

Cooperative Learning

One of the strands of the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities aspect of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is “Working with others”. In Kilmoyle Primary School we are committed to enabling our pupils to work independently when appropriate, but also to work effectively in collaboration with others. This is therefore an important element in our drive to become a “Thinking School”.

*“Cooperative learning is an educational approach which aims to organize classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. There is much **more to cooperative learning than merely arranging pupils into groups**, and it has been described as “structuring positive interdependence.” Pupils must work in groups to complete tasks collectively toward academic goals. Unlike individual learning, which can be competitive in nature, pupils learning cooperatively can capitalize on one another's resources and skills (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.). Furthermore, **the teacher's role changes** from giving information to facilitating students' learning. **Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds**. Ross and Smyth (1995) describe successful cooperative learning tasks as “**intellectually demanding, creative, open-ended, and involve higher order thinking tasks.**”*

In our delivery of effective cooperative learning, we utilise Kagan Structures. These structures are based on the PIES principles shown below and enable our pupils to work collaboratively in pairs, small groups and as a whole class.

Positive Interdependence

- The success of the group depends on the contribution of each member
- Pupils feel they are on the same team

Individual Accountability

- Each pupil is required to perform publicly
- Pupils should feel they can't hide

Equal Participation

- Each pupil should have approximately equal participation controlled by time or turn taking
- Pupils begin to feel equal in status

Simultaneous Interaction

- Structures work to maximize the percentage of pupils interacting at once
- Pupils feel engaged

