

Reconstitution of Classes

1. Rationale

Principals and teachers are often concerned about the uneven mix that can sometimes occur in classes and which can have unsatisfactory consequences for everybody. It is also possible that, in a large school, children can go on to secondary school without ever having the opportunity of getting to know many of the children from their own year. The management team at Réalt na Mara G.N.S. have worked out a system of reconstituting classes where necessary. The process is time consuming and depends largely for its success on the teachers who designed it, but it is widely accepted to be very worthwhile on many fronts.

The following are the main benefits that would flow from the reconstitution of classes:

- Children would get the opportunity over the remaining years of meeting and getting to know all the children in their own year. It is very important for the social development of each child and links into the SPHE programme.
- It would be a good preparation for secondary school, as it would help the children to get used to change within a safe environment, and with the support of friends.
- When the children move on to secondary school, they would have a better chance of being in the same class as children they knew well and from whom they could get support and, with whom they would find it easy to form friendships.

Method for Reconstituting Classes

- Early in the second-term, the SPHE programme has a focus on 'Friendship' and teachers teach a series of lessons on the importance of friends and what friendship means. At the end of this process every child fills in a personal 'Friendship Worksheet', where they write the names of their 'Best friends' and their 'Other Friends'. Teachers keep these worksheets in case questions arise later
- At the start of the third-term, using the worksheets and the information from the standardised test results, each teacher divides their class into four [or three] co-operative learning groups of approximately 6/7 children. Each working group should have the following elements:
 - a) A good balance of abilities according to Drumcondra Standardised Tests.
 - b) At least **one best friend** and **two other friends** for each child, with this information coming from the worksheets.
 - c) Children with behavioural/emotional problems in different groups where possible,

but always with some friends.

- The children work co-operatively in these groups for the third-term, get to know each other and get used to working together. The teacher can make some changes to these groups initially if there is good reason, but the three elements listed above must be maintained.
- In June, the teachers come together for 'class formation' meetings.
- Class lists are finalised at the end of this process. Children and teachers know their new classes by the end of the school year before they go on holidays.
- Parents know that this process is carried out with great care and professionalism, and that the interests of every child carefully considered. Children adapt to it very easily, become very open and socially flexible.

The system should be evaluated annually by the teachers and changed slightly if this is seen to be necessary. The original method may change somewhat as fine-tuning takes place. It then becomes accepted by the entire school community. It should be mentioned in the school information booklet so that parents are fully aware of the system when they enrol their child in the school.

Reviewed & Signed: September 2013.