



Voluntary Smartphone Code (Opt-in Policy: Delaying Smart Phone Ownership Until Primary School Completion)

Introduction: At Scoil an Chlochair NS, we understand the increasing prevalence of smartphones in today's society. While smartphones offer numerous advantages, we strongly encourage parents to consider delaying the purchase of smartphones for their children until they complete primary school (approximately age 12).

This Opt-in Policy has been developed in conjunction with other local primary schools and is supported by our Board of Management and Parent Association.

Dr. Colman Noctor, is a Mental Health Nurse and Psychotherapist with a special interest in Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. He has over 25 years of international clinical experience and his research area is the impact of technology on young people's mental health:

- Getting to grips with the effect of smartphones on education
- Survey: Majority of primary schools have problems with smartphone and social media use outside of school
- Colman Noctor: Why let a tech company decide when your child is ready to own a smartphone?
- Colman Noctor: Is there a right time to buy your child a smartphone?

The National Parents Council has also highlighted the risks associated with smartphone use at a young age - cyber bullying, depression, access to pornographic content, vulnerability to contact from predators and an increased risk of suicide.

In January 2023, a SPHE teacher, Eoghan Cleary from Temple Carrig was interviewed on the Ryan Tubridy show and shared his research findings regarding some of the detrimental impact smartphones is having on our children.

Why has it been introduced?

Over the past few years, concern around young children having unsupervised access to the internet and social media has grown considerably.

There is an increasing body of evidence which has shown the detrimental effects of this excessive use of smart phones on the developing brain especially on children under the age of 14 - socially, emotionally and educationally.

Dr. Mary Aiken, Ireland's foremost cyber safety expert stated back in 2018 that smartphones should not be used by children under the age of fourteen.

The Voluntary Code

We believe that this voluntary code offers parents and guardians who are concerned about their child having personal access to a smartphone, a tool to help address the above issues.

Collective agreement to hold off on smart devices will reduce peer pressure and provide parents with the data to respond to possible pressure from their children for example: *85% of 4th class parents have opted into the "Smart Device Voluntary Code".*

Additional resources:

- Psych Central: How Smartphones Affect Child Development
- Webwise : information and support you need to ensure your child makes the most of their time online
- CyberSafeKids

Benefits of Delaying Smart Phone Ownership:

• Enhanced Social and Emotional Development

Delaying smartphone ownership can foster better social and emotional development in children. It affords them the time to develop essential face to-face communication skills and build stronger interpersonal relationships without digital distractions.

• **Improved Concentration and Academic Performance**

By postponing smartphone usage, children can focus on their studies, leading to improved academic performance. Reduced screen time can enhance concentration and critical thinking skills

• **Reduced Screen Time**

Delayed smartphone ownership limits a child's exposure to excessive screen time, reducing the risk of negative effects such as sleep disturbances, decreased physical activity, and cyberbullying.

• **Safer Online Experience**

Young children are vulnerable to online risks. Delaying smartphone access allows parents to educate children about responsible internet use and gradually introduce them to digital technology in a controlled environment.

• **Parent-Child Bonding**

Without the constant distraction of a smart phone, parents and children can engage in more meaningful activities together, strengthening the parent-child bond.

Conclusion: Delaying the purchase of smartphones for children until they complete primary school at least, can bring about numerous benefits for their development and safety. We hope that collectively, along with other parents in our own school and in the wider community, we can make this a realistic option for parents and children in the years to come.

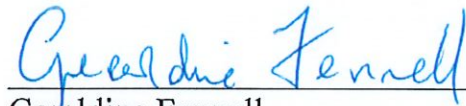
Key points:

1. As this is an Opt-in code, we understand that parents may still choose, or may have already chosen, to buy their child a smartphone. In these cases, we would encourage parents to educate themselves and their children in online safety and encourage healthy habits around time spent on their phone. Smartphones are not permitted in school.

2. The Voluntary Code does **not** include regular mobile phones with no internet access.
3. All information is **anonymous** and results will be assimilated by class group as a percentage.
4. It recognises that every family has different priorities and opinions in relation to internet access and smartphone use.
5. If a parent /guardian alters their view subsequently and wants to purchase a personal smartphone device for their child(ren) they can do so at any stage.
6. It is not a solution in itself to the growing problem but it is potentially **one tool** which may be helpful to those who wish to avail of it.

