

# Concept for mixing classes in the SESB classes at Charles Dickens Primary School (after year 2 and 4)

## **a) Why are we mixing the Europe school class groups?**

The European classes in the SESB system depend on a balanced ratio of Partner Tongue and Mother Tongue speakers, i.e. English and German children in one class. Teaching and learning takes place at the European School as a two-way immersion programme. In this model, one native language and one additional language are taught alternately in two language groups. Bilingualism is the learning goal and is maintained throughout the entire school career. Not only the teachers, but also the classmates serve as linguistic role models for the children in the other language group. This gives the children an insight into the culture of the country of the respective partner language. For this reason, the SESB classes depend on language groups of equal distribution for desired cultural exchange and an equal influence in both German and English.

In the past, there has repeatedly been an imbalance in the language groups. The newly introduced admission procedure (two monolingual admission groups and one bilingual admission group, which must then be divided into two language groups) makes it increasingly difficult to achieve a balanced ratio.

For example, the following ratios between mother tongue (MT) and partner tongue (PT) are not uncommon:

10 MT English to 13 PT German or

9 MT English to 14 PT German.

Due to the parallel partner and native language courses and the conditions described above, it is essential that both language groups are of an equal size. We believe class mixing to be a way to solve this problem.

## **a) What are the positive effects of regularly mixing the groups?**

1. The mixing of classes after the 2nd and 4th grades, which is the aim of the CDGS, promotes greater social development. Pupils have to adapt to new classmates, and a new class community has to be formed. This will make the children more flexible and willing to embrace new experiences in future school and life experiences.
2. Due to the small number of mixed classes (2 classes with approximately 50 pupils), there will not be a completely new composition, as a maximum of half of the pupils will leave a class. This means a majority of their class mates will remain with them after the mixing of the classes.
3. The change between the two classes shifts the focus away from the class group to the entire year group. In secondary schools, most pupils from the CDGS return to a single class. The transition is made easier because they already know each other from their previous mixed classes.
4. Mixing classes creates an educational need to coordinate the topics covered within each year group so that, after moving to another class or transferring to secondary school. This will allow pupils to draw on the same level of knowledge. This makes joint learning assessments possible and useful. The resulting need for colleagues working in the same year group to agree on topics and approaches contributes significantly to facilitating and improving work. This will ensure students in all classes get an equal education.

5. In classes where mixing classes is common, it will be easier for newcomers to integrate.
6. For children with challenging behaviour patterns or for pupils who are less integrated into the class community, mixing can represent a new opportunity. In this sense, it may also counteract stigmatisation.
7. Stigmatisation at the level of the whole class can also be prevented in this way. Sometimes children need a break from certain other students.
8. Due to the changed admission procedure, it is often observed that children leave school again in their first year because it quickly becomes apparent that they are not suited to this type of school. Therefore, changing classes after the second year is extremely useful in order to compensate for incorrect classification or an imbalance in class size.
9. Transferring after the fourth year becomes important if several children in a class transfer to a basic grammar school (gymnasium) at the end of the school year, which can lead to newcomers always being admitted to only one class.
10. Furthermore, mixing for educational reasons ensures an even distribution of different learning and performance levels.

### **b) What are some potential reasons against mixing the groups?**

1. Mixing separates friendships.

Pupils will continue to be taught on the same floor in their new classes. This usually affects only a few pupils, as at least 50% of the class composition remains the same. They will still see each other during breaks and at other year group activities (see below).

2. Change causes unrest.

A class is subject to constant change and fluctuation anyway. Children grow older, change, leave the class, new pupils join, teachers change. However, any initial difficulties that may arise can be offset in the first few weeks of the classes concerned by offering more social learning opportunities.

Accompanying measures are conceivable in the weeks before the end of the school year, when the pupils of the two classes see each other more often and have the opportunity to interact. Joint events are conceivable here, for example:

Excursions, collaborative presentations at assemblies, mutual classroom visits to present work, joint activities with native speakers during lunch and free time, coordinated joint activities offered by educators during afternoon care.

3. Parents will attempt to influence the new class composition.

During the discussion at the general parents' conference, the parent representatives emphasised the importance of informing new pupils at the school about the mixed-age classes after the 2nd and 4th school years when they register at the CDGS. Only in this way can children be prepared for the upcoming change in their family environment in the long term. The introduction of mixed-age classes must meet this need of the parents.

New parents of first-year pupils will be informed that mixing will take place at the Open Day, on the website and at the first parents' evening.

The feared interference of parents in the respective mixing process is limited by the procedure described below.

### **c) How will the classes be mixed?**

The classes will be mixed at the end Year 2 and at the end of Year 4. This will only take place at the end of the school year. The initial class mixing will commence at the end of the 2025/2026 school year. This will be followed by the mixing of the 2nd and 4th grades in the 2027/2028 school year.

The concept will only be implemented with classes that began after the decision was made to begin the mixing process (specified above).

The former class teams (teachers and educators) will decide on the composition of the new classes. Parents will have no influence on this. The plan is to mix the classes thoroughly. This means that as many pupils as possible, but no more than half, will be exchanged.

The teachers of the relevant classes will meet in year group conferences in the second half of the school year and discuss possible changes. They will agree on the frequency and timing of the necessary meetings to plan the year group mix of their classes. They will inform the school management about the current status of the plans. The school management will be informed of the exact composition of the newly mixed classes for the following school year before the last month of the current school year.

Parents will be informed in the last week of school which class their child will be attending from the next school year onwards.

The following priorities should be observed in the work of the year group conferences:

1. Pupil numbers:
  - Ratio of native language/partner language
  - Ratio of boys/girls
  - Number of new transfer pupils per class
  - Number of children with special educational needs per class
  - No concentration of individual nationalities
2. Behavioural problems and other issues
3. Attention must be paid to ensuring an even mix of academic ability in the new Year 3 and Year 5 classes.

The experiences of the first round will be evaluated by the school leadership group in consultation with the new year teams of the mixed classes in the first half of the school year. The GK will be informed of the results of this evaluation and will vote on recommended changes to the concept. The GK will forward its vote to the SK for approval of any changes.

A final evaluation will take place in the 2030/2031 school year. By this time, the first classes that were mixed at the CDGS will have reached secondary school. Only after sometime will we be able to determine if this a success.