

# **St. Clare's Primary School.**

## **Policy on the Retention of Pupils in the same grade**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy was developed by the staff and Board of Management (B.O.M.) and staff of St. Clare's P.S.

- 2.** This policy is set out in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills recommendations in relation to the retention of pupils in the same grade, in particular Circular 32/03. The B.O.M. trusts that by so doing parents will be assisted in relation to retention matters.
- 3.** The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the School Principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from this policy.

### **Rationale**

The B.O.M. and staff deemed that this policy was necessary for the following reasons: -

- Clarifying the exceptional nature of a pupil being retained in a class (repeating a class)
- Outlining the D.E.S. position regarding the retention of pupils in the same grade
- To help maintain class size in line the D.E.S. guidelines regarding Pupil Teacher Ratio
- Outline the procedure and timeframes involved in St Clare's P.S.
- Having a documented procedure in place ensures that all pupils are treated fairly and equally.
- Such a procedure also ensures no exceptions or discrimination is possible
- Children are not entitled to an automatic right to repeat a class. Children repeating a class is exceptional not the norm.

### **Relationship to school ethos.**

St Clare's P.S. is a Catholic co-educational primary school. The school has a catholic ethos and models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The school aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all pupils; cognitive, intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people and promotes a Christian philosophy of life. It is felt that implementing a policy that is fair and non-discriminatory would only serve to complement the scene of equality that is promoted in the school.

## **Content Background**

In line with D.E.S. guidelines, St. Clare's P.S. recognises that the primary school curriculum is designed as an eight year course, including a two year infant cycle followed by six years in standards from first to sixth, with children progressing to the next grade at the end of each school year. The primary curriculum is flexible and child-centred, and can be adapted to meet children's needs.

Considerable support is provided for S.N. pupils in St. Clare's P.S. including:

- LSRT support teaching and special needs assistants (as per DES provision). These supports are based on the individual child's needs and are subject to D.E.S. sanction. These provisions enable pupils to make progress, in keeping with their needs and abilities, and to move consecutively through the 8 class levels in the school along with their peers.

The promotion of pupils to the next standard will normally take place at the beginning of the school year.

### **Retention of Pupils.**

In St. Clare's P.S. children will only be allowed to repeat a year for educational reasons and in exceptional circumstances. There is no right to retention and school is expected to be an eight year cycle with the appropriate supports provided in line with DES guidelines for those with S.N.

### **What are Exceptional Circumstances relating to Retention?**

Exceptional circumstances will be determined on a case by case basis and such determination shall be judged by the principal following an assessment of

- \*The benefits of retention to the pupil not presently available.
- \*The opinions of relevant staff and parents /guardians.
- \*The educational deficits which can be rectified by retention.
- \*The new / additional professional educational reports advising retention.
- \*The provision of additional supports which had not been previously available to the school which will transform the learning circumstances of the pupil.

This list is indicative and not exhaustive.

In exceptional circumstances the Principal teacher will consult with

- The LSRT teacher/resource
- The class teacher
- The ISMT
- The parent(s)/ Guardians

Following the consultations, if the principal concludes that a pupil would benefit educationally/socially by repeating a grade level this may be considered in circumstances as outlined above.

The rationale for this retention will be clarified for the benefit of the B.O.M in the principals report at the meeting where enrolments/class allocations/divisions are ratified (Normally provisionally in March/finalised in August).

A record of the decision to retain a pupil outlining both the educational basis for the decision and the social implications will be kept on file.

There will be a clear programme outlined for such a pupil that records precisely what new approach will be used for her/him and what its expected benefit will be.

These records will be retained within the school and will be brought to the Inspector's attention by the Principal when s/he visits the school. (D.E.S. Circular 32/ 03)

### **Factors Governing the circumstances surrounding the retention of Pupils**

- Where retention is being considered this possibility will be discussed formally with parents / guardians following due consideration and staff consultation.
- The Principal only will approve any consideration of retention.
- If parents/ guardians do not consent to the retention of the pupil, the pupil will not be retained but the principal will keep a record of their refusal to grant consent on file.
- No pupil will repeat a grade more than once. (Where a pupil has already repeated a class in another school this will be also taken into account )
- Pupils will not repeat either Junior or Senior Infants infant classes. Parents / Guardians will be advised in this regard at enrolment. (In line with D.E. S. Guidelines a pupil cannot be retained in an infant class beyond the 30th June next following the date on which he/ she has: - a) been enrolled in the school for one and a half years or b) reached the age of six and a half years, whichever is earlier)
- Pupils will not repeat 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> classes. (Transfers from other schools in the state will be included in this provision- It is D.E.S. policy that pupils who have completed sixth class in one school must not transfer to another primary school to repeat )
- When a retention may be educationally beneficial the retention will take place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> class setting where curricular objectives are not initially introduced.

### **Timeframe**

In order to achieve class size in line with D.E.S guidelines on pupil teacher ratio the principal must be made aware of all pupils requesting retention in a class in conjunction with all new enrolments prior to 1 March.

As with the enrolment policy should the 1 March fall on the weekend the closing date for the retention of pupils in a class will then be the Friday before 1 March.

The B.O.M. shall ratify any retentions together with new enrolment requests at the March/April meeting and parents will be notified of the decision within a week of this meeting.

Capitation and other grants in respect of such pupils shall not be paid by the D.E.S. In all cases where the proposed retention of pupils has staffing implications the Primary Payments Section of the D. E. S. will be notified.

An additional grade level will not operate through the retention of all or a substantial number of pupils at a grade level.

**Communication.**

Parents of pupils enrolled in the school will be informed about this policy at parent teacher meetings .This policy document is available on request.

**Review.**

This policy will be reviewed by the BOM on a regular basis and/or on the issue of new D.E.S. guidelines on the retention of pupils in the same grade. This policy will be changed where deemed necessary by the BOM.

**Approval and Ratification**

The policy was ratified by the Board of management in May 2009. It was revised and amended in conjunction with enrolment and class allocation/division policy in March 2016.