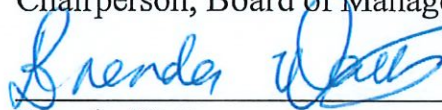
Ratified by the Board of Management on: 26th of November 2024

Signed:



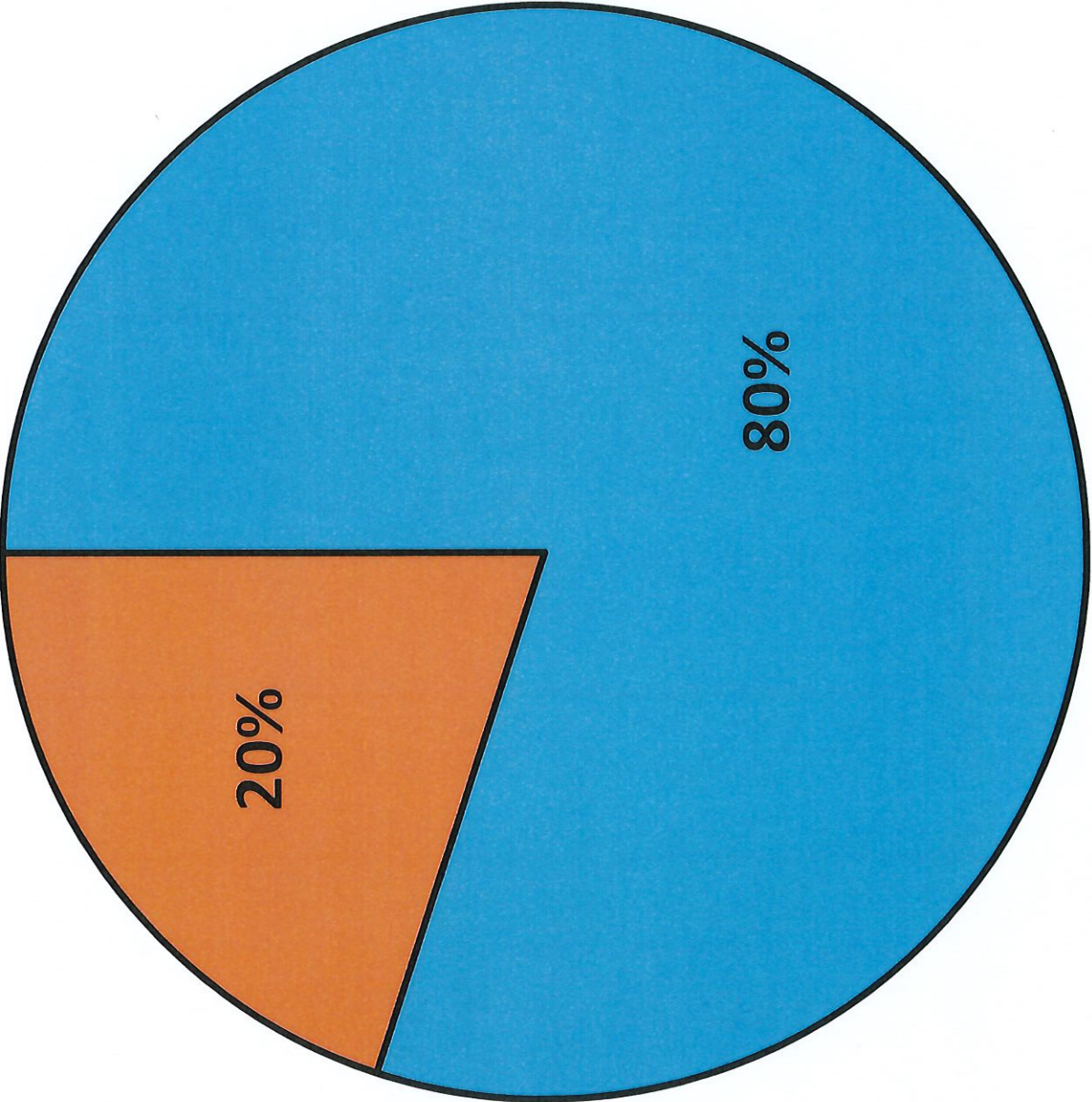
Geraldine Fennell
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:



