



PARENT/STAFF COMMUNICATION POLICY

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The policy was most recently formulated by the staff of Sacred Heart B.N.S., the Board of Management and the Parents' Association in the school year 2021/22.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Sacred Heart B.N.S. 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.
- For parents read as parents/guardians.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with parents:

- Meeting for incoming Junior Infants in school year prior to starting school.
- Meeting/visit with new Junior Infants (parents and pupils) in June prior to starting school.
- Information meeting for Junior Infant parents in October.
- 'Parents Evenings' in September to meet new class teachers.
- Meetings with parents of pupils with S.E.N.
- Parents receive school report for each pupil at the end of the school year.
- Meetings with parents of 2nd and 6th classes to help prepare for sacraments of Communion and Confirmation.
- School newsletters (Principal's Blog) to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Parents' Association A.G.M.
- School website (www.sacredheartballygall.ie) and Twitter (@shbnsd11) are used to keep parents up-to-date with all key activities taking place in the school.

- Aladdin Connect, used to relay messages between parents and teachers/the school.
- Notes from staff to parents and vice versa
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Sports days/events, Carol Service, school plays etc.
- Involvement of parents in the religious education through the Grow in Love programme.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

WHAT IS THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION?

The parents' association is the structure through which parents/guardians in a school can work together for the best possible education for their children. The parents' association works with the principal, staff and Board of Management to build effective partnership of home and school.

WHY IS PARTNERSHIP IMPORTANT?

Partnership between home and school is important because with positive and active partnership, the child gets the best that primary education can offer.

Children do better, behave better and are happier at school where parents/guardians and teachers work closely together.

Teachers can do a better job where they are supported by and working closely with parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians can do a better job where they have the support of other parents.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Education Act, 1998 sets down the role of the parents' association:

"A parents'" association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, principal, teachers and students.

"To advise the principal or the board on matters relating to the school."

"To adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents in the operation of the school, in consultation with the principal".

In order to do these tasks well, the parents' association needs to have effective ways of

- Consulting with parents, so that parents can express their views on school policy matters.
- Finding out from parents about the kinds of activities that will promote parental involvement and partnership for the benefit of the students.

- Finding out from pupils about how the parents' association can be of help to them.
- Consulting with and advising the principal and the board of management.

PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes. They will be held in February (where possible) 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. Aladdin Connect will be used to assist with the scheduling of said meetings. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings may take place in classrooms, support rooms or communally in the PE hall. If there are any reasons why face-to-face meetings cannot be used for meetings (e.g. pandemic, school shut due to damage), telephone or internet will be used to facilitate meetings. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is: -

- To establish and maintain good and honest communication between the school and parents.
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school.
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To meet demand for accountability.
- 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 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 (N.R.I.T.)
- To share with the parent the problems and difficulties a child may have in school.

REPORTING TO PARENTS:

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. School 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.

REPORT CARDS TEMPLATES

The NCCA has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils, including information from standardised tests.

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.

Sacred Heart B.N.S. has adopted one of the NCCA report cards and uses it in its entirety.

Report cards will be sent to parents no later than 14 days prior to the end of the school year. School reports are kept on file and stored in accordance with latest GDPR regulations.

FORMAL MEETINGS

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in February. 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 / IEP'S

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** will take place in October and February for children with specific learning 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. If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time.

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

- Staff cannot supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are close by.
- 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.

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.

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 in order to facilitate family holidays.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The school promotes positive home-school contacts and endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of everyone within the school community. Sacred Heart BNS has a Complaints Policy that should be read in conjunction with this policy, the aims of which are identified below.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- 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 by providing an opportunity to liaise with the class teacher or special needs assistants

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 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 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 behaviour 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.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- In certain exceptional circumstances, the Gardaí may be called.
- 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 meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.
- Staffs 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 9.00 a.m. and finish at 2.45 p.m. and this time should not be interrupted.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Swift and efficient resolution of grievances
- Parent/teacher/SNA satisfaction
- Positive school community feedback
- Reviews of school policies as issues arise

SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE AT WORK

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative in 2005. It is an important piece of legislation for Board of Managements 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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed by Chairperson _____

Signed by Principal _____

To be reviewed in 2024/25 school year.