**Parent Teacher Communication Policy**

**Introductory Statement:**

This policy was developed by the staff of St. Mary’s No.2 National School, the Board of Management and the Parent body in the school year 2017-2018.

**Staff and pupils have the right to a safe, well disciplined, secure, disruption-free environment and to be treated with due respect.**

Parents are welcome to meet with teachers / principal, by appointment, during the school year to have a consultation with the class teacher, to discuss concerns about their child or to check on their child’s progress.

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.

It is impossible to give parents full attention if they arrive unexpectedly at the classroom door. Making an appointment is necessary. The teacher can then give parents their full attention.

The secretary is always available from 1.30pm to 2.30pm to accept messages, make appointments on your behalf, accept school gear etc. Please go straight to the office upon arrival to school with such messages. Reminder that putting a note in your child’s folder / homework diary is a very effective way of communicating with your class & support teachers. Classes begin at 9.00a.m. and finish at 2.40p.m. (1.40p.m. for Infants) and this time should not be interrupted.

**Rationale:**

**The need for this policy arises from:-**

Section 28, Education Act 1998 – procedures for processing complaints by parents prescribed for all schools under the Act.

Communication is an essential part of this partnership. It is important that all communication takes place in a spirit of mutual respect and courtesy.

**Relationship to School Ethos:**

The school promotes positive home – school contacts and endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of everyone within the school community. The policy contributes towards those ideals.

**Aims/Objectives:**

* To afford parents / teachers an opportunity to liaise with each other and to foster fruitful and trusting relationships between school and parents
* To afford parents an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through the framework of a defined procedure
* To minimise the opportunity for conflict

**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 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 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 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

**Safety, Health and Welfare at Work:**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for B.O.M. and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

In this respect, all staff should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours.

**Parents are thus 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 parent association
* Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them

**Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with parents include:**

* 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 needs
* Consultation throughout the year
* Written communication
* Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents in written format via the school newsletter.
* Our regular newsletter, keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
* Homework diary 1st – 6th class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
* Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Sports Day, school services and school concerts

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary or leave a message on the answering machine to arrange a suitable time

**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

**In-School Procedures:**

An appointment can be made by:

* Writing a note to the teachers, in the child’s diary or a letter, requesting an appointment, including a brief outline of his/her concerns
* Ringing the school office between 1.30pm and 2.30pm. The secretary will inform the class teacher and then inform parent of suitable time. Again, brief outline of concerns are to be given to teachers, prior to meeting
* The Principal must be informed of any meetings taking place
* All other messages (lunches, sports gear) can be left into the office or into the pupils classroom if there is nobody is in the office
* At all times, parent/teacher consultations should take place out of hearing of the child in question, other pupils and other parents
* If sensitive issue is being discussed, it is advisable to have other teachers / principal or outside agencies with parental permission present.
* Communication regarding pupils is made with parents / guardians only
* Meetings should take place in private and not on corridors
* Keep records of meetings Parent Teacher Consultation form.

**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. Parents will be given the opportunity to reschedule the proposed appointment time, citing preferred times on a note to the class teacher. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings will take place in classrooms and 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 and kept in pupil profile folders.

**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 learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing
* To identify areas of tension and disagreement
* 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 the 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 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 the staffs’ knowledge of their student’s progress through providing further information about the students’ learning at home.

**Report Cards:**

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 can 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](http://www.ncca.ie)) for reporting to parents on students’ progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular. Reports must be issued to parents at least one week prior to summer holidays.

**Formal Meetings:**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in November. 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 to the child’s home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents
* 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

**Formal Meetings: I.E.P.s:**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings 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 made do so by prior appointment.

**Informal Parent/Staff Meetings:**

1. The School encourages communication between parents and staff
2. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child’s concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:
3. Staff cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
4. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
5. It can be embarrassing 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 staff member 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.

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

**Parents Complaints Procedure:**

The Board of Management of St. Mary’s has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teachers’ union and management bodies, which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998. It must be noted that the Board of Management is a separate entity and any queries, concerns or issues must be brought through the proper channel, namely through the procedures, as outlined in this policy.

**Introduction:**

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

* Matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education & Skills
* Frivolous of vexatious and which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school
* Complaints in which either party has a 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.

**Stage 1: Informal stage**:

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly 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** 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 the 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 written complaint

**Stage 3:**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
2. Supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and
3. 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:
4. The teacher should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
5. 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
6. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting

**Stage 5:**

Following the Board’s 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. The decision of the Board shall be final

**Success Criteria:**

* Parent/Teacher satisfaction
* Positive school community feedback
* Increased awareness of pupil progress and early identification of needs
* Optimum achievement for pupils
* Swift and efficient resolution of grievances
* Reviews of school policies as issues arise

**Implementation:**

The policy will be reviewed as and when necessary.

**Ratification and Communication**:

* This Parent Teacher Communication Policy has been prepared on the conditions that exist in the school at the time of writing. It may be altered, revised or updated at a future date to comply with any changes in conditions.
* The B.O.M. officially ratified the policy on **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Reverend Roderick Smyth**

Chairperson of the B.O.M.