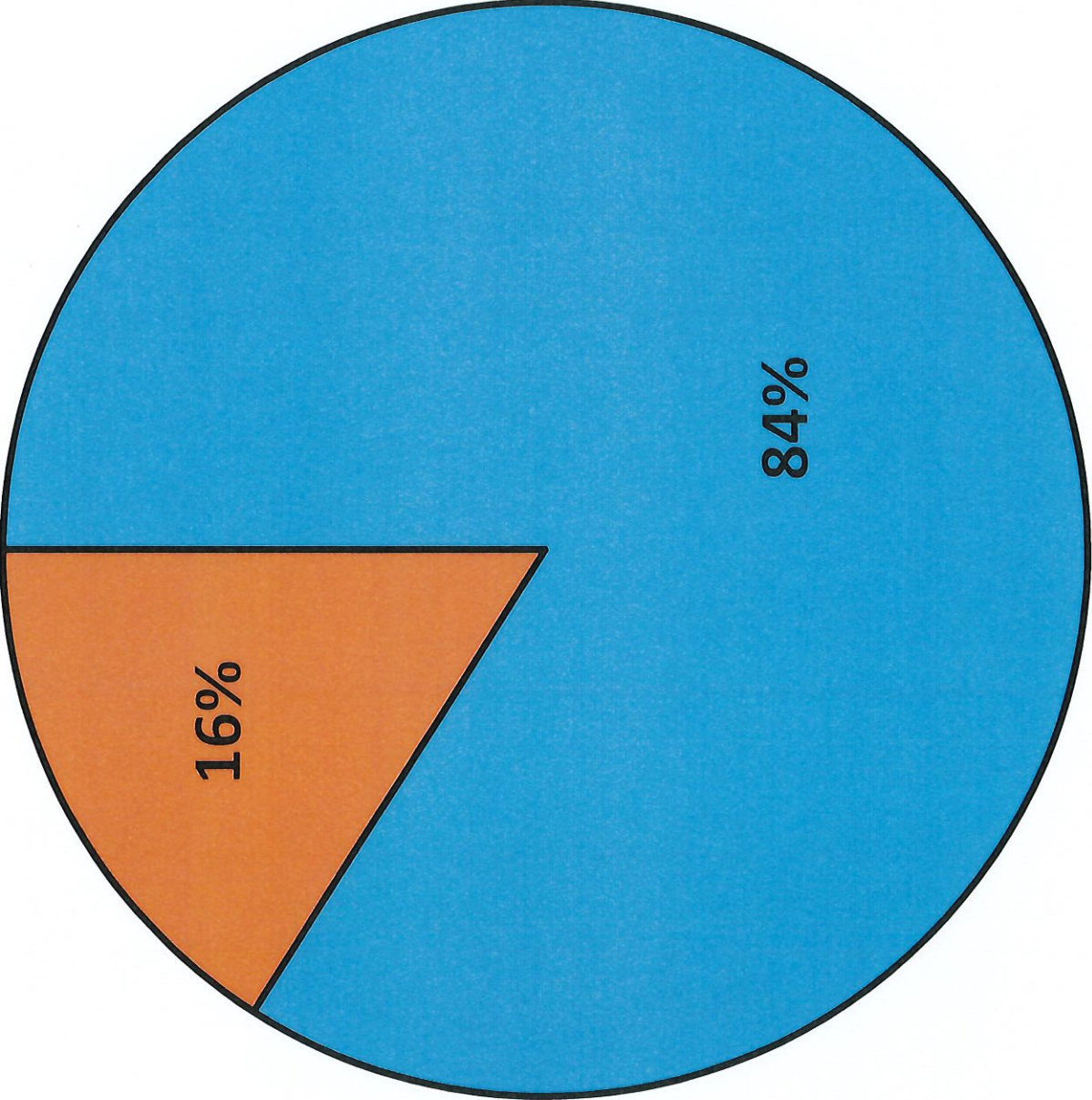
Brenda Watts
Acting Principal

Junior Infants



