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# Guidance on Structuring of Classes in Primary Schools

Education & Children's Services

## **Guidance on Structuring of Classes in Primary Schools**

This guidance is intended to support schools in the structuring of Primary School classes. It outlines the process which should be followed as part of the annual exercise to review school rolls and staffing in line with the Primary Staffing Standard.

[Microsoft Word - Appx 3 - Primary Staffing Standard final \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Background**

The Standards in Scottish Schools Act 2000 places a responsibility on all councils to deliver education to support children and young people to develop their fullest potential.

Curriculum for Excellence and a range of other documentation such as How Good is Our School, together with the authority's robust programme of tracking, assessment and moderation, provide an effective framework to ensure all children progress in their learning. The planning and organisation of learning throughout Curriculum for Excellence is designed to provide challenge and enjoyment, breadth and depth, relevance and coherence, personalisation and choice for the learners, as well as ensuring progression and application of learning.

Each academic session, Perth & Kinross Council's staffing exercise is used to identify the number of teachers allocated to each primary school, based on the total number of children on the roll for each school and the number of primary classes required. It is then the responsibility of the headteacher to group children into classes to make the best use of the available teachers and classrooms in meeting the needs of all learners. This may include the formation of composite classes.

It is important to note that the provision of high-quality learning experiences is not dependent on class structures. To engage and challenge children, allowing them to attain and achieve in line with their potential, schools will organise their children in a range of groupings for various purposes.

### **Class size limits in primary schools**

Scottish Government guidance sets maximum registration class sizes for P1 at 25 children, for P2 and P3 at 30 children, and for P4-P7 at 33 children.

For a range of other activities in schools, larger groupings of children are permitted as long as there is appropriate staffing in place. Class size limits apply to ordinary teaching and learning sessions. In response to exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to exceed the limit as a short time measure with the permission of the Service Manager.

In addition, in structuring class groups, consideration must be given to the cubic capacity of specific classrooms and the maximum number of children that can be accommodated in each room, taking account of Perth and Kinross guidance on physical space standards and other health and safety regulations. Schools can obtain further advice on classroom capacities by contacting [ECSresources@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:ECSresources@pkc.gov.uk).

### **Reserved places**

Each session, where class/stage groups in a school are approaching full capacity, a number of places are reserved for families who may move into the catchment area of the school over the course of that school year. All reserved places must be approved by Perth and Kinross Council Learning and Families Committee. Further details may be obtained from [FBSSchools@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:FBSSchools@pkc.gov.uk)

## **Structuring classes for entry to P1**

When structuring more than one class for entry to P1, the headteacher will consult with Early Years colleagues and with any partner provider pre-school settings in the first instance. The allocation of children to classes will then take account of the following:

- transition reports provided by a nursery or pre-school provision
- gender balance in the class group
- family relationships
- creating effective learning groups
- the known needs of individual learners and any additional support requirements

## **Structuring classes across the school from year to year**

The headteacher will make decisions about the class structures for a new session based on:

- the whole school roll for the new session
- the number of teachers allocated to the school
- classroom capacities
- the known needs of individual learners
- creating learning groups

## **Structuring a composite class from two consecutive stages**

Across Perth and Kinross each year, the majority of our schools will have one or more composite classes. In 2021-22, 61 out of our 70 primary schools (87%) operated with composite classes at one or more stages. 173 classes out of a total of 443 classes were composite – this represents 39% of the council's primary classes, so moving to and from composite groups is common.

Where the whole school roll, and the total number of teachers allocated, do not permit the structuring of only single stage or non-composite classes, then a headteacher will structure composite classes to ensure appropriate numbers of children in class groups.

- For example, in a school where the agreed number of classes based on optimum class configurations is 6, at least one class will have to include children from two of the seven year groups, P1 to P7.
- For a school with more than 7 classes and less than 14 classes it may well be the case that one or more of the classes are structured as composites of two consecutive year groups. This arises from the fact that intake at P1 can vary significantly from year to year – for example 14 one year and then 26 the next year. In addition, where the year group entering P1 in August is significantly more or less than the year group which left P7 in June, there may be a necessity to restructure one or more classes between the new P2 and P7 to take account of this significant change.

