

November 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

The School Board and P&C, on behalf of parents and carers, asked for clarity about the process, timeline and policy around how classes are structured and students placed in classes for the following year. It was recognised that this is a responsibility of the principal and staff but that for some the uncertainty about class placements can cause anxiety and uncertainty for the following year.

The staff and I make up the class structure and student placements with consideration for every student. It is a complex and considered process to provide the best education we can within the guidelines and resources available.

Background

PROCESS	TIMELINE	COMMENT
Funding: Schools are resourced on a per student basis with additional funding to the school for students with special needs such as disability, physical disabilities, English as an Additional Language and Aboriginality. In regional schools and low socioeconomic schools additional funding is also provided.	Draft Budget Term 4 (Based on student estimate) February student Census Friday Term 1 Week 2. Final Budget March	About 90% of funding is for staff wages. About 10% for cash expenses including utilities, resources, additional programs, cost centres etc. Funding is determined from the February census and the school is informed early March of final funding for the year
Class Structure: Determined by staff and Principal based on funding available. The school is provided with a planning tool that we can put student numbers, teachers and support staff and budget costing into. This creates a class structure that meets legal requirements and funding. Class structure is set as late as possible	Term 4 Week 7 (May vary if numbers are fluctuating)	There is little flexibility to create smaller or additional classes. The planning tool will often generate classes that are simply unworkable and that we need to adjust. For example a split call with 4 children in one year level and 27 in the other.
Straight or Composite (Split) The composition of classes is largely determined by the number of students in each year level and across the school and funding available	Term 4 Week 7	Most people prefer straight classes however realistically numbers rarely fall to support this.
Class Numbers: Class recommended numbers are set by the Department and Industrial agreements with Unions. It varies considerably from year level to year. Classes can go over recommended numbers by agreement with teachers. We negotiate additional support if this occurs.		Kindergarten- 20 Pre-primary 27 1-3 Straight or split 24 Year 3/ 4 split 23 Years 4-7 32 (Straight) Years 4-7 31 (Split)
Parent input to class placements: Parents are invited to put their additional information or requests to the Principal in writing	End of Term 4 Week 6 – Friday 17 th November	Will still consider late requests up until we put classes together. Parents can always talk with their class teacher and School Leaders if they have concerns. We generally don't make changes once classes are set because of the detailed process we have concluded.

Information used to make Student Placements:	Collected and collated Term 3 and up to Term 4 Week 8	This includes: Parent requests Students friendship socio-grams Academic performance data Behaviour/ attendance Previous placement information Girl/boy balance Teacher judgements
Student Placements: Teachers and School Leaders make up classes (See Policy) and is finally endorsed by the Principal	Term 4 Week 8	Whilst it may seem advantageous to put class lists out before the end of the school year this is not practicable given we often have to make adjustments when Admin return the week prior to students, allowing for new enrolments or students leaving that we were not aware of.
Restructure classes during school year: Fortunately not something we have had to do at Newborough in recent years.	After census in February and when final finances are made available to the school in March	We would only restructure after our finances are established and student numbers warrant. If we had to restructure it would most likely be to provide an additional class. We would look for minimal disruption to existing classes.
Announcement of Classes, Rooms and Teachers:	Booklist Collection day - Monday 29 th January 9:00-11:00am, 2024	Classes, teachers and rooms are placed on classroom doors on booklist day just prior to students commencing

Questions and Answers

What input can parents have with the placement of their child?

Parents are invited to provide additional information the school may not have when considering the placement of their child. This is advertised in the newsletter at the start of term four with all correspondence directed to the principal. The range of information presented by parents varies considerably. Some examples include requests for children not to be with certain other children, preference for straight or composite classes, preference of teachers (or not), friendship groups, academic groups, type of teacher, etc. Whilst we encourage parents not to request certain teachers it is handy to know if there has been a great experience or an issue with a particular teacher in the past. There is a set closing date, however, as long as I receive correspondence prior to placements we use this in our considerations. Once classes are made up it is very difficult to move children around.

Why are there split classes some years and not others?

Split or composite classes are made purely on the distribution of numbers in year levels. Even though one-year level could make up two straight classes we have to consider the whole school. Unfortunately, numbers vary from year to year. The only year level that we can manage with quotas is the non-compulsory Kindergarten year level.

How are decisions made around student allocations to split classes?

At Newborough we endeavour to have homogeneous classes whether composite or straight. That is a balance of academic, social, disability, gender and behaviour. Having said this we do look for students who can work independently as the class teacher needs to work with a range of groups whilst others are on task.

