

Composite classes

Policy Link

Learning and Teaching

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Resources



For the purposes of this document:

- Parents will be taken to mean all parents and carers

This leaflet has been produced by South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources to provide you with information relating to composite or multi-stage classes. It also provides answers to questions regularly asked regarding the formation of, and the teaching and learning in, composite classes.

What is a composite class?

Primary schools have pupils at seven broad year stages, Primary 1 to Primary 7. A year stage is a group of pupils entering primary school at a common date. Composite classes are those where children of more than one year stage are grouped together to form a class.

Most schools in South Lanarkshire Council have composite classes, which have been a common feature across Scotland for many years. In particular, smaller schools have always provided appropriate learning and teaching opportunities and have maximised the benefits of multi-stage groupings for their pupils.

Why are composite class formed?

The Scottish Government provides resources for teacher staffing based on the total number of pupils within the school, regardless of the numbers of pupils at each stage. However, the number of pupils in each stage will vary from year to year. This means that head teachers are required to make management decisions to organise classes to make best use of available staff, resources and space. These decisions will involve considering both educational and organisational factors.

How are composite classes formed?

The maximum number of pupils in any composite class may not exceed 25.

The head teacher will structure classes based on policy and advice given by the education authority. In South Lanarkshire classes are normally formed on the basis of working groups in language and/or mathematics. This means that pupils working at broadly the same pace and level in these subjects are grouped together. Such an arrangement will make for the most efficient use of learning and teaching opportunities.

What learning opportunities will my child experience?

Children in all classes will follow programmes constructed to help them progress at their own level, regardless of whether or not they are in a composite or single stage class. Teachers group pupils of similar learning ability for learning and teaching purposes in all classes and are trained to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of all pupils. Every class contains pupils of different abilities.

In addition, the school will make every effort to involve children of any one year group in activities which bring them all together. However, it is also important that the natural identity of each class is maintained and the school will ensure that this happens.

My child has been put into a composite class with pupils from the stage below. Is he/she being kept back?

No, this is certainly not the case. You can be confident that the head teacher will have organised classes to make best use of all available resources. In so doing he/she will have allocated children to particular classes according to authority policy and guidelines. Children will progress through learning experiences tailored to fit their personal level of attainment.

What if my child's friends are in another class?

You should be assured that your child's teacher will be sensitive to the needs of all children in his/her class and will be encouraging the pupils to develop good working relationships and friendships. Children usually make new friends very quickly and can cope far better with change than adults imagine. Pupils will also spend time in the playground mixing with all of the school's other pupils.

Will my child always be in a composite class?

Not necessarily. The need for composite classes changes as the roll of the school fluctuates. Each year staffing and class formations are reviewed by the head teacher and South Lanarkshire Council. In some schools there are no single stage classes and pupils will move through primary school in composite classes.

At both school and education authority level quality control procedures exist to ensure your child is making good progress within the nationally agreed guidelines. There is no evidence to support the view that composite classes affect attainment adversely and there is evidence to show that pupils gain socially.

When will we know my child's class for next session?

Class organisation and staffing are complex matters. However, head teachers will finalise their class structure and inform parents and Parent Councils as soon as the information is available, normally in June.

In certain circumstances, class restructuring may have to take place during the summer break, after the new school session has started or, in very exceptional circumstances, at any point during the year.

Can I refuse to have my child taught in a composite class?

No. The management of class organisation in schools is the responsibility of the head teacher. Where there are specific concerns about a child's learning or progress, schools have systems for consulting and communicating with individual parents on a regular basis as necessary.

The authority will only over-rule a head teacher's decision if the criteria for class organisation do not comply with the policy and advice of Education Resources

More information

If you require any more information about class structures or about composite classes in general, please contact your child's school. Your child's head teacher will be happy to meet with you to discuss class structure and your child's progress.

For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language, please phone 01698 454545 or email education@southlanarkshire.gov.uk