



1. Would this begin in Sept 2019? **Yes....we hope so.**
2. Will all classes be mixed or just some? **No, not 5th or 6th. 1st Class to 4th Class may be subject to remixing.**
3. What stage of the year would the classes be told they are being mixed? **We would hope to inform parents by May every year.**
4. What criteria would be looked at for mixing classes? **Gender rebalance, additional needs rebalance, personality dynamic rebalance, encouraging inclusion in all classes.**
5. Would there be an imbalance of abilities in the mixing of the classes? **As above**
6. Are we going to be told the reason for the mixing of particular classes e.g. gender etc.? **In most cases it will be based on a mix of the same criteria (see point 4), sometimes the gender balance criteria would be already met.**
7. Will it be done on an annual basis? **A class would be re-mixed only once in their school life. This would occur between Sen infants and 4th class. It would happen once a year, to one class per year. Junior Infants are only re-constituted to free up 3 classrooms for new Infants coming in. This does not come under this proposal.**
8. Who will explain the process to the children...parents or teachers? **This was discussed on the night. As parents will be informed first, we would expect that they will talk to their children. Teachers will then have some gentle discussion with them and talk about the benefits and possible challenges. They will be reassured that they will still have one or two of their best friends in the new mix and that they will probably have at least 10 of their former classmates in the new mix! Also, they will still meet their former classmates in the yard at playtime. The class that is to be re-mixed will engage in Learn Together and SPHE lessons focused on making and sustaining friendships, conflict resolution, recognizing and coping with disappointment, dealing with worries and confidence building throughout May and June leading to a decided remix.**
9. What is the follow up procedure if the mix is not working? If a certain child is not settling into the new mix, can they be moved again? **That child would be scaffolded by social skills interventions e.g. teacher giving the child some group sessions where they can learn some skills for making new friendships and have an opportunity to share their worries within a small group/individual setting. It is unlikely to happen though as all children will have at least one of their former close friends with them in the new mix. If needs are transient the class teacher and parents will**

support. If needs are more enduring, then Support Staff are deployed to support the relevant pupils.

10. How would the process be managed from the point of view of the anxiety of the children? **The children would be assured in advance of it happening and that it is a very natural process in a lot of schools. Children who have been through the process already in our school will be invited to talk to the classes that are to be re-mixed, about their experience of it. The classes to be re-mixed would have opportunities in advance to share activities e.g. co-operative games in the yard or roleplays/table quizzes in the hall.**
11. If it is felt that a class does not need to be mixed as they progress from SI through to 3rd, will they be mixed regardless going into 4th in line with the policy (if ratified)? **Yes, if it is the agreed policy that they would be mixed at one stage in their school journey. Even if the class dynamic is working well we want to provide equal opportunities to all pupils.**
12. If a class is mixed earlier in their school life, but then the balance being attempted is found not to have been achieved, or it is altered through e.g. new students joining, students leaving etc... will the option of another mix be possible? **No....we will only re-mix once.**
13. How will the school endeavour to manage the popularity contest that can take place if children are asked to nominate 2-3 friends? I have heard anecdotal evidence of other schools having children who are on the edge of a couple of groups in classes not being nominated by any group. Similarly, I have heard of children contesting with one another to be chosen by certain peers to be nominated which has caused unnecessary anxiety and turmoil.
The choosing of friends would be totally confidential so no child would know if another child had nominated them or not...the teacher would advise children to be careful in their conversations around this (a bit like birthday invitations and being sensitive not to hurt others feelings).
14. Why the mix of the classes is going to be only one time during the primary school life? I feel that doing it once is not going to help anyone (it's not going to be bad neither for them) but the children are not going to win anything from it, most of them, they won't even remember. If it is done every year, or every two years?
Why do it only once? It is actually difficult enough from an administration point of view to even do it once.....names on Aladdin (school admin software) and handover for teachers etc. are time consuming, especially at the end of year, in June when school reports etc. all have to be written up. We think any school practising this more than once in the journey of the student really give themselves a lot of extra admin work.
Having said that, we agree that it would be great if it could happen more than once, so that, as you say, children will benefit from the practice of making new friends and opening themselves up to new friendships.



But, initially, for a trial period of a few years, we would like to see how it works out with mixing once.

15. Is there anything proposed to enable friends remain in contact during school time next year?

Yard Playtime and other projects/workshops.

16. Have you taken account of children that might be leaving the school (i.e. if you put only one of one e of a child's friends in the same friend in the same class as them and then that friend moves school)?