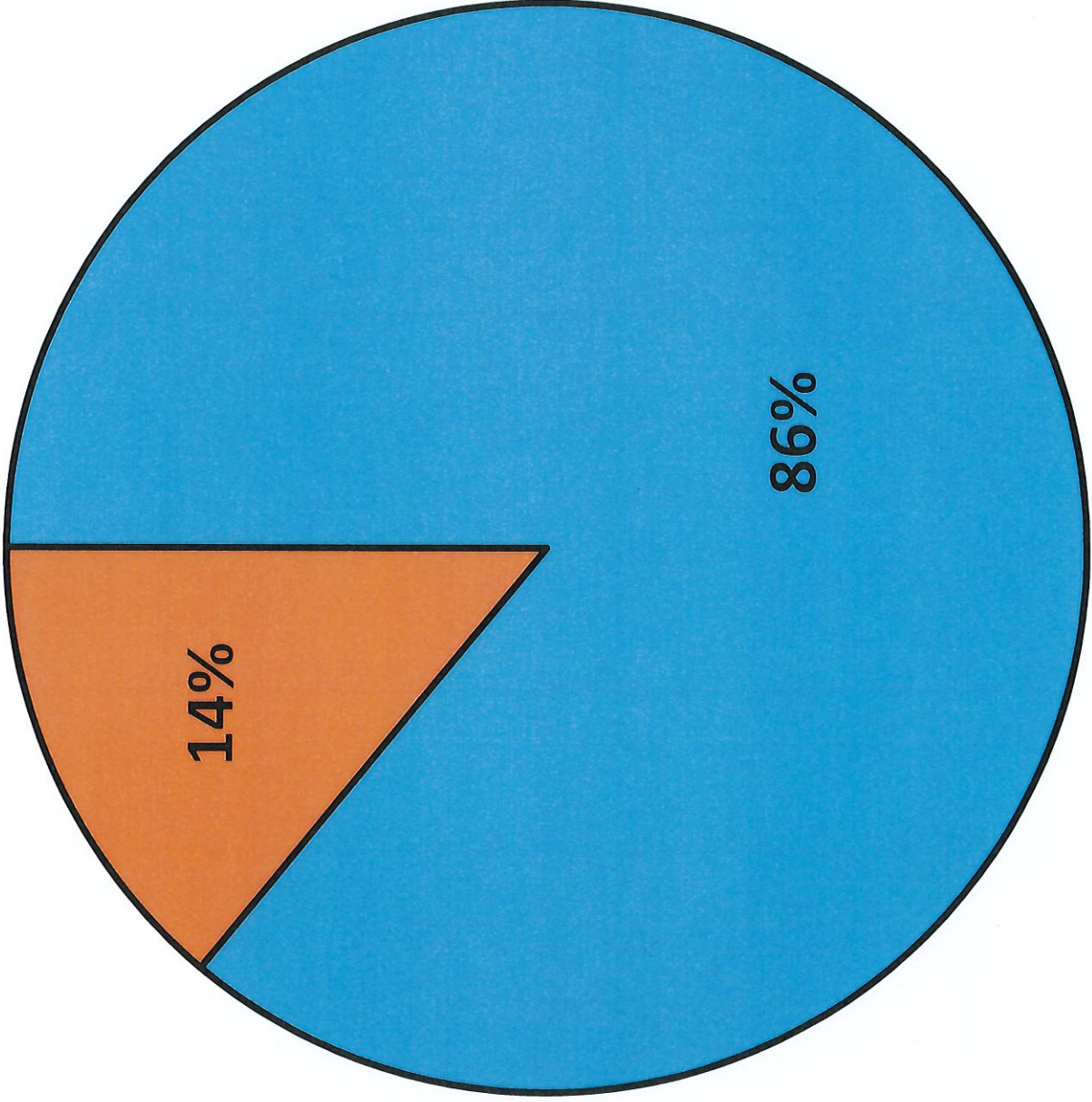
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Senior Infants



