



St. Brigid's National School
Parent Communication and
Complaints Procedure

St. Brigid's National School

Parent Communication and Complaints Policy

Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff and Board of Management of St. Brigid's NS in consultation with the parents.

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Brigid's NS. 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.
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
- Become actively involved in the school Parents' Association.

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

- Monthly newsletters outlining school events and news
- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants in the June prior to their child's commencement in the school.
- 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.
- Communication via School Website to keep parents up-to-date with school events.
- Homework diary 1st - 6th class, often 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 services and school concerts.
- If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary during office hours or write a note to the class teacher requesting a meeting and outlining the reason for the meeting.
- 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 email.
- It is important that if a child is absent through illness, urgent family reason etc that a note is given to the class teacher explaining the absence.

- 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.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Formal Meetings:

Formal 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 or support rooms. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children. 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.

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 identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education

Formal meetings for students with special needs - Student Support Plans:

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Student Support Plan** will take place in September/October with a review in February and June. 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 class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:
 - a) Staff cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
 - b) It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.
 - c) It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.
3. 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.

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 of evidence that staffs use, such as conversations with the learner, data-collection, examination of students' own self-assessment data, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staff knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

Report card:

St. Brigid's NS uses a standard report template provided by the NCCA to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. It is our aim to help parents understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any 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

School Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedure:

Complaints are infrequent but the school endeavours to ensure that these would be dealt with informally and fairly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in St. Brigid's National School.

The need for this policy arises from Section 28, Education Act 1998 - procedures for processing complaints by parents against teachers.

Please Note

This policy does not cover:

1. Complaints that are being dealt with through legal channels.
2. Matters of professional competence which come under the remit of the Department of Education and Science
3. Frivolous or vexatious complaints, which do not relate to the work of a particular teacher.

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. A parent should request an appointment in writing/via telephone ensuring to outline why they wish to meet. Parents should not contact school staff at home and staff home and mobile numbers are not to be made public.
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. The principal will liaise with the class teacher and parent.

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 within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint. A note should be kept of any meeting and its outcomes, which should be agreed with the parties.

Stage 3:

1. If the complaint is not resolved, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
 - a. Supply the staff with a copy of the written complaint and
 - b. Arrange a meeting with the staff, 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 staff 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:
 - a. The staff should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
 - b. 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
 - c. The Board should they wish may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting. The decision to meet with the complainant is at the discretion of the board of management.

Stage 5:

1. Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 school days of the meeting of the Board. A complainant unhappy with the investigation/handling of the complaint by a Board of Management may bring the matter to the attention of the school patron or refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.
2. The decision of the Board shall be final.

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 or if the incident happens on the telephone the stakeholder can bring the phone conversation to a close. 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
- **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 9:00 am and finish at 2:40pm and this time should not be interrupted.**

Please note:

*In this policy 'days' means school days.

*All of the above stages must be completed in the order laid out.

*It is important to note that members of the Board of Management are nominees, not representatives. No member of the board should ever be approached with complaints or queries regarding school issues, nor should any member claim to represent the board in any way.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

In Ireland, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the duties of employers and employees in relation to the maintenance of safe workplaces. The Board of Management of a school, as the employer, "shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees." They are also obliged to assess the risks to health, safety and welfare at work, and minimize those risks through taking measures set out in the Act. In addition, they are required to report to the Health and Safety Authority incidents where employees suffer an accident or injury at work, which causes absence of 3 consecutive days or more. Employees are required to take reasonable care to protect their safety at work.

As outlined above, assaults and violence are categorized as risks to occupational health and safety, so in this context, school boards of management are required to assess the risk of assaults and violence against staff occurring and put measures in place to ensure that such risks

are minimized. In addition, they are required to make reports to the authorities in relation to incidents which occur.

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.

Success Criteria

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

Ratified by the Board of Management in February 2020.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal