



Working Together (Parent-Staff Communication)

Introductory statement

This policy was first developed by the staff of Saplings Special School Kill, the Board of Management and the parents association in the school year of 2016-2017 and is updated on a three yearly basis.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Saplings Special School Kill. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. All of the stakeholders in Saplings Kill aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in 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 (See school Ethos and Mission Statement)
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association.
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

Staff are encouraged to:

- Participate in any meetings with parents in a positive and respectful manner.
- Collaborate with the parents in an open two-way communication so that both parties are working together to develop the full potential of the student.

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- Be aware of the activities of the Parents' Association and link in with them where possible to support their fundraising activities.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Meeting for new parents.
- One to one meetings between parents and teachers, parents and Behaviour Analyst, parents and principal.
- Meetings between parents and the trans-disciplinary team, including social work/ HSE therapists as appropriate, working with the student to ensure agreement on goals being worked towards.
- Communication and consultation throughout the year (communication book, comments from SNA, reports from teacher).
- Thorough on-going communication between the Principal and the Parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of relevant school policies.
- Termly newsletters to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Communication diaries are used to relay messages.
- Parents invited to events throughout the year e.g. Open night, Staff and Family BBQ

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by staff.

Parent/staff meetings

The aim of Parent/Staff meetings is:

- To improve communication between the school and parents.
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school.
- To inform staff on how children are coping outside school.
- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents.
- To help staff/parents get to know the children better as individuals.
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.

Circular 56/2011 INITIAL STEPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL

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LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY has been adopted by the Board of Management. References to parent-school communication are:

Reporting to parents

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents to support their children in this way by sharing meaningful information with parents about the progress that children are achieving in the education system. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that staff use, such as conversations with the learner, data-collection and documented progress on objectives and milestones reached in their short and long term planning, examination of students' own self-assessment data, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staffs' knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

Report card templates

Schools should help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. The NCCA has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents and take account of research commissioned by the NCCA.

The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:
the child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
the child's learning dispositions
the child's social and personal development
ways in which parents can support their child's learning

All primary schools must use one of the report card templates (available at www.ncca.ie) for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular.

Formal Meetings-IEPs

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Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** take place yearly. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment.

- All communication sent from the school will be sent home in the child's bag or to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents.
- In the case of separated parents, an assumption is made that both parents will attend the same meeting, however requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's staff(s) individually for parent/staff meetings.

Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

- Saplings encourage communication between parents and staff, however, meetings with the class staff in the reception lobby to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds.
 - A staff member cannot adequately supervise their student/class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
 - It is difficult to be discreet when there are potentially other parents and children standing close by.
 - It could cause distraction for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a member of staff urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to 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. A parent wishing to speak to a member of staff urgently should in the first instance indicate their request to the school secretary. The school secretary will pass on the request to the Principal if the staff member being sought is a teacher or SNA. The secretary can go directly to the Behaviour Analyst if the request is to meet with her. In the absence of the Principal, the secretary can use discretionary judgement to communicate the request to the next line manager or directly to the member of staff themselves.

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.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and confidentially.

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

Note: This is a procedure reached through national agreement between the INTO and the CPSMA and was written to deal with complaints about teachers. Because of the special nature of our school and the large numbers of 'non-teaching' staff, the word 'teacher' has been replaced with 'staff member' throughout.

Stage 1-informal stage

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the staff member with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the staff member he/she should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it (*or the class teacher if the complaint is against an SNA. In this instance the class teacher will work with the parent/guardian and SNA to try to reach an amicable resolution*).
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-formal stage

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 staff member 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 authorization of the Board:
 - a. supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and
 - b. arrange a meeting with the staff member, 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

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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 staff member 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 staff member should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint.
 - b. He/she should be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting.
 - c. 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, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff member and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This is something we work on with the students in the school but this also extends to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance and is a major part of our education model, adults in the school community also have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí may be

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called.

- All stakeholders should be respectful in all their communications which involve discussions about school staff. Ideally, parents and staff should refrain from discussing other parents and staff except in face to face meetings where both parties are present. All stakeholders must be aware that they are responsible for what they say or write about others, and this includes face conversations, conversations on social media, on whatsapp groups/ Facebook messenger etc. and that the persons being discussed have rights up to and including taking legal action should inappropriate, offensive or untrue messages be posted about them.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.
- Staff are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved. Classes begin at 9:20 am and finish at 3:00pm and this time should not be interrupted if possible.

Ratified by the Board of Management

This revised policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in December 2019. It is envisaged that this policy will be reviewed in 2022.

It will be subject to a review every three years or at an earlier date if considered desirable by the Board of Management.

Signed _____ (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date _____