

Guidance for schools

Deciding on class placements for twins and multiples

March 2014

Educational Psychology Service

"This is a fantastic tool to help parents and teachers make joint decisions about classroom placements for twins, triplets or higher multiples." Keith Reed CEO TAMBA

Tamba

TWINS & MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATION

Background



hackney
learning trust

Local Authorities are required to offer multiples places in the same schools but policies and decisions about whether to separate children into different classes or keep them together vary between schools.

Studies from the UK, Australia and the US suggest schools tend to decide whether twins should be separated without adequately consulting parents (Tully et al., 2004). Decisions to separate twins were often driven by beliefs that separating twins would develop individuality and independence (Gleeson et al., 1990). However, some schools keep twins together because separation might lead to distress and emotional difficulties (Segal & Russell, 1992). Unfortunately, the current research does not provide good accounts of the effects of classroom separation on the development of twins, and there is currently no clear evidence to support the belief that separation provides greater outcomes for individuality. The tendency to treat twins on a homogenous basis can lead to the imposition of blanket policies, which are either inappropriate or ineffective. This highlights the need for schools to work with families on a case by case basis.

This briefing paper provides guidance about how to decide whether twins should be in separate or the same class.

Guidance on Supporting Twins in School

- It is for the setting and parent to decide: schools and other settings should consider each case on its own merits. Parents and schools should make decisions in partnership.
- The focus of support should not be on whether to put twins in separate or same classes but on *how best* to help twins develop to be mature dependents (see table below).
- Decisions on classroom arrangements should be specific to the needs of the twin. Areas of needs to be considered include:
 - Twins' relationship with each other (see Appendix 2)
 - The individual needs of each child (see Appendix 4)
 - Individual views of each child
 - Prior experiences of separation
 - Pre-school experience
 - Twins' social relationships outside the twinship
- Research evidence on the effectiveness of twins being in separate or same classes is inconclusive (see Appendix 1). If in doubt, twins should stay together and the situation be kept under review with parents.
- Any decision should be reviewed regularly.

Best Practice suggestions following a decision to:

1. assign twins to the same class

- Teachers can assign twins to different playgroups or study groups within the same class to give each the chance to meet friends and work with different children.
- Teachers should have separate parent meetings to discuss each child.
- Teacher should discuss about each child's strengths and differences in relation to their peers and not in relation to the other twin.
- Support twins to encourage each other and be pleased when the other succeeds.
- Conduct regular reviews on whether being in the same classroom is appropriate

2. assign twins to separate classes

- Continue to provide opportunities for twins to work together in some situations.
- Plan and implement transition support to help twins adjust to school without their parents and the other twin sibling.
- Conduct regular reviews on whether separation is appropriate.

General best practice suggestions

- Make individual eye contact with each child and address them separately
- Address each child by saying their name
- Expect each child to speak for themselves
- Recognise the uniqueness of each child
- Make sure all staff can tell twins apart (If teachers /staff find this difficult, they should discuss with parents strategies for distinguishing between twins)
- Try not to compare achievement of one twin to the other
- Try not to refer to the children as 'the twins'

Appendix 1

Research Summary

	Reasons for	Reasons against
Same class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is access to support and presence of a familiar face in the new setting to help build confidence (Beuchamp & Brooks, 2003; Webbink et al 2007) • Less comparisons are made between children at home, because they have the same opportunities in class (Jones & De Gioia 2010). • Each receive same teaching style, so less comparison (Hay & Preedy, 2006) • Twins may enjoy being together (Segal, 2005) • In early years such arrangements supports language development (Webbink et al, 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible dominance of one twin • Possible over-reliance of one twin • Potential competition between twins • Such arrangements may not extend the network of peers
Separate class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each engages in activities that develop their personal interests and skills (Segal, 2005) • Each develop their own social networks (Hay & Preedy, 2006) • Teachers are more prone to differentiate to child's abilities (Hay & Preedy, 2006) • Teachers more prone to compare with peer group rather than each other (Hay & Preedy, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should be aware that twins might not have experienced being separated from each other before coming to school. If placed in separate classes, twins starting school would have to deal with separation from their parents and the other twin. • May break the bond between twins • May remove the support of the other twin • Potential short term effects of internalising problems, which disappear in the long term (Tully et al 2004; Van Leeuwen et al 2005). However, no long term effects of separation on externalising problems, internalising problems and academic performance (Van Leeuwen et al 2005)

Appendix 2

The relationship between twins

The relationship between twins can change over time. The school experience should support the development of these changing relationships as they grow.

