

# Composite Classes

## GUIDELINES

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### What are composite classes?

- Primary Schools have pupils at seven year stages, P1 to P7. A year stage can therefore be defined as a group of pupils entering primary education at a common date.
- Composite classes occur where children from two or more year stages are grouped together in the one registration class.

### Why are composite classes formed?

- Schools receive a basic complement of teaching staff in accordance with the total number of pupils on the roll. No account is taken of the way in which pupils may happen to be distributed across age bands. Schools may, however, on occasions receive additional staffing in accordance with the council's strategy.
- The national conditions of service for teachers currently set a maximum number of 33 pupils for single year stage classes in primary schools and a maximum number of 25 pupils for classes of more than one year stage. North Lanarkshire is currently working to the proposed contractual maximum of 25 pupils in P1, 30 pupils in P2-3 and 33 pupils in P4-7.
- It is, therefore, normally possible to form single year stage classes when the number of pupils at each year stage is the contractual class maximum or below, or a multiple of the appropriate maximum. Where numbers are very small or where they are slightly larger than contractual size, it is usually necessary to form composite classes, perhaps at several stages.

### The formation of classes, including composite classes

- The authority subscribes to the view that a number of professional considerations should be borne in mind when considering the classification of classes. In particular consideration should be given to ensuring that due account is taken of available resources of personnel for the effective management of the school. It is important

for learning and teaching in the school as a whole that class classification allows for effective deployment of promoted or promoted and specialist staff together with the effective use of resources and teaching space.

### Selection of pupils to classes, including composite classes

- In the formation of new classes full account must be taken of existing successful groupings of pupils. Schools should use language and/or mathematics groupings as the baseline for decisions as to which class children are allocated. Within this broad guideline a language and/or mathematics working group could be defined as:
  - A number of pupils of broadly the same attainment who have shown the capacity of working well as a learning group
  - The use of language and/or mathematics working groups as a criterion carries particular advantages
- Working groups ensure the continuity and progression appropriate to the ability and aptitude of the children.
- Cohesive class groupings will largely be kept together thus minimising concerns for pupils and their parents.
- By implication the use of language and/or mathematics working groups as the guiding principle will mean that account can be taken of a balance of ability groups across the classes thus reassuring parents that no pupil is being discriminated against e.g. "kept back" or "pushed on" inappropriately.

### Final responsibility for decisions on class formation

- Responsibility for the decision on class classification rests with the head teacher who must be able to produce documented educational and organisational evidence to support final structures.

- Head teachers should consult with promoted staff and teachers to inform the final decision on composite class formation.
- Where any extreme organisational difficulty exists head teachers should make contact with Education headquarters.

### **Communication**

- Openness with parents is vital to ensure their understanding and support.
- Staff, parents and pupils must be informed about class formation and where appropriate, the criteria used for allocating pupils to classes. This is best done in June.
- Information relating to the criteria used for class formation should be in every school handbook.

### **Head Teacher's Role**

- Incorporate the criteria for structuring classes in the school handbook.
- Make available any authority guidance, including the attached advice leaflet, for parents, on the formation of classes.
- Inform parents of likely re-classification of classes at the earliest possible opportunity to allow for appropriate discussion to take place.
- Inform Education headquarters of ongoing developments in relation to the formation of classes.
- Monitor planning, programmes of study and assessment to demonstrate equality of provision across all classes.

### **Good Practice**

- The delivery of the curriculum in composite classes is the same as that in classes of a single year stage i.e. Curriculum for Excellence and school programmes of work to support planning for children's development in all

areas of the curriculum.

- As in classes of a single year stage pupils will work in social groups, mixed ability groups and ability groups according to the tasks in which they are involved and the teaching methodologies employed. Effective management of personnel, resources and teaching space are critical in the final decisions on class classification and organisation.
- In particular head teachers should ensure that promoted staff are deployed to the benefit of the whole school and that teachers with particular skills, such as Principal or Depute Head Teachers, are available for the benefit of as many pupils as possible.
- Head teachers should consult with promoted staff and teachers at parallel stages to make decisions regarding the curriculum content, effective grouping and organisation for teaching. Consultation should ensure that pupils in composite classes undertake programmes of study which are demonstrably equivalent to those followed by pupils in single year stage classes.
- When referring to composite classes, Head teachers and teachers should always make positive statements regarding decisions taken on class formation.
- Do not use statements such as: "we have avoided making composite classes this year" and "we try not to have children in a composite class in two consecutive years".
- Using such statements implies that children in a composite class are necessarily disadvantaged. This is not the authority view.
- The school procedures for assessment, recording and reporting should be followed for composite classes and many issues surrounding pupils in such classes addressed in the normal manner.