

4th Statement on School Planning.

Under the terms of the EDUCATION ACT 1998, Section 21 sub-sections 1-4 the Board is required to ‘make arrangements for the preparation of a School plan’.

The Board has developed a plan under the DEIS Scheme. It has been prepared collaboratively based on the views of all the partners. (parents, children, teachers, parents association, and Board of Management.) This work has been ongoing since June 2007.

In light of the Croke Park Agreement 2010 and in view of the recommendations of the WSE report from February 2011 it is appropriate to consider the detailed framework which makes clear how Scoil Mhuire planning, organisation and policy development takes place.

1. A framework for curricular planning, organisation and policy development:

In order to achieve a collaborative culture in the school where there is opportunity for teachers and all members of the school community to have input, co-operation and flexibility among staff and between partners is critically important.

The development process must be practical, relevant and useful. It should ideally have input from all the education partners [i.e. the Teachers, Staff, Parents Principal and the Board of Management]. It should clarify and facilitate the achievement of the ‘*Aims of Our school*’ .

The framework outlined here is intended to

- a. ensure efficient and effective collaborative planning.
- b. minimise interference with direct instruction time for pupils.

It recognises however that while direct instruction and teacher contact plays a vital part in children's learning there will also be times when pupils can constructively and usefully work independently within certain defined situations. This asserts the value of activities for children such as singing, game playing or video watching or independent reading and writing etc. These can be undertaken by children without the need for close involvement of class teacher. They can be organised for groups that are bigger than the normal class size. In order to facilitate planning time arrangements other than standard supervision arrangements are made.

2. Standard supervision arrangements.

For the purposes of providing supervision and instruction children are divided into classes of approximately the same size. See *'Policy for the placement of children in classes.'* It is useful to note that the school is organised into four classes at each of the class levels. The numbers in classes is based on the most recent staffing schedule issued by the DES.

Rooms 1, 2, 3, 4, accommodates second class

Rooms 5, 6, 7, 8, accommodates first class

Rooms 9, 10, 11, 12, accommodates senior infants

Rooms 13, 14, 15, 16, accommodates junior infants.

3. Incidental supervision arrangements.

It is standard practise that class teams work together but also for convenience within the team's rooms, teachers in the closest adjacent rooms will generally collaborate for incidental supervision purposes as follows:

The teacher will go to the teacher beside them or the teacher across from them.

Where a teacher must leave the room for a short period then he /she will firstly inform their partner of their intended absence. That partner teacher will keep an

occasional eye on the behaviour in the classroom of the colleague next door. A cause for concern here lies in the proximity of teachers in rooms 3,4 5,6 11,12 and 13,14 to one another. This concern can be addressed to some extent by ensuring that

- a. children understand how to behave when teacher is out of the classroom
- b. children are engaged in worthwhile activity before teacher leaves and
- c. children who need direct supervision by an adult at all times are left with the partner teacher. This can also happen for short term disciplinary purposes. (cf *Behaviour Management Policy document*)

In the event of both teachers in the above pairings being absent support will be sought from within the learning support team or from the HSCL Teacher or Principal. This will be undertaken before both teachers absent themselves from the classroom.

The next recourse is to divide the children across the classes as follows

Junior infant children are shared out equitably across junior and senior infant classes.

Senior infant children are shared out equitably across junior and senior infant classes

1st class children are shared out equitably across first and second classes

2nd class children are shared out equitably across first and second classes.

In certain circumstances and only rarely, in cases of urgency, are teachers of infants asked to supervise children of first and second classes. When that occasion arises the teachers in rooms opposite the class teachers carry out the supervision as follows

1 with 16, 2 with 15, 3 with 14, 4 with 13, 5 with 12, 6 with 11, 7 with 10, and 8 with 9.

Classes can double up for certain activities such as going swimming. In some instances four classes from one level are brought together for outings or assemblies for instance.

4. Limits on the length of meetings.

In deciding the length of time a teacher spends at meetings there must be discretion allowed for each teacher. It will depend on several factors such as the degree to which the children in a class can work independently; the standard of work being achieved by the pupils and/or the availability of adequate supervision.

