Education and Skills, the organisation of pupils and classes is deemed to be the remit of the Principal.

Circular16/1973: The Principal Teacher and Organisation

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

**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 reconstituted classes

**Rationale**

Principals and teachers endeavour to create a positive learning environment that balances the needs and abilities of all the children within the class level. It is 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 Management’s, children, parents and teachers and is common practice in schools. The process is time consuming and depends largely for its successes on the teachers who designed it but it is widely accepted to be very worthwhile on many fronts.

The majority of our pupils are very happy in school and they always have a friend to play with and rarely feel left out or alone but this is not always the case. We have found that as pupils move up through the school cliques can develop and at times a sense of isolation can deepen and some pupils are never afforded the opportunity to explore new friendships. This sense of stagnation can affect the happiness of our pupils which in turn can impact on their learning. If a child is being left out or isolated by a group for a reason that is not apparent to them , this is far more upsetting to the pupil than when the opportunity to make new friends is presented to them, as it will be when the classes are reconstituted.

Reconstitution will help to further develop their social skills and to continue to expand their friendship groups. The classes will continue to have lots of interaction together in yard, school tours, during sports events and as they work collaboratively on many aspects of school life.

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

* Pupils may achieve better academic outcomes, as classes are balanced in terms of gender, academic ability, special educational needs, language development and behaviour.
* During their primary school years, the children get the opportunity of 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 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 make the transition 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 during the transition.

**Considerations for Reconstituting Classes**

* Following reconstitution, the pupils will be in the same class as half of their current class. Each child will be in the same class with at least one of their close friends chosen from their friendship flower.
* It is considered best practice to form mixed ability groups.
* The dynamics of the class must be considered. Emotional, behavioural and social factors could upset the dynamic of the new class and will be taken into consideration when forming new groupings.
* Both classes should be balanced in terms of special educational needs of pupils.
* The needs of pupils with SNA access will be central to any allocation.
* Pervious composition of classes will be examined when forming new groupings.

 **Methods 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 will fill in a personal friendship flower where they write the names of 5 of their friends. (The Senior Infants will be assisted by the class teacher in writing the names)
* At the start of the third term a meeting will take place between all staff members associated with the three classes to be reconstituted (Senior Infants/2nd Class/4th Class ).Mainstream teachers, SEN teachers and the Principal will work together to devise the new class groupings and will endeavour to place the pupils with at least one friend. Professional experience and best judgement will be used. Class lists are finalised at the end of this process.
* It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands for groups of friends to be kept together. The decision will ultimately lie with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every pupil in the school.
* During the last term the class teacher will conduct a survey with the pupils to gather information on what the pupils are looking forward to and their concerns prior to the reconstitution of classes. Lessons will be devised following this, focusing on the concerns the pupils have, with the aim of alleviating any worries pupils have.
* Before the school year ends, the pupils will come together with their new class group and spend time in their new classrooms with their new teacher (if appointed). The teacher will do some bonding activities with the class.
* The process is carried out with great care and professionalism, with the interest of every pupil carefully considered.

**Role of Parents**

* The process of forming new friendships is a life skill which is important to develop. Your positive and supportive attitude is a key element in achieving a successful outcome of the new class group. Your first concern will be for your child’s happiness. Please see Appendix A for guidelines

**Review:**

There will be a review carried out next May and any fine tuning needed will be conducted if necessary. It will be outlined on our website and in the Enrolment Registration form so that every parent is fully aware of the reconstitution system in place in the school when they enrol their child.

**Ratification and Communication:**

The Board of Management has approved this policy and it will begin from June 2022.

It will be available on our school website.

The policy will be reviewed in May 2023.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Fr. Martin Glynn Date:\_\_\_\_10th May 2022\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

**Appendix A: Frequently asked questions**

**What if my child is separated from their friends?**

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

**But my child is no longer with their 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 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?**

In your September Parents Meeting, parents will be given an opportunity to put their phone numbers on a list to be shared with other parents in the class.