Type of relationship	Description of relationship	Implications for classroom separation
Extreme individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twins may find their relationship with each other restrictive • Might deny having a twin or have a dislike for each other • Might be opposite extremes to establish individual identities • May have separate friends • Mostly play alone • Does not share twin success • Competitive and might try to dominate over each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might dislike being in the same class or group • Teachers/parents might wish to provide some opportunities for them to work together
Mature dependents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy being together • Function well as a unit or as an individual • Might pursue individual interests and friendships with others • Might have separate and similar friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might be able to cope well in most school situations • Might be happy together or apart from twin
Closely coupled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See themselves as a unit and don't like to be separated • Might respond to each other's names • Might not be able to recognise own image in the mirror • Might have their own language • Might have few friends • Keep in pace with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might benefit from being apart • Might find separation traumatic if they are separated for the first time in school

Appendix 3

1. Resources for parents & teachers

Curtin University – Twins and Multiples - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/>
 Twins & Multiple Birth Association - <http://www.tamba.org.uk/home>

2. References

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Appendix 4

Deciding on class placements for twins January 2014

Together or Apart

A Checklist for parents and teachers of Multiples

Curtin University

<http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/>

“Together or Apart”
A Checklist for Parents and Teachers of Multiples

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This checklist and questionnaire provides a framework for parents and teachers when discussing separation of multiple birth children in school.

There is no simple recipe to decide if multiples should be separated in school. With regard to higher multiples we need to ask, “Who, if any, should be separated from the others?”

Rather than simply focussing on whether or not to separate, discussion between parents and teachers should cover:

- How dependent/independent the children are;
- Social skills and dependence upon adults;
- Previous experience of being apart;
- Language and abilities relative to each other and to their peer group;
- Behaviour at preschool or at school;
- Does one dominate e.g. when reading or telling about events, do they take turns to dominate or none of the children dominate?
- In social situations, does one always hang back?
- Interests at home, at sport and at school;
- Needs for intervention (speech and language therapy, physiotherapy etc.);
- Same or different friends;
- Zygosity and sex; generally girls are closer than boys and MZ are closer than DZ , but there are so many exceptions to any rule!
- Physical development-are they much smaller (or larger) than most of the other children?
- Age of the multiples-is it time for them to try a new experience?
- Feelings of teachers and parents;
- Views of any other professional seeing the multiples;
- Wishes of the children: especially where these differ from each other or from those of the adults.

THE CLOSENESS OF THE MULTIPLE BOND
IS IT DIFFERENT AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL?

When parents and teachers talk about what is best for multiples, it may sometimes seem as though they are speaking about different children. Any child may behave quite differently at home than at school. The following questions deal with behaviours which are often situation-specific and if answered separately by parents and teachers can give some idea of what may be different between the home and school situation. The checklist may be used by parents and nursery staff when considering placement at the start of school or at any stage when during the school year

1. Have you found if one multiple is ill or upset, the other(s) are affected also?

usually	sometimes	seldom	never
Parents			
Teachers			

2. If one multiple is reprimanded do you find the other(s) react(s) or are affected also?

usually sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

3a. Do the multiples combine forces to be helpful?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

3b. Do the multiples combine to be creative?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

3c. Do the multiples combine to be disruptive?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

4. Does one multiple check what the other(s) are getting or doing? (Answer for each child)

Child A often occasionally seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

Child B often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

Child C often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

(apologies to parents of quintuplets or more!)

5a. Do the multiples compare themselves in sports activities?

usually sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

5b. Do the multiples compare themselves in appearance?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

5c. Do the multiples compare themselves in academic performance?

Often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

5d. Do the multiples compare themselves in popularity and peer approval?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

5e. Do the multiples compare themselves in adult approval?

often sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

6. Which of the following characterises competition among the multiples

They compete constantly with each other Parents Teachers
 They co-operate and have pride in each other
 Their competitiveness is healthy
 They compete for adult approval
 They are jealous and never praise each other

7. If one child is obviously more talented in a particular area, the other(s) will opt out

usually sometimes seldom never
 Parents
 Teachers

8. Do you believe the children show a tendency to go to opposite extremes in behaviour, personality, interests (e.g. quiet/noisy; indoor/outdoor; outgoing/shy; placid aggressive)

Yes No
 Parents
 Teachers

9. At present which multiple do you think needs extra help at school in:

Parent Response	Child A	Child B	Child C	Child D
Speech and Language				
Writing				
Reading				
Number skills				
Fine Motor Skills				
Gross Motor Skills				

Teacher Response	Child A	Child B	Child C	Child D
Speech and Language				
Writing				
Reading				
Number skills				
Fine Motor Skills				
Gross Motor Skills				

10. At present what do you think each multiple would prefer?

Parent Response	Child A	Child B	Child C	Child D
To be in the same class				
To be in separate classes				
To be in separate schools				
The children don't mind				
Haven't asked them				

Teacher Response	Child A	Child B	Child C	Child D
To be in the same class				
To be in separate classes				
To be in separate schools				
The children don't mind				
Haven't asked them				

Having completed the checklist consider the reasons for separating the children or keeping them together in school.

Reasons for Separation

Reasons for Keeping Together

Final decision made in partnership with parents and teachers.

We have decided to

because.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Any further action e.g. assessment; involvement of outside agencies.

Date of review:

Signed.....(Parents)

Signed.....(School)

Date