Meetings where the children are being supervised by a teacher who is remote from the classroom should not detain the teacher for any longer than 20 minutes.

Meetings where there are two classes being supervised by one teacher should not last any longer than one hour in the case of 1st and 2nd classes and 45 minutes in the case of Junior and Senior infant classes.

Meetings when children being supervised by non class teachers should not last longer than an hour and a half.

5. Cover for teachers who are absent on E.P.V. days, on tinneas pearsanta, or on sick leave but substitution is not available.

In the event of absence of a teacher without the provision of substitute cover it is necessary to redistribute the classes. The policy for this is outlined in

'Contingency and substitute cover'

The division of classes will be undertaken by a non- class teacher. Normally the division of classes will be undertaken in turn by these teachers. The collection will be undertaken on a rota basis.

This division will be based on an allocation devised by the class teacher. The allocation process will use the class lists to assign a room number to each child. A copy of this list is to be left in the classroom and one in the secretary's office.

6. Dismissal when classes have been divided.

Children from the infant classes are collected by non class teachers on a rota basis beginning at 1.25. The principal or individual without responsibility for a class are normally assigned to this. It is undertaken on a rota basis.

The children are escorted to their rooms Children are then sent home in the normal way.

Children from 1st or 2nd classes are collected at 2.25. The teachers from the infant classes escort them to their classroom. The roll should be checked to ensure that all the children are dismissed from their own classes. Children are then be sent home in the normal way.

7. of meetings.

Teachers must ensure that pupils receive an adequate quota of instruction and engagement in meaningful activities each week. This amounts to seventeen hours thirty minutes for infants and twenty two thirty for 1st and 2nd class children. This does not preclude teachers attending meetings once the children are engaged in meaningful activity. Limits must however be placed on the length of meetings in order to protect the quality of the instruction time for children.

8. The judicious use of assembly time and eating time.

One hour and forty minutes each week is allowed for assembly time in schools. It is current practise that teachers instruct the children for at least one hour and fifteen minutes of that time. This can facilitate a significant number of short planning meetings which are required in the school.

9. Meeting arrangements:

There will be eleven staff meetings in the school year two in the month of September and one each month after that. Dates for staff meetings will be decided each year. Meetings will be held after school and will last for no more than an hour and ten minutes. The Department of Education and Skills may from time to time make provision for school planning time.

Fortnightly team planning meetings can be undertaken by the junior infant and senior infant class teachers after the junior and senior infant classes go home. These will continue once a fortnight through school dismissal time of 2.40 to 3.25.

The junior and senior infant class teachers will provide supervision once each fortnight to release 1st and second class teachers. These periods of supervision are a sharing of the responsibility for curricular planning, organisation and policy development. They will function on the understanding that when the class teaching teams rotate, the teachers who have taught 1st and 2nd class will reciprocate.

The fact that there is a judicious use of assembly time ensures that there is no loss of tuition or contact time for the pupils.

It is also fulfilling the flexibility terms of the Croke Park agreement in ensuring an improvement in the quality of service provision.

The addition of 45 minutes per meeting session from the Croke Park hours to these fortnightly meetings will give each team 90 minutes per fortnight to address the organisational, planning and policy development needs of the school.

These meeting times combined with teacher's personal planning time as outlined under rule 126 of the rules for national schools (enclosed) provide a time framework within which school planning can occur for the foreseeable future.

10. Curricular planning:

This planning is the responsibility of each teacher under the terms of rule 126 and is ongoing for each professional as an integral part of their daily work but also takes place mainly:

- a. At the **beginning of the year** in order to facilitate teams to plan for the year's work.
- b. On a **fortnightly** basis as teams co-ordinate work and plan activities for each class group. Team members will decide on the need for these meetings on an ongoing basis.
- c. To facilitate talk, debate and discussion on **new initiatives** such as First steps Reading; Maths recovery; Ceol and others;
- d. Incidentally as needs arise.
- e. As part of monthly staff meetings.

11. The beginning of the year.

On the return of the children to school in September

Junior infant children will be dismissed at 12.00 for three weeks in September.

The primary reason for this is that the children find the work at this point very demanding. They also find the constraints of full class activity very onerous. In

order to ease their transition from home to school it is desirable that the children be dismissed at 12.00 noon.

A secondary and subsequent reason is that it creates the opportunity of teacher availability to facilitate school curricular planning at all class levels. Over three weeks and without including the hour of preparation time normally allowed to infant teachers there is a total of twenty hours of teacher time available to facilitate planning. Divided equally among the four teams each team potentially has five hours available for planning meetings.

This availability requires that the teachers of junior infants supervise each of the other three class groups for blocks of time.

- **2nd class** will have from 1.30 to 2.30 for two meetings in September where Junior infant teachers supervise their classes. The 2nd class teachers will dismiss their own classes.
- **1st class** will have one afternoon where Junior infant teachers supervise their classes. The 1st class teachers will dismiss their own classes. Four members of the Learning Support team will supervise 1st classes for another afternoon to ensure that 1st class get a second meeting opportunity in September
- **Senior Infants** will have two afternoon from 1.00 to 2.40 during the first three weeks where Junior infant teachers supervise and dismiss their classes. Four members of the learning support team will also supervise for one afternoon from 1.00 to 2.40 to facilitate planning in senior infants. These arrangements will be put in place every second day to ensure a spread of supervision time for Junior infant teachers.

12. On a fortnightly (or at intervals) basis to review progress and to plan forthcoming events.

Fortnightly meetings are important to facilitate team planning between teachers of each class level. They are more easily facilitated for the infant teachers as the children go home at 1.40. The last hour is intended as preparation time for the subsequent day. Providing an afternoon for planning once per fortnight facilitates planning and in turn will expedite preparation.

The fact that teachers of first and second have class supervision responsibilities means that some facility for relief must be sought.

The use of an hour to an hour and a half of the time of teachers without direct responsibility for classes provides a solution to this problem.

The solution depends on these teachers being flexible and juggling their workload to facilitate this planning.

In order for this to work they will need to release the 1st and 2nd class teachers once a fortnight from 1.55 to 2.40. The Junior Infant teachers will then dismiss the 2nd class pupils and the senior infant teachers will dismiss the first class pupils in order to allow an uninterrupted meeting for 1st and 2nd class teachers to continue into 'Croke Park' time and conclude their meeting at 3.25.

13. When implementing new teaching initiatives as the need arises.

Where extra meetings are needed the teachers without class teaching responsibility will be asked to supervise classes.

Teachers without class responsibilities have a measure of unpredictability in their work. On some occasions it is difficult for them to provide cover for these meetings and a measure of understanding and patience will be required from all involved.

The principal, learning support teachers, and HSCL teacher will provide this cover for an maximum of one to one and half hours per month between division of classes and supervision for curricular planning.

Supervision sessions will run on Friday afternoons by arrangement with the different class groups. This must be arranged a week in advance and by arrangement with the team members involved.

Week 1 2nd class

Week 2 1st class

Week 3 Senior Infants

Week 4 Junior Infants

As new initiatives develop there may be a need to have meetings between teachers in groups to further discuss teaching methodologies or policy. This discussion can happen at monthly meetings and special meetings referred to above. However on occasion children can be given deskwork to undertake and the teachers meet in the hall while maintaining supervision of the children. The use of classroom assistants or parental volunteers will be considered to facilitate this dimension of planning.

14. Incidentally as needs arise.

Occasionally issues arise which require teachers in class groups to have short meetings in relation to a particular point e.g. arrangements for practises, small disciplinary matters etc. These can occur on the yard immediately after break or in the hall. Children will be given deskwork or reading or playtime during these sessions.

