

Parent/Staff Communication Policy

Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the Staff, Board of Management and the Parents Association of Coolbock National School in May 2016.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Coolbock National School. The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good moral 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. All the stakeholders 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
- Become actively involved in the school/Parents' Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Enrolment Evening for parents of new Junior Infants – February/March
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November
- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
- Meetings with parents whose children have special educational needs
- Consultation throughout the year
- Through the Parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies. Decisions taken to review current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents via newsletters and the Parents Association
- Regular newsletters, text messaging service and e-mails keep parents up-to-date with school events and holidays
- E-mails are used to communicate messages between parents and teachers.
- Parents requested to sign the homework diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year
- Involvement of parents in the preparation of pupils for Communion and Confirmation
- Parents are also welcome to make an appointment with teachers any time throughout the year. Parents can make this appointment by contacting the school by e-mail or note.

Parent/Teacher meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes (Circular 14/04). Where possible, they will be held in the first term, towards the end of November for all classes. They will be initiated by the school staff and details regarding time, etc. will be worked out by the class teacher, in consultation with parents. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings may take place in classrooms or support rooms. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children. A short written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together
- To meet demands for accountability
- To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- To identify areas of difficulty
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- To inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy

Circular 56/2011 Initial Steps in the implementation of the national 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 staffs 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.

Report cards will be sent to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents. Any changes to the child's home address must be given in writing to the school.

In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings and to request information on the child's learning.

School E-mail

E-mail will be used as the primary method of written communication between teachers and parents, unless a lack of internet coverage is indicated by parents. E-mails will be sent to one e-mail address per family. In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to receive e-mails. All e-mails will be sent to e-mail addresses as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents. Any changes to these e-mail addresses must be given to the school in writing. During term time, the school e-mail address is checked on a daily basis. If an e-mail is sent from the school to a parent, they will be informed by text message, advising them to read their e-mail.

The school e-mail address is coolbocknationalschool@gmail.com

Rationale for using e-mail as the primary means of written communication:

- The teacher or parent has time to communicate the message to parents without having the children or other parents in close proximity
- Sensitive information can be communicated between parents and teachers without the pupils or other parents' knowledge
- There is a written record of e-mail communication
- Times and dates of meetings can be agreed in an efficient and effective manner

Text Messaging Service

The text messaging service keeps parents up to date with school events and holidays. Text messages will be sent to two mobile phone numbers per family. In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to receive text messages. All text messages will be sent to mobile phone numbers as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents. Any changes to these numbers must be given to the school in writing.

Notes in Children's Homework Journal

Teachers may send handwritten notes in the children's journals concerning housekeeping issues and positive reinforcement of children's work or behaviour.

Special Educational Needs

Formal parent/teacher meetings for pupils with special educational needs on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** will take place in September/October. 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.

Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings

The School encourages communication between parents and staff.

Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:

1. Staff cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent
2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by

3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

Parents wishing to speak to a teacher can do so at 2:50 provided it is a brief meeting. If the issue is not resolved within 5 minutes or if it is an issue that the teacher or parent feels will need longer than 5 minutes to address, an appointment must be made at a mutually acceptable time. This appointment can be made by e-mail or note.

Explanations of Absence

All explanations of pupil absences, along with notifications of dentist/medical appointments must be given in writing to the school (Education Welfare Act 2000). These notes can be given through the school e-mail address.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education. 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.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The INTO and Primary School Management reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

Stage 1-informal stage

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the **teacher** with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher he/she should approach the **Principal** 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-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 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 referred to in 3(b)
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 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 Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board.
2. 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 not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our school should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, 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 community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí may be called
- 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 that the length of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected

