

“Versetzung” in the Sek-I Programme at St. Kilian’s Deutsche Schule Dublin

Preface

The terms “Versetzung” or “Nicht-Versetzung” and their use in the German school system run contrary to the spirit and substance of the Irish Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act 2004¹. Under legislation in Ireland, every child is entitled to education according to their individual needs and potential. In this context, the progression from primary (year 5 and 6) to secondary education (first to Sek-I and then on to Sek-II) may not be determined by grades in individual subjects. For the reason outlined above repeating or skipping a year is not permitted. This means, all students have to be progressed (“versetzt”) and they must be supported through special educational interventions or differentiated teaching to enhance their academic performance.

Therefore, the concepts of integration and inclusion, which are an integral part of the Irish educational system, are contrary to the notion of a “Versetzung” and the restraints it puts on certain children (not) to enter the Sek-I stream. Differentiation and learning support are core-concepts of teaching and learning at every school and thereby all students are prepared for the Leaving Certificate within 6 academic years. If a student is prevented from progressing on to Sek-II because of their poor grades, parents have the legal right to challenge this through the courts and to question the educational provision and support for their child in the Sek-I.

In this context of the application, “Versetzung” must be considered in line with the profile of the school and as the progression into the senior cycle years 11

¹ The Special Needs Act of 2004 is effective since 2016 for all schools in Ireland.

and 12 and, therefore, into the English language curriculum leading to Leaving Certificate.

However, a grade “mangelhaft” in either of the subjects German or History in the Sek-I exams would automatically exclude a student from opting into the bilingual Leaving Certificate programme.

For the reasons outlined above, the following model of “Versetzung” is applicable for the Deutsche Schule Dublin:

1. Range

1.1. In a 12-year school system, Sek-I applies to years 5 to 10. Year 10 has a double function: it is the last year of Sek-I at the same time as it is the introduction into the years leading to “Abitur” at a German “Gymnasium”. At St. Kilian’s Deutsche Schule Dublin year 10 is also used as an introduction to the bilingual leaving certificate.

1.2. Years 5 and 6 are organized as an orientation period. They end with a “Versetzungskonferenz” respectively.

1.3. The integrated teaching of students at “Realschule”-level in all years makes it necessary to differentiate teaching and tasks in class and also have a separate grading scale when it comes to written tests. Students attending “Realschule” will be registered for a “Realschulabschluss” at the end of Sek-I.

1.4. The reports for years 7 to 10 should indicate “Realschule” or “Gymnasium”.

2. Overall principles

2.1. The “Versetzung” or “Nicht-Versetzung” of a student is a pedagogical measurement. Its aim is to maintain the personal learning progress and the academic career of the individual student in accordance with the targets set for the year group as stated in the curriculum. The decision about “Versetzung” has to ensure the learning progress in the next academic year, both for the individual student and the teaching group.

“Versetzung auf Probe” contradicts this principle and can only be granted as a qualified exception. After a 3-month period the “Klassenkonferenz” (a conference held by Sek-I teachers teaching this student) decides about the level.

“Nicht-Versetzung” means going back into the Irish system. All students remain at the school.

2.2. The decision about “Versetzung” will be taken while considering the academic progress of the second half of the academic year. However, the progress of the whole year group will be taken into account. The decision about “Versetzung” will include all marks of Sek-I core subjects (German, Maths, English, Biology, History, Chemistry) as well as the overall development of the personality of a student. To make an adjudication on the academic ability of a student, only subjects that are part of the Sek-I programme will be taken into consideration. Core subjects in the Sek-I programme are of primary relevance for “Versetzung” and will be noted as such on the report.

3. Basic Procedures

3.1. The conference of subject teachers of a Sek-I year group decides for each student if he/she will be “versetzt” (to continue in the year group of the following year) at a specially convened meeting at the end of the academic year. The principal or his/her designated representative is to be head of this conference.

3.2. Subject teachers have to give their final grade in good time before the conference. The grade is the result of an overall assessment that reflects both subject related and pedagogical aspects. The mark should not be given according to a strict mathematical scheme. Therefore, it is not possible/acceptable to base this grade solely on the written results as produced in the “Klassenarbeiten”. It also has to reflect achievements from classwork, the quality of spoken response in classroom dialogue, and other suitable means of measuring academic progress.

3.3. The decision has to be taken by all teachers having taught the student in the Sek-I programme. They have to give their vote. A single majority will do. Should there be a draw, it is the principal who will have the deciding vote.