15. As part of monthly staff meetings.

Agendas for staff meetings will be arranged to ensure that there is a balance between curricular planning, organisation and policy development:

There may be an exception to this if there is a matter which will require a full staff meeting. This will be balanced during subsequent staff meetings

16. Policy planning

The Middle Management Team has devised and agreed a strategic plan for policy development entitled '*What policies do we need?*' It currently lists 67 policies that are at four different stages of development. It is envisaged that over the coming two years from 2011 to 2013 all of these policies will be significantly progressed. The methodology will be to have each teacher on the team bring a draft policy to their particular class team for development and approval and then referred to the plenary staff meeting to be proposed to the Board of Management. The Board will refer policies to the Parents' Council or the parent body if it deems that to be appropriate. Once finalised the policy will be posted on the school website and notice of this sent to parents. Parents will be invited to seek a copy from the school office or by e-mail.

17. Details of policy planning.

It is not productive to have the entire staff involved in drafting or amending the details of all policy initiatives. Each class team and the learning support team will develop one policy per term for presentation to a staff meeting for formal approval. This will allow for the development and in due course the revision of policy documents at regular intervals.

Where deemed necessary a representational sub-committee may be formed to prepare work and report to the subsequent staff meeting, board of management meeting or other relevant body. These sub committees will need to meet at certain intervals. The sub-committees will be made up of one member of each class level team, learning support team and special needs assistants team.

These policies will form part of the agenda for the fortnightly team planning meetings. They will be prepared in draft form by individual members of the teaching team and brought to the meeting for consideration.

18.Revision of policies

On an ongoing basis policies need to be revised and refreshed. In order to keep staff up to date there will be a 'Policy of the fortnight' which will be commended for reading to all staff. Each staff member is required to be conversant with school policies and if amendments are needed to e-mail the staff member that drafted with suggested amendments during that fortnight. Recommended amendments will be compiled by that teacher and placed in that policy folder on the server. When the appropriate time for revision of policies comes those suggestions will be considered and the policy adapted where necessary.

19.Organisational planning

Meetings of the in-school management team.

Sub-committees of staff set up to develop policies on particular issues.

Sub-committees of staff set up to plan particular events

Incidental short meetings held at intervals.

Special events such as the Bookweek or the President's visit.

Part of each monthly staff meeting time.

20.Details of Organisational Planning.

Meetings of the in-school management team.

The in-school management team consists of those staff members who hold posts of responsibility. However it is important to remember that staff whether posts of responsibility holders or not should work as a team. Communication among teachers /staff is kept open by issuing copies to all staff of the agenda and minutes of decisions taken. The meetings of post holders are intended to improve team cohesion. They are held at intervals or as deemed necessary. They

will be held from 2.40 to 3.30. The purpose of these meetings is among other things:

- a. to prepare objectives to be achieved through the post holders for the school.
- b. to review objectives on an annual basis
- c. to consider policy initiatives and have preliminary debates on them
- d. to consider roles for new potential post holders.

If middle management team meetings are necessary during school time supervision of the children will be undertaken by other class teachers to facilitate the holding of inschool management team meetings.

Incidental meetings held at intervals.

On occasions pressing matters of importance may arise which require consideration by the team. The teaching team may meet for 5 to 15 minute meetings at the end of break times. The teachers involved must ensure adequate supervision of the children is undertaken during these short meetings.

Announcements and information can be passed on to the staff team at the end of break times. It is important that breaks are maintained as such breaks and not used as meeting time for staff. It is also important that the senior person of a team, or a person appointed at intervals, who has been present for a short staff meeting inform the teacher who is on yard duty of communications.

Part of each monthly staff meeting time.

The monthly staff meeting provides the forum for plenary discussions on curricular planning, organisation and policy development. In general there is a commitment to devoting a balance of time to curricular planning, organisation and policy development . The policy on *'The organisation of staff meetings'* outlines in detail the procedures and practises for staff meetings at Scoil Mhuire Soisearach.

21. Supervision of classes

In situations where a class is being supervised by a teacher other than its current teacher the current teacher is to have meaningful work left for the children.

Work should be prepared with the children in order to allow the supervising teacher the opportunity to continue with their own work. This does not preclude the supervising teacher from teaching some lesson to a class while supervising it. In general the class teacher and not the supervising teacher will dismiss the children at home time.

22. Conclusion.

This framework will be subject to review at intervals depending on the issues and concerns that arise when it is being implemented. Such a review will have input from the teaching staff and will be subject to approval of the Board of management of the time.

End.