

# St. Brigid's Boys' National School, Mart Lane, Foxrock

## Parent/Staff Communication Policy

### Introductory statement

This policy was revised by the staff of St. Brigid's B.N.S and the Board of Management in the school year 2020.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Brigid's Boys' 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/parent association

### Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – Summer Term
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one on a yearly basis
- 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
- Policies ratified by the Board of Management are brought to the Parents' Association. 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 website
- Regular communication keeps parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Homework diary 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 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. school masses, sporting events, school concerts etc.

Parents are also welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary 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.

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## **Parent/Teacher meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes. They will be initiated by the school staff. Parents can book their preferred slot for a meeting through their Aladdin Connect account. An appointment slot will be given to any parents who are, for any reason unable to access Aladdin Connect. Meetings may take place in classrooms, support rooms or communally in the PE Hall. 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 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 to school policy.

## **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 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) 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

## **Formal Meetings**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in Term One or early in Term 2. 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 with the child, posted or sent to the parent's e-mail 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

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## **Formal Meetings – School Support Plus Plans (formally IEPs)**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the School Support Plus plan will take place in October/November. This is an individual education plan for children with special educational needs. 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/Staff Meetings**

1. The School encourages communication between parents and staff.
2. Meetings with the teacher at the classroom door to discuss a child's concern/progress are **discouraged** on a number of grounds:
  1. A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her 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.

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.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc, we request that this is left at the secretary's office.

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

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **(Regarding complaints made by Parents/Guardians in relation to Teachers)**

Complaints are infrequent but 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 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:

- on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills;
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- 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.

#### **Stage 1**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, 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 she/he 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**

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. 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 five days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### **Stage 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:
  - 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.

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## 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 three days of the Board meeting.
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
  - a. the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
  - b. the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
  - c. the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint;
  - d. the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of the case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
  - e. 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
  - f. the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3 (b).

## Stage 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.
2. The decision of the Board of Management shall be final.
3. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years
4. CPSMA (Catholic Primary Schools Management Association) or INTO (Irish National Teachers' Organisation) may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months notice of intention to do so.

**In this agreement 'days' means school days.**

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **(Regarding complaints made by Parents/Guardians in relation to Special Needs Assistants)**

Only those complaints about Special Needs Assistants 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:

- On matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills;
- Frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- Complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

#### **Procedure**

1. Any Parent/Guardian, who wishes to pursue a complaint against a Special Needs Assistant, should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
2. The Chairperson, upon receipt of the written complaint, will authorise the Principal to form and chair a committee comprised of the Principal, Special Duties Teacher with responsibility for liaising with the SNA team and the teacher of the class to which the SNA in question is attached to investigate the complaint.
3. The investigating committee should seek to meet with and gather information from all parties relevant to the complaint.
4. When such meetings have been completed, the investigating committee should formulate a written report for the Chairperson of the Board of Management, in which the findings of the committee are stated.
5. Having considered the report of the committee, the Chairperson will decide if any further action is warranted.
6. If the Chairperson is satisfied that the complaint has not been substantiated, she/he will communicate this in writing to both the complainant and the Special Needs Assistant.
7. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Chairperson, she/he may appeal this decision in writing to the Board of Management.

Or

8. If the Chairperson determines that the complaint has been substantiated or that further investigation is warranted, she/he will make a formal report to the Board of Management.
9. In the eventuality of outcomes 7 & 8, as detailed above, the Board of Management will further investigate the complaint.
10. Having completed this investigation, the Board will communicate its decision in writing to both the complainant and the Special Needs Assistant.
11. The decision of the Board of Management shall be final.

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## **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
- 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 8.55 am and finish at 2.35 pm and this time should not be interrupted.

**Reviewed and updated by the Board of Management on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020.**

Appendix: Schedule for Catholic Schools

A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.