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East Dunbartonshire Council

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EDUCATION (Update June 2015)

COMPOSITE CLASSES

A Guide for Parents





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Dear Parent / Carer

This information leaflet attempts to answer questions that parents regularly ask about composite classes.

If you require additional information, please contact the Head Teacher or a member of the management team of your child's school.

Yours faithfully

JACQUI MACDONALD

Jacqui MacDonald
Chief Education Officer

What is a composite class?

Primary schools have pupils at seven broad year stages, primary 1 to primary 7. A composite class is composed of children from more than one stage/year group, e.g. a primary 2/3 composite class has children from both primary 2 and primary 3.

Does the Education Service have the authority to form composite classes?

Yes. The Scottish Government acknowledges composite classes as a method of class organisation available to Head Teachers. Nationally, there is an agreement that composite class size should not exceed 25 pupils.

Why are composite classes necessary?

There are three main factors that affect the class organisation within a primary school.

1. Staffing complement

The number of teachers allocated to a school generally depends on the number of children on its roll.

2. Class size limits

In Scotland, class sizes are limited as follows:

Single Stage Classes:

- Primary 1 25 pupils
- Primary 2-3 30 pupils
- Primary 4-7 33 pupils

Composite Classes:

- Primary 1-7 25 pupils

3. Accommodation

The number of classes formed can be affected by the number of rooms or bases available for teaching purposes.

How are children identified for a composite class?

In forming a composite class a Head Teacher will take into consideration the following factors:

Ability Working Groups:

It is normal to identify a group of children who are of similar ability within their stage and who the teacher feels will work well together. This helps to reduce the range of different abilities in a composite class.

Age/Maturity:

The same criteria cannot always be used to help establish primary 1 pupils in a composite class. Instead, schools tend to consider age as a probable indicator of maturity, unless there are other known factors such as pre-school reports, comments from parents etc.

How are children taught in a composite class?

In primary schools, children are mainly taught in groups or individually, according to their needs. This principle is central to the development of each child, regardless of whether he/she is in a single stage or composite class. Teachers are trained to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils under their charge. Every class contains children at different ability levels.

How is the curriculum taught in a composite class?

In every Scottish school, the curriculum is guided by a series of attainment targets in all areas of study. This, for many years, has been known as the 5-14 curriculum. However, with recent developments in education, the Scottish Government has introduced a Curriculum for Excellence. All primary schools are now working within the stages and levels of this new system. Progress through the curriculum is determined by each child's stage of development, not by his/her class.

My child is at primary 2 stage and is being placed in a primary 1/primary 2 composite class. How can a teacher settle the new intake without disadvantaging my child?

The Head Teacher will ensure that support, as far as possible, is provided to the class teacher to help settle the new intake. The class teacher will employ strategies such as the grouping arrangements, already mentioned, to ensure the uninterrupted progress of your child's education.

You should also keep in mind that initially the primary 1 intake will attend for a short school day. Consequently, the class teacher has the opportunity to provide even more individual support to the primary 2 pupils.

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. Head Teachers consult regularly with parents regarding their children's progress. Where there are specific concerns about a child's learning or progress, schools have in place systems for consulting or communicating with individual parents on a more frequent basis, if this is necessary.

When will I be informed if my child is to be in a composite class?

The Head Teacher of your child's school will inform you as to the class your child will be in as soon as he/she has finalised the class organisation for the school. Normally this will be from mid-June; however, circumstances may arise where the Head Teacher will have to adjust the classroom organisation to accommodate an unexpected intake of pupils. This can happen at any time of the school year and, by law, the school must provide places if there is the capacity in the school.

If my child is placed in a composite class will he/she continue in that class throughout his/her primary school education?

Schools cannot guarantee whether placing a child in a composite class will continue for successive years or not. As mentioned before, there are many factors that affect the class organisation of a school, including the overall school roll, the school's staffing complement, class size limits and the availability of rooms or bases for teaching purposes.

How do the children maintain contact with children from their own year groups?

Schools take every available opportunity to maintain peer group/social relationships. Your child will continue to meet and interact with previous classmates at social times during the school day. Children, when appropriate, may also attend their own year group events and assemblies.

How do teachers feel about composite classes?

Composite classes have existed nationally and in East Dunbartonshire for many years. Teachers are trained to provide for a range of ability, maturity and personal and social development needs within any one class. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and school review reports confirm that effective learning and teaching takes place in composite and single stage classes across East Dunbartonshire.

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into different community languages.

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