3.4. Minutes must be written up and record the results of the conference on reports and “Versetzung”. If a “Versetzung” can only take place because a good grade in one subject compensates for a non-satisfactory grade in another subject, this must also be recorded in the minutes. The decision about “Nicht-Versetzung”, which means that a student has to leave the Sek-I programme and

go back fully into the Irish system, has to be minuted stating the reasoning for this decision.

3.5. Jumps in a grade of more than one range must be explained by the subject teacher and this too must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

3.6. Where there is a danger of “Versetzung”, parents of the pupil must be informed 10 weeks prior to the end of the academic year at the latest. This information has to be given in writing. It is called “blue letter” and it must state the subjects in which at this point in time the pupil’s performance is not satisfactory. Should this communication not be received by the parent for whatever reason, one may not assume a right of “Versetzung”.

4. Decisions on academic career

4.1. In years 5 and 6, close contact with parents is necessary to ensure that parents are informed or counselled in due course about development, academic progress and academic career. In October (of 5th and 6th class) parents receive information/a communication about the academic progress of their child. Where problems become evident, parents will be informed in writing and a parent-teacher-meeting will be offered to advise parents on how best to proceed and what options are open to their child.

4.2. At the end of years 5 and 6 the conference of subject teachers of a Sek-I year group give an individual recommendation on the future curricular stream (Sek-I or Irish curriculum).

The following criteria function as underlying principles:

- The academic achievement and also the academic progress, especially in core subjects with a higher number of lessons
- The ability of verbal expression and the ability to think abstractively
- Perseverance and willingness to put effort into classwork and homework
- The level of interest and engagement shown in classroom settings and (if applicable) during extra-curricular activities

4.3. Where the recommendation of the school and the expectations of parents differ, it is first and foremost up to the parents to take a decision. The final classification will be undertaken after half a year. The decision is then taken by the school in line with the probationary process and compliant with the criteria outlined above.

4.4. In accordance with the principle of flexibility in ensuring as many options as possible exist to facilitate change from one academic programme to the other, recommendations to change the academic career can be given by school until the end of year 7.² Such a recommendation is generally proposed at the end of an academic year.

5. Principles governing the decision on “Versetzung”

5.1. Grade 4 or better in all subjects will lead to “Versetzung”.

5.2. A student will also gain “Versetzung”, if his or her academic achievement is

- a) grade 5 in not more than one of the following subjects: German, Maths, English, and if grade 5 can be compensated by grade 3 in one of the other subjects in this range of subjects or
- b) not grade 4 in not more than one of the other subjects or
- c) grade 5 in one of the subjects German, Maths, English, and one of the other subjects, the overall report however shows at least three grades 3, one of them in German, Maths, or English
- d) grade 5 in two of the other subjects, but the grade 5 can be compensated by at least three grades 3.

5.3. Grade 6 in one of the other subjects needs to be compensated by at least three grades 3, one of them in the subjects German, Maths, or English.

5.4. Grade 6 in one of the subjects German, Maths, or English will make it impossible to gain “Versetzung”. A compensation is not possible.

5.5. It is also impossible to gain “Versetzung”, if the academic achievement is graded 5 in more than two subjects or is graded 5 in one subject and 6 in another subject or is graded 6 in two or more subjects.

5.6. When transferring a student into another curricular stream, the regulations of the respective system will apply.

5.7. In instances where extenuating circumstances determine that a student presently doesn't meet the requirements to gain “Versetzung”, “Versetzung” can be granted to the student nonetheless. However, it should be ensured that due to the overall ability for academic performance and the overall progress of the student, successful participation in the following year group can be guaranteed. The decision needs to be unanimous. A detailed explanation needs

² Prior: year 8: changed due to new regulations on the Junior Cycle.

to be minuted. In accordance with the circumstances outlined above, a “Versetzung” is not possible if it refers to progression into the Bilingual Leaving Cert programme, to the successful completion of the Sek-I exams or the transition into the Gymnasiale Oberstufe in a German Gymnasium.

5.8. In relation to the regulations of the Irish Ministry of Education and the concept of inclusion in Irish schools, it is neither possible to repeat a year nor to skip a year of school. Instead, differentiation in the teaching, learning and assessment should be the centre of classroom practice.

6. Non-gradable achievements in individual subjects

6.1. If the academic achievement can't be graded due to reasons for which the student can be held responsible, it will result in grade 6.

6.2. If the academic achievement can't be graded due to reasons for which the student cannot be held responsible, a grade will not be given for the subject and the subject will not be taken into consideration in context of “Versetzung”. The overall principles as listed in 2.1. are to be applied.

(reviewed December 2019)