

Glenurquhart Primary School



Composite Classes - A Guide for Parents

Class arrangements within Glenurquhart Primary are dependent on numbers of pupils and the allocation of teachers allocated to the school according to its roll. Often classes are joined to make composite classes where two stages are in the same class.

Background information

All Scottish schools are staffed according to Scottish Government guidelines. This provides the appropriate number of teachers required for the total school roll.

National conditions of service for teachers set a normal maximum number of 33 pupils for single year stage classes in primary school. Composite classes, where two or more age groups are taught in the same class, have a maximum capacity of 25 pupils.

Government guidelines to reduce class sizes at P1 to 25 and P2-3 to 30 in single stage classes has also to be taken into account although it should be noted that these capacities are not set in statute and may be exceeded in single age group classes (up to a maximum class size of 33) should circumstances arise following the first day of a new school session.

In determining the staffing complement of a school, the Education Authority takes into account such national agreements in the context of any proposed housing development within a school's catchment area, the availability of accommodation within each locality and individual establishment.

The realities of local, and indeed national, demographic patterns dictate that composite classes are likely to remain a feature of our school organisation for the foreseeable future.

Some Questions and Answers regarding composite classes.

What is a composite class?

A composite class is a class organisation where children of two or more stages are grouped together e.g. Primary 1 and 2 – P1/2, Primary 2 and 3 – P2/3.

Do Head Teachers have the authority to form composite classes?

Yes. Following the Education Authority staffing allocation being given to the Head Teacher, they will then consider how to form classes complying with class numbers detailed above. The Scottish Government Education Directorate acknowledges composite classes as a method of class organisation available to Head Teachers. Scottish Local Authorities, working with teaching trades unions, have a long-established joint agreement of a maximum composite class size of 25 pupils. The current "Scheme of Salaries and Conditions of Service for Teaching Staff in School Education" outlines the Head Teacher's responsibility to manage class organisation supported by advice from the education authority. On rare occasions, it may be acceptable to exceed this figure when an additional teacher is made available to the school. This would result in a team-teaching situation in any composite class where pupil numbers exceed 25.

How is a composite class formed?

The maximum number of pupils in a composite class is set at 25, except in a team-teaching situation described above. Class Teachers and the Head Teacher monitor each child's progress through continuous assessment systems throughout the year. To ensure the best teaching and learning experience of each pupil, the Head Teacher will consider the organisation of composite classes, according to the needs of each child.

How are children identified for a composite class?

In forming a composite class, the Head Teacher, together with the Principal Teacher will discuss prospective class lists with your child's current class teachers. If pupils have been in a composite class one year and there is a straight class the following session, we will try if possible, to put these pupils into a straight class.

Together, school staff will consider an individual pupil's:

- Educational development
- Attainment levels
- Additional Support Needs.
- Personal and social development
- Chronological age
- Gender (to ensure a reasonable balance in the class where possible)

*****FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*****

Will my child be disadvantaged through being taught in a composite class?

Absolutely not! Traditionally, teachers have grouped pupils of similar ability for learning and teaching purposes within all classes. Most children educated within Highland Council schools are taught in composite classes.

My child is at P2 stage and is being placed in a P1/2 composite. How can a teacher settle-in the new intake without disadvantaging my child?

The Head Teacher will ensure that support is provided for P1/2 class teacher to help settle in the new pupils. The class teacher will employ strategies, such as the grouping arrangements already mentioned, to ensure the uninterrupted progress of your child's education.

How can teachers teach children at different stages in one class?

Teachers are trained to adapt their teaching methods and programmes of study to meet the needs of the pupils. Every class contains children at different ability levels. Teachers may employ a variety of arrangements for their teaching, including individual support, grouping of ability levels, working together at class stages and teaching classes as a whole group.

You can be assured whatever class organisation your child encounters, he or she will have their curriculum tailored to ensure their progress at an appropriate pace for their ability. This is continually monitored by the Head Teacher and regularly discussed with class teachers and support staff.

When will I be informed if my child is to be in a composite class?

The Head Teacher will inform you about your child's class as soon as they have finalised the class organisation for the new school year. We try to do this prior to the summer break where possible however circumstances may arise where the Head Teacher will have to adjust the organisation of classes to accommodate an unexpected intake of pupils. This reorganisation can happen at any time of the year because the school must provide places for pupils within its catchment area if there is an overall capacity within the school.

If my child is placed in a composite class will he/she continue in that class throughout his/her primary school education?

Not necessarily. Classes are reviewed annually in line with roll projections for the coming session and the resultant staffing allocations made by the Local Authority. The Head Teacher will, at the earliest opportunity, strive to inform you which class your child will be placed in.

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

No. The management of class organisation in schools is the responsibility of the Head Teacher. If you have any concerns about composite classes which are not answered through this guidance please make an appointment to speak to the Head Teacher.

If my child is placed in a composite class will there be opportunities for my child to continue to work and socialise with the friends he/she established at previous stages of the nursery or the school?

Yes. Your child will continue to meet and interact with previous classmates at social times during the school day or during class time through teaching arrangements. Where possible we will provide opportunities for the children to work together on collaborative projects and events as a whole year group.

How are composite classes explained to the children?

At times there can be the misconception amongst children that the 'most able' are put into the older classes or, the younger half are being kept back. This will be clarified during an assembly where why and how classes are formed (as detailed in this policy) will be discussed. Children will have the opportunity to ask questions and teachers can explain further in class circle time situations and during transition events. We will also communicate fully with and through the Pupil Council. The importance of working together and building relationships as well as demonstrating our school values will always be encouraged.