

# **Composite Classes in Primary Schools - A Guide for Parents**

## **Background information**

With over 170 primary schools, the Authority requires to manage teacher numbers within the resources available to it. The Authority must ensure that all schools and communities are treated fairly by a consistent and transparent application of staffing entitlements.

National conditions of service for teachers set a normal maximum number of 33 pupils for single year stage classes in a primary school.

In Highland the maximum class sizes for single year stage classes are:

- P1 - 25 pupils
- P2 or P3 – 30 pupils
- P4, P5, P6 or P7 – 33 pupils

Composite classes, where two or more age groups are taught in the same class, have a maximum capacity of 25 pupils unless more than one teacher is allocated to the class.

## **Questions and Answers regarding composite classes**

### **What is a composite class?**

A composite class is a class where children of two or more stages are grouped together (e.g. P1/2, P4/5/6 etc).

### **Why does my child's school have composite classes?**

Almost two thirds of schools in Highland have school rolls of less than 100 pupils, so there is no alternative but to create one or more composite classes. Composite classes are formed because of the way in which the pupil roll is configured in any given session (i.e. the numbers of pupils in different year groups). It is not uncommon for this situation to change from year to year as the sizes of year groups can vary quite dramatically. Essentially the majority of primary schools in Highland including large primary schools have composite classes.

### **Do composite classes have fewer pupils in them?**

The maximum size of any composite class will be 25 pupils, whereas the maximum size of a P2 or P3 class will be 30 pupils and a P4 to P7 class will be 33 pupils.

### **How is a composite class formed?**

Class Teachers and the Head Teacher monitor each child's progress through continuous assessment systems throughout the year. The Head Teacher will consider the configuration of composite classes to ensure the best learning and teaching experience for pupils in their school.

## **How are children identified for a composite class?**

In forming a composite class, the Head Teacher will discuss prospective class lists with the child's current class teacher or early learning and childcare practitioner.

The initial criteria looked at will be pupils chronological age. However it is important Head Teachers are provided with as much flexibility as possible, therefore they may consider other key criteria such as:

- Educational development
- Attainment levels
- Additional Support Needs.
- Personal and social development
- Gender (to ensure a reasonable balance in the class where possible)

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

The Head Teacher will inform you about your child's class as soon as they have finalised the class organisation for the new school year and this would normally happen prior to the summer holidays. However circumstances may arise where the Head Teacher will have to adjust the organisation of classes at the start of the new session to accommodate a change in the projected school roll. When classes have been finalised in August there will be no further change to the class organisation for the remainder of the session.

## **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. If you have any concerns about composite classes which are not covered in this information sheet please make an appointment to speak to the Head Teacher.

## **If my child is placed in a composite class will they continue in that class throughout their primary school education?**

Not necessarily. Classes are reviewed annually in line with roll projections for the coming session and the staffing allocations made by the Local Authority. The Head Teacher will, at the earliest opportunity, inform you which class your child will be placed in.

## **If my child is placed in a composite class will there be opportunities for my child to continue to work and socialise with the friends they established at previous stages of the nursery or the school?**

Your child will continue to meet and interact with previous classmates at social times during the school day or during class time through teaching arrangements. Where possible we may provide opportunities for the children to work together on collaborative projects and events as a whole year group.

## **Will my child's friendship grouping change?**

This may well be the case but it could equally well happen that new classes are formed without the requirement of composite classes. Although care is taken in allocating pupils to classes, that their social needs are considered, in general terms it is likely to be good for children to experience classes with different pupils so that their circle of friends can be

extended. Certainly when pupils transition to secondary school new friendship groupings are formed in different subject areas and this situation is welcomed by most children.

### **Will my child be held back if they are placed in a composite class?**

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that being in a composite class has any detrimental effect whatsoever on the education of children. Educational research suggests pupils in composite classes are not disadvantaged nor do they experience poorer outcomes.

All teachers are aware they must cater for the needs and abilities of all pupils in their class. Learning and teaching in primary schools is delivered to ensure work is tailored to the needs and current achievement levels of individual pupils. The stage, range of abilities and range of needs of all children are taken into consideration when planning the curriculum. All classes are in effect 'composite' classes.

Teaching is mostly undertaken in small groups and it is as easy to form groups with similar existing achievement levels in a composite class as it is in a non-composite class. Schools will plan the educational experiences for pupils in all classes in ways which ensure progression and continuity.