The headteacher, who is responsible for the leadership and organisation of learning in the school, will make the decision on how best to organise classes applying the following criteria:

- each composite class shall have a maximum of 25 children as per national guidance
- the lead factor in determining the population of the composite class will be the date of birth of the child, ie the oldest children from the younger stage join with the youngest children from the older stage.

(This criterion is used because it is unambiguous and transparent: for the purposes of school provision, age is not a 'protected characteristic' in the Equality Act 2010. This means that in relation to the provision of education, schools may lawfully use the criteria of age to organise classes)

- a reasonable balance in terms of gender, where possible
- the range of Additional Support Needs spread reasonably across classes - these needs should be evidenced through the Child and Young Person's Planning process.

Composite classes will normally be named with the stage of the younger children first and the stage of the older second eg P4/5.

### **Structuring multi-composite classes involving children from more than two stages**

In smaller schools, where the whole school roll indicates that four or fewer class teachers will be allocated, multi-composite classes may be a feature eg P1/2/3. Where possible it is advisable to avoid splitting a year group across two classes, however that is not always feasible.

Multi-composite classes will normally be named with the stage of the youngest children first and the stage of the oldest last eg P3/4/5.

### **Parental Engagement**

Whilst it is a common occurrence, changing classes can sometimes be a source of anxiety for parents/carers and children.

Parents/carers should be made aware of the organisation of learning groupings and structure of classes and the real possibility of change from first enrolling in school ie through the school handbook and as part of P1 induction meetings. They should be made aware of the reasons why a composite class would be required, and that teaching and learning approaches will ensure the class structure does not impact adversely on learning.

Headteachers should keep parents/carers informed of anticipated changes to the school population eg a smaller or larger enrolment than usual into P1, or other matters as appropriate that may lead to the formation of composite classes and/or the restructuring of others.

There are many forms of parental engagement. In addition to working through Parent Councils, schools may choose to communicate via newsletters, informal chat sessions, and other opportunities for communicating information and responding to enquiries.

When engaging with parents and carers, either collectively or individually, headteachers should make it clear that they are not consulting parents/carers on the formation or population of the composite class. They are informing parents/carers about the educational and management basis for the decision and seeking to reassure parents/carers if they have anxieties in relation to their own child(ren) or on a wider basis.

For children who have additional support needs, the Child/Young Person's Planning process offers an opportunity for parents to discuss and plan for changes, taking into account the child's individual learning needs.

Parents/carers of children affected by the creation of composite classes should be informed of the reasons for the formation of the class and the class their child(ren) will be placed in. If a parent or carer has a concern about the class allocation for their child, they should be invited to share that concern with the school's headteacher.

If a parent or carer has concerns about whether a child's learning needs will be met in the new class, then those concerns should be taken to the headteacher who will be able to explain how the school will organise teaching and learning to meet the learning needs of that child in the coming session.

The headteacher should also listen to parents/carers' concerns about specific matters, for example their children's friendships within previous and the prospective new cohorts and reassure them about how this will be monitored within the new arrangements. **Social groupings and friendships are not criteria for populating classes.**

### **Support for Children**

Headteachers recognise that change can be unsettling for some children and they will work with class teachers to talk to children about moving classes, providing reassurance and addressing any concerns that children may have.

Children will be supported through the transition process with regular wellbeing check-ins during the first few weeks of the new term. Throughout the year, there will be opportunities for whole year groups to be together for example, at break and lunch times, clubs, events and school trips. The retention of existing friendship groups will be encouraged, as will the formation of new relationships.

Children who have additional support needs will have the opportunity to discuss and prepare for any changes that may affect them through the Child/Young Person Planning Process.

### **In the event of a disagreement between parents/carers and the school about class allocation**

If having done all of the above, a parent or carer continues to be of the view that a headteacher has not followed the appropriate guidance in structuring the classes in the school, then concerns should be addressed to [FBSSchools@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:FBSSchools@pkc.gov.uk) who will forward to the school's Quality Improvement Officer for review.