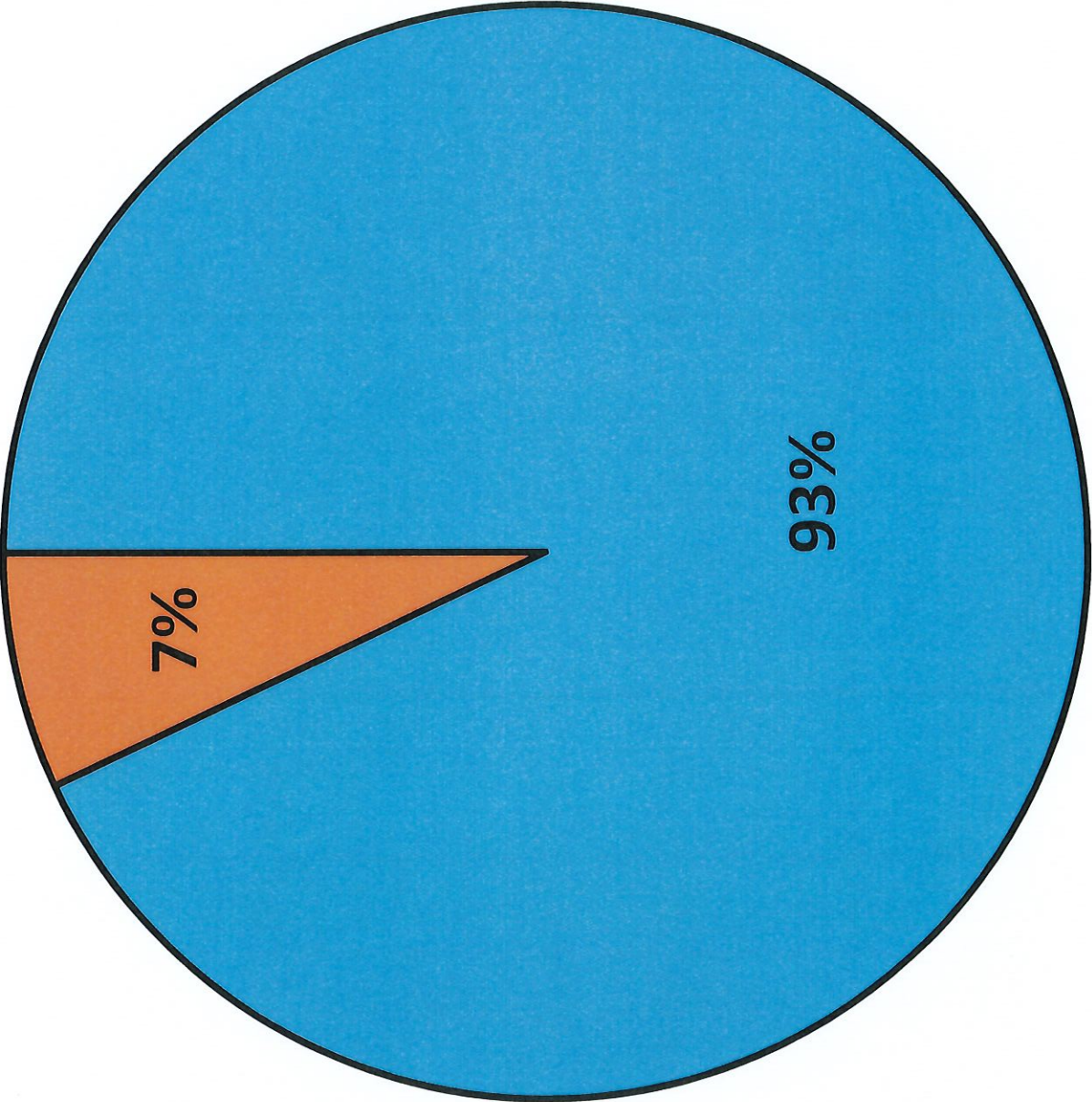
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1st Class



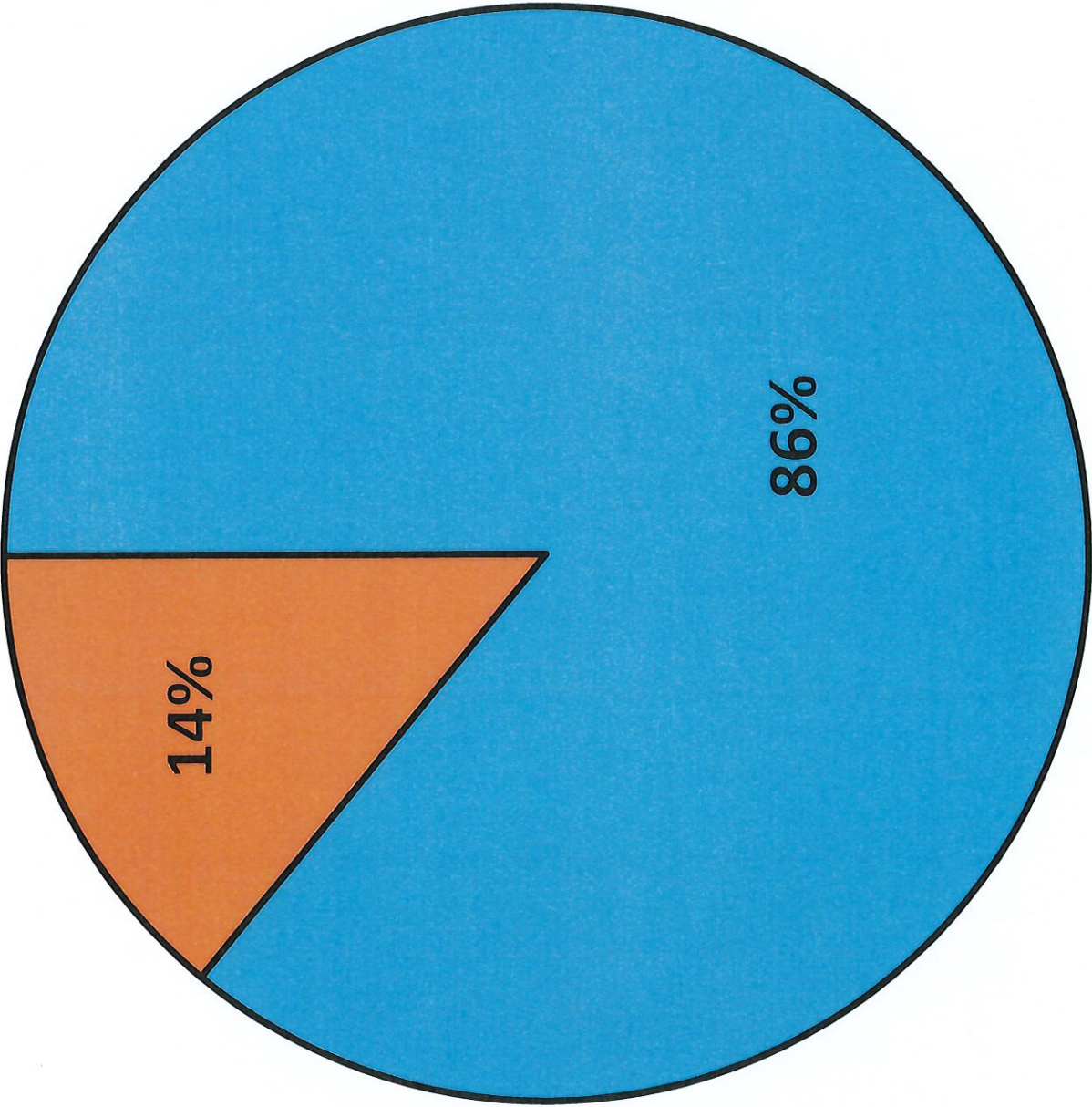
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2nd Class



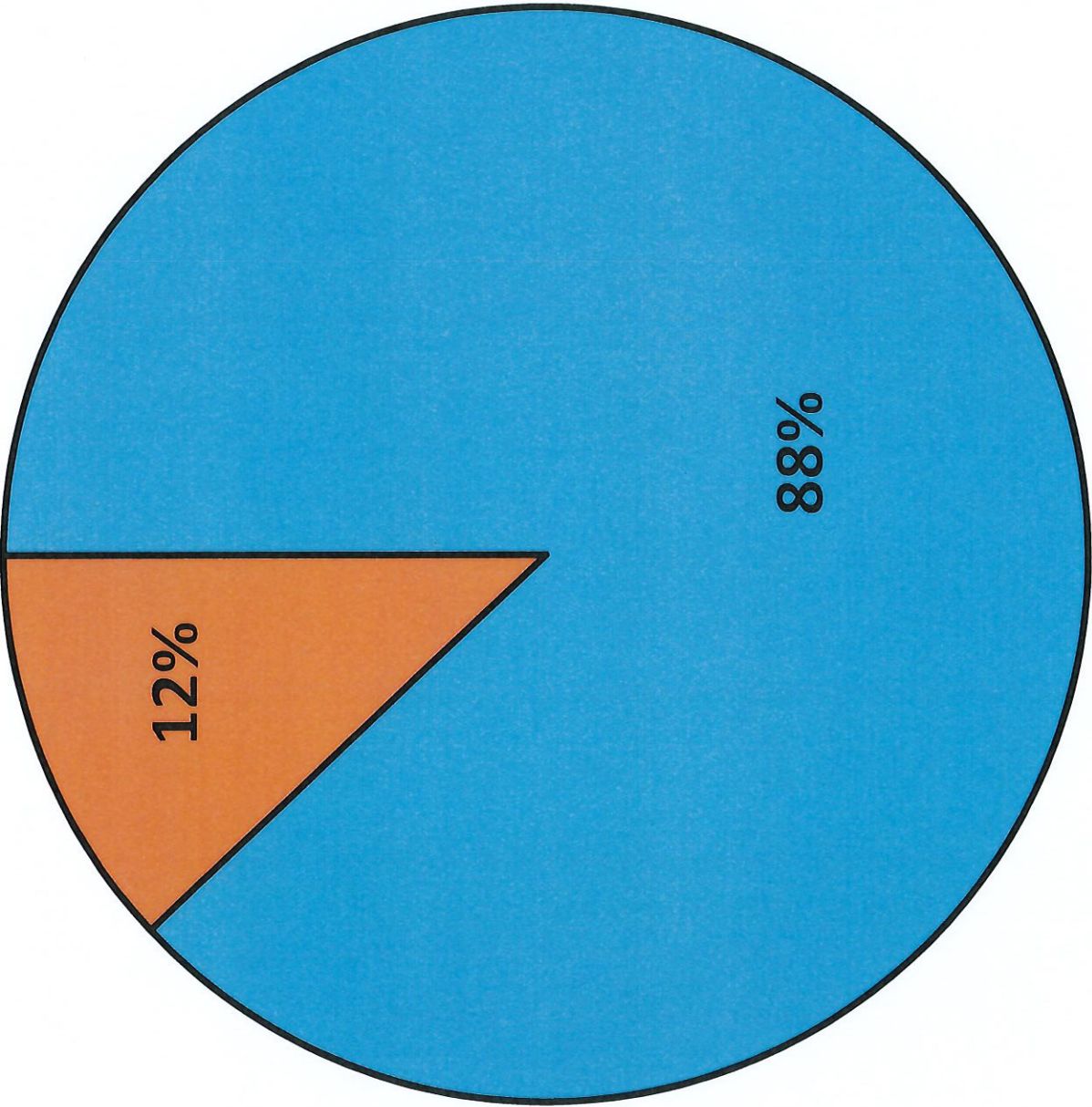
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3rd Class



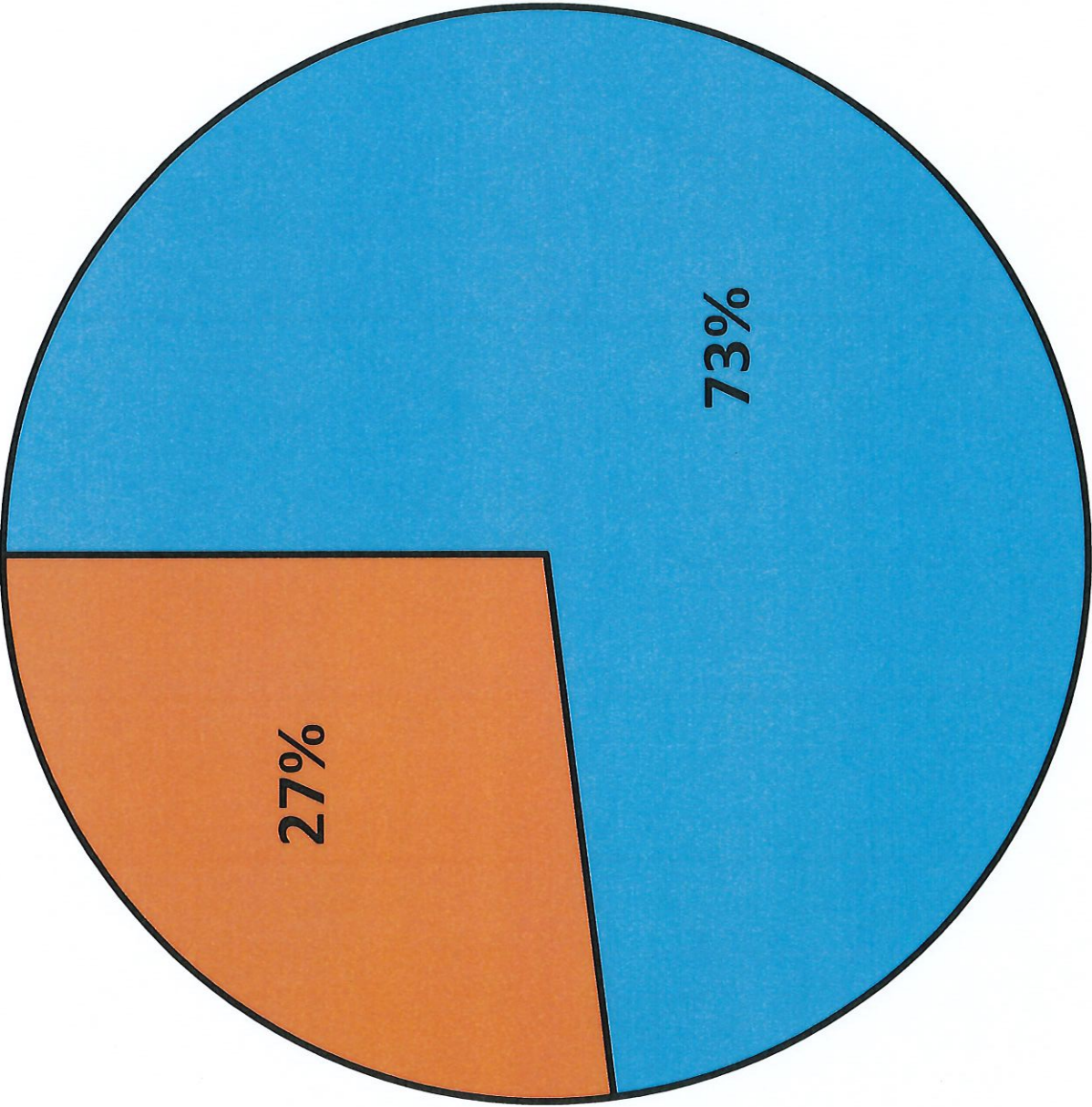
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4th Class



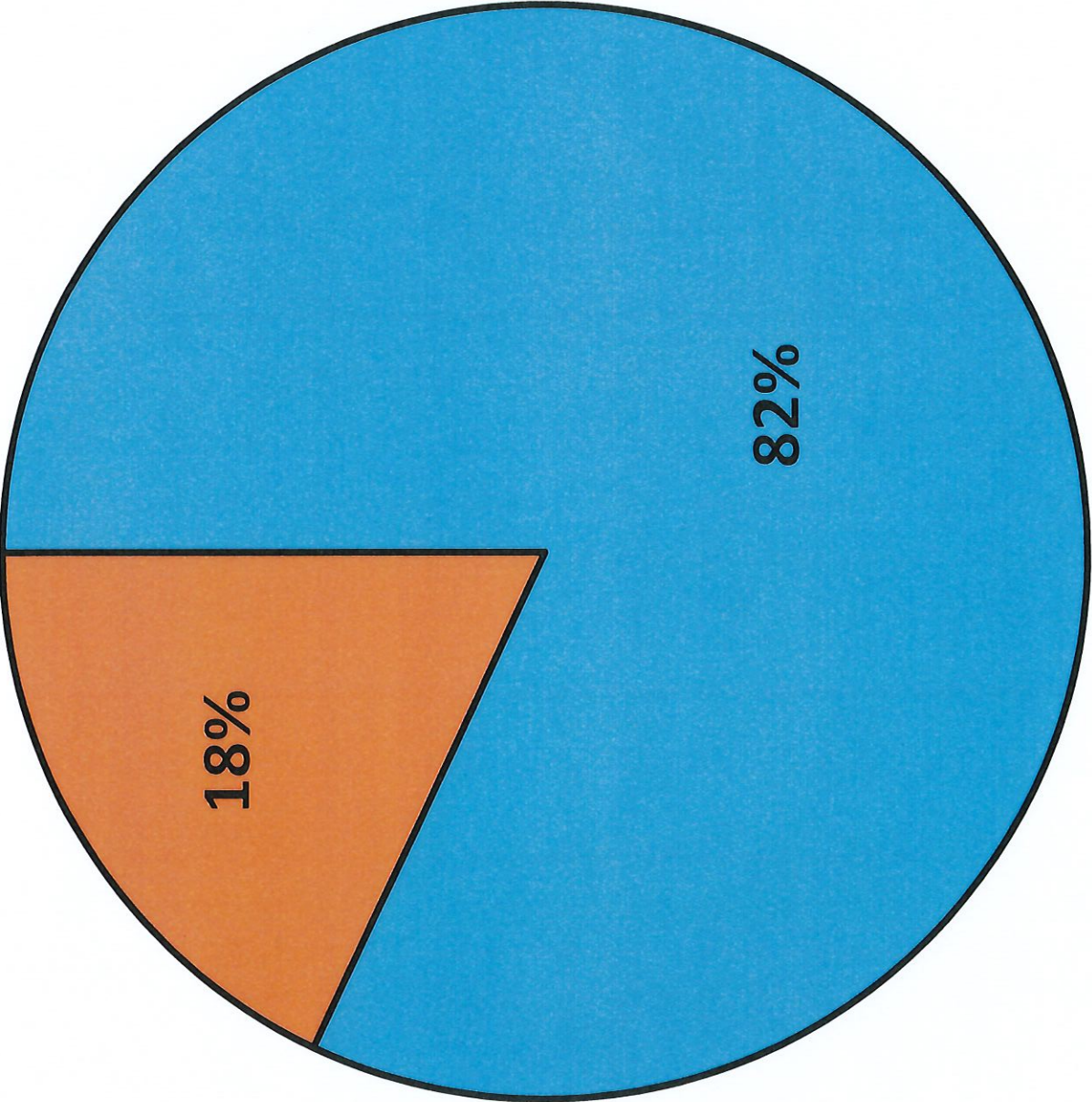
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5th Class



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6th Class



Opted in Opted out