We have experienced the scenario of a very good friend of a child leaving the school and leaving that friend bereft.....but this actually happened in a class that had not been re-mixed. The two children had been 'besties' from the day they enrolled and had not practised their 'making new friends' skills on anyone else. We had to scaffold this child for a while until he/ she was able to find a new group of friends. This is actually one of the reasons why we think the 're-mixing' would be of benefit, in general. With regard to choosing friends, we agree that the teacher is actually best placed and we think that the teacher would not leave a child in a new 'mix' with just one friend.

17. They would be regrouped once in their school journey and will remain in that grouping going into 6th class. If it turned out that some children reacted badly to the change and didn't settle, would it be an option to review this and regroup again?

No, they will not be re-mixed again. Children who find the re-mix unsettling will be scaffolded by the teacher and support team. This is unlikely to happen, however, as the remix will entail being in a class with at least half of their previous class.

18. Re 'The aims of regrouping I understand the practical reasons for this, but I feel that as regrouping will not work for all children it would be less arbitrary to regroup who and when necessary, due to tension in the group or support needs for example, as opposed to every class once throughout primary school. I also feel that they have opportunity to mix with other children at the times noted in the following slide, 'Activities throughout the year where groups may come together',

We find, in our experience, that despite having socialised in yard etc. with the children from the corresponding class, by the time they reach 5th and 6th, certain cliques and 'friendships' are too bonded to break into. This creates a lot of issues in those year groups. Any teacher who has had experience of many years teaching those classes has also spent a lot of class time listening to and trying to manage friendships/ conflict in 6th class. This impacts on teaching and learning time.

19. Is there any peer reviewed research (preferably from Ireland / UK) to show the advantages and disadvantages of the policy? This would be important in order to make an evidence based decision. Any pros and cons presented appear to be anecdotal.

Not that we know of...it is anecdotal. The evidence we are using is based on our own professional judgements and experience as a teaching community and the shared knowledge of colleagues in other schools.

20. Have you considered working together to identify instances where a particular class dynamic could be improved by moving some students between classes ? i.e. not making it a blanket policy.

No, we try to avoid moving a child from class to class.

21. How many parents are required to vote on this in order for it to be adopted as a policy? Is there a set minimum percentage?

We will let parents know this with the issuing of the ballot.

22. If children are asked to choose friends to mix with them what happens if nobody picks them as their friend or if the friends they pick don't reciprocate? Note that also consider that this can happen to a child who has a broad range of friends and is quite happy in their class – the effect on them could be quite distressing and lead to low self-esteem.

See above (# 10 and 13)

23. Have you considered exploring more innovative ways of collaborating and mixing classes together - similar to the mixing of sixth class to work on a project together? The advantage of this is that you gain a lot of the potential benefits without the risk of causing upset or disruption to students.

Class timetables, teacher's plans, teacher's knowledge of the children and their needs would be factors in this. Very time consuming and not in best interest of the welfare of the children as the teacher would not be aware of the needs of the children in the corresponding class.

24. If this change is to be introduced I would suggest only mixing classes in 1st and 2nd as the children will have time to adjust within their new group over a number of years. Going into a new group from 4th class on doesn't give enough time and could be too disruptive at a key time. It also might be an idea to only introduce this idea for new classes starting from September as children can be prepared for change. Are you intending to poll the children themselves in order to gauge and consider their opinion. What weight will be given to their opinion on the final decision?

We would be informing all new children to the school (and their parents) that this would be a policy. We would not poll children but we do get their opinions through the student council.

25. What structure is in place to support children who become quite unhappy following the change?

See above (# 10 & 13)



26. Have you considered the effect of this on highly sensitive children who require stability more than others and who take a longer time to adjust?
See above (# 10 and 13). It is our hope that such a concept as remixing would actually benefit our sensitive children, providing more opportunities for them to find their voice in a balanced setting.
27. Can you clarify how the new class will be created (I would appreciate if you could rely on teacher's experience and knowledge rather than kid's preference) It would be great to have a balanced class in terms of gender, ethnicity, special needs.... - there are so many different nationalities in ET and this is such an amazing learning opportunity for the kids.
Teachers may do an SPHE lesson which would help the children to reflect on friendships and who they would choose to be in their 'inner circle'the teacher would have the final decision on who would be in the re-mix, taking a lot into consideration and, as you say, the teacher's own experience and knowledge of the children.
28. Can you consider potentially limiting the age group (1st/ 2nd/3rd class) - you could look at starting the mixing classes as a " pilot" for a selected # of classes and subsequently extend it as you gather more feedback/data. I would probably suggest not to do it in junior and senior as kids might not get the full benefits.
Yes, this could be a possibility.