

Waterpark National School
Working Together - Parent-Staff Communication

Introductory statement

This policy was reviewed by the staff of Waterpark National School, the Board of Management and the Parents Association in February 2018.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Waterpark National School. The school community strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. All of the stakeholders in Waterpark National School 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 and affirm the role of the parent as the 'primary and natural educator' of their children (as per Article 42.1 of the Irish Constitution)
- 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.
- Value and respect the input of parents/guardians and encourage them to bring any concerns to you at an early stage to avoid situations escalating.
- 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 parents and induction of new Junior Infants in May/June
- Parent/teacher meetings, one-to-one, annually in November
- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs as often as is deemed necessary.
- Written communication via email, notes in homework diary and texts.
- Through the Parent's Association, Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting of school policies relevant to them. Decisions taken to change current policies or procedures or to

introduce new ones will be made known to all parents in written form via email, text or school website.

- 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
- Regular notifications keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Parents are invited to school masses and school concerts.
- Involvement of parents in the First Communion 'Do This in Memory of me,' Program.
- Involvement of parents in the Sacrament of Confirmation 'I Shall be your Witness' Program.
- Regular updates of school events are posted on the school website throughout the year.

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 the staff.

Parent/staff meetings:

Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes. Where possible they will be held in the first term, in 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 and resource rooms. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children.

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.

Formal Parent/Staff 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.

Formal Meetings – IEP'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 may do so by prior appointment.

Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

Meetings between parents and teachers are encouraged and are seen as an essential process to resolve any difficulty which a child may be experiencing.

Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. However, parents are welcome to speak to the Principal or teacher(s) at an appointed time.

To arrange such a meeting parents should phone the school between 8.40am and 2.20pm or a note can be sent with your child requesting such a meeting.

The parent will call the teacher concerned as soon as possible and a meeting will be arranged at a time suited to all concerned.

Meetings with a class teacher or principal at a classroom door, in the school hallway or in the car park to discuss major concerns about a child are discouraged on a number of grounds;

- a. A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- b. It is difficult to be discrete when so many children are standing close by.
- c. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door.
- d. The teacher may need access to notes or records which may be necessary to conduct the meeting.

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. 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. Under the Education Welfare Act, once a child has been absent for 20 days in a school year, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency.

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 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

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 is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously by the board of management.

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.

Parental Complaints Procedure

Introduction

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

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management. Unwritten complaints, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

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 make an appointment with the class teacher, through the school office, with a view to resolving the complaint. The nature of the complaint should be briefly, but clearly, stated in advance, either verbally or in writing to the teacher. Both parties may request to have another adult with them.
- 2 Any parent approaching the Principal with a complaint will be reminded that it is more appropriate to discuss and hopefully resolve the issue with the class teacher in the first instance. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher s/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it. An appointment should be arranged through the office, briefly, but clearly outlining the nature of the complaint.
- 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.

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.

Stage 4

- 1 If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management

- 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 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.

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 as soon as possible.
- 2 The decision of the board shall be final.

In this policy 'days' means school days.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson: Michael Forristal

Principal: Orla Collins

Date: 07th February 2018

Due for Review: Spring 2021