



St. Patrick's Junior School

TENNIS COURT LANE, SKERRIES, CO. DUBLIN.

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PARENT TEACHER COMMUNICATION POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on Parent/Teacher communication and Parent/Teacher Meetings in St. Patrick's Junior School, Skerries.

The home is central to the development of the child and the nurturing of good moral values. Both the school and the family strive to be mutually supportive 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.

St. Patrick's Junior School is a welcoming and inclusive community that is holistic, respectful and tolerant of all religious traditions and beliefs. The school community strives to create an atmosphere of love, respect, security and trust. Teachers are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each pupil. We work in close collaboration with the family. Good communication between parents and teachers is essential to the nurturing of this positive, supportive environment.

Parents are encouraged to

- Develop close links with the school and 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 their children's education through the Parents' Association, the Active Schools programme, the Green Schools programme etc.
- Through the Parents' Association, participate in policy formulation and the decision-making processes affecting them.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

- There is a meeting for parents of new Junior Infants in June of each year. Parents are invited to the school hall and welcomed to the school by the principal and class teachers. It is also an opportunity to distribute the necessary documentation.
- Individual parent/teacher meetings take place in February for all classes.
- There may be additional parent teacher meetings for parents whose children attend learning support or who have special educational needs.
- A written report on each pupil is provided to parents/guardians at the end of each school year.
- Following the receipt of the end of year report parents can make an appointment for a brief meeting with the class teacher to clarify any aspects of the end of year report of which they are unsure.

- Teachers may consult with parents regularly or request to meet parents. The homework journal can be used with 1st – 2nd class to relay messages. Parents are asked to sign the journal daily.
- Newsletters are issued on a monthly basis. They include updates on the school, Board of Management and Parents' Association news and notices of forthcoming events.
- Parents may be texted from time to time with school reminders and messages.
- The school website is www.stps.ie.
- Each class has its own blog which is accessible from the website.

FORMAL PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS

The purpose of Parent/Teacher meetings is to:

- Let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- Inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- Establish an on-going relationship and communication with parents
- Allow teachers and parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together
- 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 identify ways in which parents and teachers can support the child further

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 teachers use, such as conversations with the learner, documented progress on objectives, checklists, examination of students' own self-assessment data and examples of students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich teachers' knowledge of their pupil's progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

The principal attends a number of these formal parent teacher meetings each year. No prior notice of the principal's attendance at these meetings can be given.

- Formal timetabled Parent/Teacher meetings take place in February.
- The meetings are held in accordance with DES/CPSMA/INTO guidelines.
- Meetings will be timetabled and held between 2.40p.m. and 5.45p.m.
- The principal and teachers agree the meeting schedule and parents are given an appointment in advance.
- The school aims to co-ordinate sibling meeting times and meetings with the learning support/ resource teacher (where relevant) where these have not been held jointly with the class teacher.
- Parent/guardians who cannot attend the formal parent teacher meeting can make alternative arrangements at the discretion of the class teacher.
- The principal shall be informed of all parent teacher meetings taking place.
- Teachers will bring relevant issues to the attention of the principal in advance of the meetings

- Issues arising from the meetings will be discussed with the principal and other relevant staff members.
- We recommend one joint parent teacher meeting for parents of pupils who have separated in order to ensure that both parents have access to the same information at the same time in respect of their children. However, separate meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians on request.
- Where separate meetings are arranged, this fact will be brought to the attention of the principal and a senior member of the teaching staff will be present with the class teacher and learning support/resource teacher (where relevant) at both meetings.
- All staff members maintain the highest level of professional confidentiality in regard to information received during or as a result of parent teacher meetings.

ADDITIONAL PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS

Good, respectful communication between parents and teachers is vital and is strongly encouraged at St. Patrick's JNS.

Outside of the Formal Parent/Teacher meetings in February, a parent may wish to meet with their child's class teacher or the principal, and a teacher may wish to meet with a parent.

Informal communication is important and brief exchanges will naturally take place early in the morning between teachers and parents while children are settling into their classroom, or at the school gate at home-time. However, 'meetings' with teachers at classroom doors to discuss a concern or a child's progress is strongly discouraged on a number of grounds:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door.

When a Parent Would Like to Meet a Teacher to Discuss a Concern or Development

- A Parent should give the teacher a note (Junior and Senior Infants) or write a note in the homework journal (first/second class).
- Alternatively, a parent may ring the school secretary and request a meeting with their child's class teacher.
- In order to make best use of the short time available for meetings, the parent must always give a reason for the meeting. Knowing the purpose of the meeting beforehand allows teachers to prepare adequately for the meeting and results in more efficient use of time at the meeting and the early resolution of issues.
- The parent should also indicate whether a time slot before school or after school suits them best.
- The parent will then be given a time and date for the parent teacher meeting.
- The principal may, without giving any prior notice, attend any parent teacher meeting.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, P.E. gear etc. this can be done through the secretary's office as it is important to keep class interruptions down to a minimum. The school secretary can also relay messages on to children where this is appropriate.

When a Teacher Would Like to Meet a Parent to Discuss a Concern or Development

- The Teacher will contact the Parent, giving a reason for the meeting and a time and date at which they will be available to meet the parent.
- If the time suggested does not suit the parent is asked to suggest an alternative time.
- These meetings will take place immediately before or after school.

When a Parent Would Like to Meet the Principal

- The School Principal is very happy to meet parents regarding enrolments, finances etc.
- However, when it comes to a concern or complaint, a parent must first approach the class teacher regarding the matter.
- Parents requesting an appointment with the principal will be asked whether the matter has already been discussed with the class teacher. If not, the parent will be redirected to the class teacher in the first instance.
- If the issue is not resolved at a meeting with the class teacher, the parent can then request an appointment with the principal.
- The principal will consult with the classroom teacher in relation to the issue and then give the parent an appointment. If appropriate, the classroom teacher will attend this parent meeting with the principal.
- In order to make the best use possible of time and to ensure that these procedures have been followed, a parent wishing to make an appointment with the principal must give an outline of the subject matter of the meeting.

END OF YEAR REPORT

Schools aim to help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them. In line with Departmental advice, the school uses an NCCA approved report template. 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.

BEHAVIOUR OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SCHOOL

Positive and respectful communication is of great 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 building 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 must and will 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 or to compare a child to others in his or her class. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so parents are required to respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect 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.
- Staff Members are generally available for brief exchanges of information (confirming the time of a meeting, etc.) in the morning and after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a mutually convenient time. This ensures that issues can be resolved.
- Please note meetings can only be held face to face. St. Patrick's school policy is that parent teacher meetings may not be held over the telephone, via Skype or via other social media. (A teacher or the principal may however telephone a parent where necessary to inform them of an incident which has taken place involving their child or an injury sustained by their child during the day.)
- Where one parent attends the parent teacher meeting on behalf of both parents it is the responsibility of the attending parent to provide feedback to the absent parent. Teachers are not permitted to take phone calls from one parent on the other parent's phone during a parent teacher meeting.
- Meetings are confidential to the participants therefore St. Patrick's JNS policy is that **no voice or video recording of a parent teacher meeting may take place**. As this is school policy, **teachers do not have the authority to give permission to be recorded** during a parent teacher meeting.

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Complaints are very infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools:

Stage 1

- 1.1 A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
- 1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.
- 1.3 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

- 2.1 If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 2.2 The Chairperson should 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

- 3.1 If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board and except in those cases where the Chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the Board to be required:
 - 3.1.1 supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; *and*
 - 3.1.2 arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
- 3.2 Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

- 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 3.1.2.
- 4.2 If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complaint should be so informed within three days of the Board meeting. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - 4.2.1 The teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
 - 4.2.2 The teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
 - 4.2.3 The teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint;
 - 4.2.4 The teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;

- 4.2.5 The board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and
- 4.2.6 The meetings of the Board of Management referred to in 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1.2.

Stage 5

- 5.1 When the Board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the Board.
- 5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.
- 5.3 In this agreement 'days' means schools days.

Please Note:

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management, except where those complaints are deemed by the Board to be:

- (i) on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
- (ii) frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- (iii) complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

TEXTS, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA

At St. Patrick' Junior National School we want to communicate with parents and deal with queries and concerns in a fair, just and respectful manner.

We ask that if a parent has a query or complaint the above procedure is adhered to. Complaints and queries must not be made by approaching other parents via text, email or social media.

The Board of Management deems such communication to be wholly unacceptable and against the school's ethos. If you have a concern, speak to your child's Class Teacher.

Approved by the Board of Management.

Date: 07/03/2017

Signed: _____

Richard Hyland,
Chairperson.