

The Formation of Classes in Midlothian Primary Schools

This leaflet is designed to help parents understand why children are sometimes placed in a composite class where children from two or more stages are grouped together e.g. P2/3 or, in some smaller schools, P4/5/6.

Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 as amended set a normal maximum number of:

- 25 pupils in a P1 class
- 30 pupils in P2 & 3 classes
- 33 pupils in P4-7 classes
- 25 pupils in composite classes

when taught by a single qualified teacher.

1.Q *Why are composite classes necessary?*

A Each school receives an allocation of teachers, including the Head Teacher, based on the number of pupils in the school. Head Teachers are required to organise the pupils into classes, according to the staffing allocation. Composite classes are formed when the number of children at a year stage is greater than that allowed, or where the number is much smaller than the number allowed. For example, a school might have 18 pupils in the P5 year group and 36 pupils in the P6 year group. As there are national agreements regulating class sizes, it would not be possible for a Head Teacher simply to make a P5 of 18 pupils and a P6 of 36. Instead he or she would form a composite class of say, 18 P5s and 6 P6s together with one teacher and the remaining 30 P6 pupils forming another class with a different teacher. Normally composite classes will have a minimum of 4 pupils from any one stage.

2.Q *How are children allocated to classes?*

A The allocation of pupils to classes will be carried in accordance with Education, Communities and Economy Directorate policy. Experience suggests that this is best achieved by the application of age as the main criterion. Head Teachers also have flexibility to respond to specific circumstances in their own schools.

3.Q *How many classes are there in primary schools in Midlothian and how many of these are composite classes?*

A Each year there are around 270 classes in Midlothian primary schools, and around 70 of these are composite classes.

Most of the composite classes include pupils from 2 year groups but in some of our smallest schools there may be pupils from 3 or more year groups.

4.Q *Are composite classes detrimental to the progress of children?*

A No. Children already work in groups according to their stage of learning. All children are individual and learn at their own rate. Children in composite classes continue to work in the same way.

5.Q *When will I know what class my child has been allocated to?*

A You will be notified in writing by the Head Teacher about this before the end of the summer term. Class composition in a school can change before the start of the new school year due to changes in pupil rolls and/or staffing.

6.Q *What if I have concerns about the fact that, for example, my child is separated from his or her friends through changes in class allocations?*

A Children, and particularly young children, quickly make new friendships and can cope with changes.

Additionally, however, the school will provide a range of opportunities for social interaction within year groups ranging from informal contact in the playground to team games and shared learning activities.

The Head Teacher will fully explain the policy and practice which is operated in your child's school and, if necessary, will meet with you to discuss any specific concerns which you may have. The Head Teacher can explain:

- (a) how the allocation of classes is consistent with the school's assessment of pupils in terms of abilities or social groupings;
- (b) how social contacts within year groups are maintained;
- (c) any other relevant factors, such as building design, which influence the formation of classes.

7.Q *Who decides on the formation of classes in schools?*

A Head Teachers are responsible for the management of their schools within a framework of guidance provided by the Children, Young People and Partnerships Directorate. This extends to the formation of classes and the Directorate would only be involved where the policy framework is being questioned.

8.Q *How can I check on my child's progress?*

A All Head Teachers should ensure that parents have information about the curriculum and about the target levels to which children are working.

Teachers assess pupils' progress and achievement in relation to experiences and outcomes specified in the curriculum guidelines. The major purpose of assessment is to identify strengths and next steps in learning to ensure effective progress. Teachers record progress and report on this to parents via parent consultation meetings and annual reports.

At any time, parents can ask to discuss their child's progress with teachers and/or promoted staff. A child's progress should not be influenced by being in either a composite or a single stage class.

Fiona Robertson
Executive Director, Children, Young People and Partnerships
Midlothian Council
Fairfield House
8 Lothian Road
DALKEITH
EH22 3ZG

**Midlothian Council
Children, Young People and
Partnerships**



The Formation of Classes in Midlothian Primary Schools

This leaflet is designed to help parents understand why children are sometimes placed in a class which has in it children who may have started school in different years.