Will my child receive the same amount of assistance in a split class as they may get in a straight class?

The most important factor with any class, straight or composite, is the **quality of the teacher**. At Newborough PS we work hard to have quality teachers who work closely together. All teachers are regularly involved in professional learning to provide consistent, evidence based processes for quality teaching in all classes. Quality teachers provide assistance, as needed, to every student.

In split classes does each year level have their own curriculum or is it the same?

In composite classes students are taught the curriculum appropriate for their year level. Each year level is discrete. Teachers from the same year level work together to provide continuity and consistency for the whole year level cohort. Clearly students get to see what the other year level(s) are doing in their class and this can be advantageous. Teachers may also do similar activities with differing learning intentions. Testing, assessment and reporting each child's progress is against the curriculum for the year level the child is in. Teachers will explain how they operate on Parent Information Night early in term one.

How does the school provide cohesiveness for year groups when split classes occur?

To assist with cohesiveness like year level teachers are provided common Duties Other Than Teaching Time (DOTT) to plan and prepare. Curriculum and pedagogical leadership is provided by level 3, senior teachers and deputies to support continuity for children in the same year level cohort irrespective of straight or composite. Our teachers are very focussed and work closely together.

Can class lists and classrooms be announced earlier?

It would be fantastic to provide class lists at the end of the year so students and parents can go on holiday knowing which classroom, teacher and classmates they will be with. We would love to do this. Unfortunately, we often have to make late changes when new enrolments occur just before the new school year. In my experience it causes a lot more trauma to think you are in one class and it changes over the break.

If you or your child are particularly anxious about this, please let us know so we can help. Similarly, we have some students with special needs that we set up strategies and assurance with parents and child to help with the transition between classes from year to year.

Can we avoid having Pre-primary and Year ones in a split given the PP and ones are in separate areas of the school?

Yes, we make every effort not to have this split. It is not a guarantee but certainly something we try very hard not to have. We also endeavour to have the year sixes, our graduating group, in straight classes. Unfortunately for 2022 the numbers simply won't allow this. We have to be fair to the whole school.

I provide the following article from ABC News Perth, 20 January 2019. It commences with a commentary from a parent at nearby Deanmore PS. The article discusses many of the issues and benefits of split classes and some of the research including meta-analysis done by Professor John Hattie on split classes and the effect on academic performance. John was based at UWA whilst his children attended school in Perth some years ago. It is an interesting read.

[Split classrooms still causing education divide, debate hampered by a lack of student data - ABC News](#)

Class Placement Policy (Reviewed 2023 for 2024)

Purpose:

To ensure classes are formed in such a way as to best meet educational needs of every student within the constraints of the resources provided. Schools are funded on a per capita Student-Centred Funding agreement and must comply with industrial agreements including class sizes.

Rationale:

Class placements are based on professional judgments about meeting a student's educational needs circumstances and interests.

Class structure and placement of students is an operational decision and as such is the responsibility of the principal and those staff who the principal delegates authority.

Process:

- The Administration Team establishes class structure options for the following year based upon anticipated enrolments. This is formula driven using the '*Student-centred funding model, Class Structures & School Organisation*' tool supplied by the Department of Education.
- Parents may submit written submissions with respect to class placements. The submissions must be based on educational reasons, addressed to "The Principal" and marked "Confidential". This is communicated through the newsletter with direction from the principal and a closing date close to when classes are structured and ready and students ready to be placed.
- All written parent requests will be considered based on individual and school needs. There is no guarantee that all parent requests will be met.
- The staff members, currently teaching particular cohorts, confer regarding placements for the following year, taking into consideration the criteria listed below:
 - Classes are to be homogeneous with respect to academic performance, social and emotional development, disabilities and behaviour and gender balance.
 - Social networks.
 - Special needs such as twins, family situation and parent-teacher issues.
 - School Psychologist recommendations.
 - Written parent submissions regarding a student's educational needs.

Composite Classes: will be formed giving consideration to:

- Independent students.
- Students with disabilities.
- Student emotional maturity and behaviour.
- Social development.
- Social networks.
- Previous class placements - Where possible students should not to be placed in composite classes in consecutive years.
- Special consideration such as twins, family situation and parent-teacher issues.
- School Psychologist recommendations.
- Written parent submissions regarding a student's educational needs.

Lists will be submitted to the Admin, including the principal, for final ratification. Lists will be published on the first School Development Day in first term.

Whilst every effort is made to keep class structures and placements stable there may be need to re-adjust classes after the school has final funding confirmation following the February school census.