

Scoil Mhuire National School
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Scoil Mhuire National School

Communication Policy

This policy was drafted and written in consultation with the Board of Management (BoM) and staff. It was created in order to provide information and guidelines regarding communication between teachers and parents in the context of Scoil Mhuire NS. It also outlines the complaint procedures at the end of this document for parents.

Aims

- