

Scoil Mhuire na nGael, Bay Estate, Dundalk

Communication Policy with Parents

Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the Staff of Scoil Mhuire na nGael in consultation with the Board of Management and the Parents' Association. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and teachers on communication from school/home and home/school in Scoil Mhuire na nGael. The family and home are central to the development of the child and the nurturing of Christian values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective.

Rationale:

To develop close links between the parents and the school:

So that parents can collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children

So that they can share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos values

To encourage parents to become actively involved in the school

To be in line with the Education Act 1998 and Education Welfare Act 2000

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

Scoil Mhuire na nGael seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character
- Support the work of the Parents' Association

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- School website is updated regularly.
- Newsletters to parents, updating them on school activities, achievements, school closures etc. are issued monthly.
- Text-a-Parent service to inform/remind parents of important school issues.
- School calendar is issued in June each year and is posted on the school website.
- Community notice board outside main reception displays relevant school and community based information.
- Parents are welcome to arrange individual meetings by appointment.
- Parent/teacher meetings take place in the first term.
- Written school reports are issued in June.

- Homework diaries in 1st – 6th classes are used to relay messages which are signed by teachers and parents. Parents are requested to sign diary nightly to certify that homework is completed.
- Parents are requested to complete absence notes in homework diary when their child has been absent from school. Automated text messages sent to parents when a child has been absent for more than 15/20/25/30... days in any academic year
- Meetings arranged with parents of children who have special needs or who are attending psychological assessment.
- School has designated Parent Room to facilitate requested meetings.
- Parents are invited to school concerts/sports days/sporting activities/ inter-generational visits/Open Night/Graduation Night/talks by outside agencies/sacramental events etc
- All relevant policies are e mailed to parents.
- Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for pupil injury or pupil incident.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed of family events/situations which may cause anxiety to the child or may adversely affect his/her education.

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians will be consulted by the teachers. In the event that the parent/guardian is unavailable then the named emergency contact will be contacted.

Parent/teacher meetings

The aim of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents and to enable parents & staff resolve any difficulties as partners.
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school.
- To give positive reinforcement to parents and guidelines on how they might further assist in their child's education.
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside of the school context.
- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents.
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals.
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.

Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings

1. Communication between parents and teachers is to be encouraged. We have a designated Parent Room to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Parents are welcome to visit the school to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher, Learning Support/Resource teacher or the Principal. Parents are asked to phone school secretary to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise supervision so the class teacher is then available to speak to the parents. Our aim is to see parents as quickly as possible- we try to arrange a meeting on the same or next day.
2. Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. However, parents are welcome to speak to the Principal or teacher(s) at an appointed time.

3. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress is discouraged on a number of grounds:
 - a. A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
 - b. It is difficult to be discrete when so many children are standing close by.
 - c. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door.

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a teacher urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc, this can be done through the secretary's office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays.

Formal Meetings

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in the first term. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child's progress, they may do so by prior appointment.

- All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address unless otherwise requested by parents.
- In the case of separated parents, requests can be made to meet the teacher(s) together or individually for parent/teacher meetings.

Complaints Procedure

The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher he/she should approach the Principal teacher with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
 - a. supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and
 - b. arrange a meeting with the teacher and where applicable, the Principal, with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting.
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
 - a. The teacher should be requested to provide a written response to the complaint to the B.O.M. and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board. He/She may be accompanied by another person to that meeting
 - b. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

Stage 5

1. Following the Board's investigations and within 5 days of the meeting of the B.O.M., the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be measured by observing the following:

- Benefit to pupil learning
- Parental involvement in school activities is increased
- Feedback from parents and staff

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff and parents have a role in supporting, developing and implementing this policy.

Ratification, Implementation & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th June 2017. A copy of this policy will be issued to all parents. The policy will be reviewed periodically.

Signed : Sr Maighread Ní Ghallchóbhair
Chairperson B.O.M.