

Composite Classes in Shetland

A Guide for Parents and Carers



Composite classes are an important part of our education system and are a successful method of managing learning and teaching in many schools across Shetland.

Composite classes are common throughout Scotland. In Shetland around 90% of Primary schools have composite classes. A composite class is when two or more year stages are grouped together.

What is a composite class?

For example, pupils from Primary 1 and Primary 2 may share the same classroom and therefore will be a composite P1/2 class. In some schools three or four stages may share the same classroom, sometimes referred to as a multi-composite class. In remote schools with a small numbers of pupils on the school roll, all children from P1-P7 will share the same class and will be taught by the same teachers.

Smaller schools have always provided appropriate learning and teaching opportunities and maximise the benefits of multi-stage classes.

How many classes should my school have?

In single stage classes, the maximum number of pupils should not exceed:

- 25 pupils in Primary 1
- 30 pupils in Primary 2 and 3
- 33 pupils in Primary 4, 5, 6 and 7

The maximum number of pupils in a composite class, irrespective of year stage is 25.

In Shetland, our policy is that a P1-7, one-teacher, school will have a maximum size of no more than 19 pupils.

The number of children in a school and at each stage varies from year to year. The projected school roll for the catchment area (total number of pupils) is used to predict how many classes there will be in schools each year. The local authority provides a teaching compliment based on the overall school roll, rather than of the number of pupils in each year group.

Sometimes a stage may be split, for example, a school may have a P1/2 and a P2/3. The objective is exactly the same, to create the best environment to allow every child to flourish. Split classes come together as often as possible during the school year in class times (such as on sporting events, educational visits or when visitors are in the school) and will have the same opportunities as always to meet and mix with peers socially in break times.

How does the school decide which class my child will go in?

Children are the most important consideration in the school and you can trust that the Head Teacher and staff will make every effort to ensure that class structures take the individual needs of all children into account. Discussions with Class Teachers and any other relevant agencies are important to allow the best possible solution for the overall balance of the class.

Factors that contribute to decisions may include:

- Children's age and development
- Existing successful groupings of pupils (such as literacy or numeracy groups)

In Scotland, the curriculum is based on experiences and outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence. Making progress is not determined by the child's class but by their stage of development. Teachers are personalising learning all the time, regardless of which composite class they are in. This is also true for schools with single stream classes i.e. no composite classes. This includes finding ways to support children when they need some extra help and to challenge children when they are ready to progress.

Teachers and support staff are well trained to meet the needs of every pupil in their care.

When will I know which class my child will be in?

Normally, classes will be formed at the end of a school year to plan for structures in the new school year. Occasionally the planned arrangements for composite classes require change. For example if new pupils move into the catchment area it may alter existing composite class configurations.

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

No. The management of class organisation in schools is the responsibility of the Head teacher in consultation with staff.

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

If you would like to view this information in a different format or language please contact:

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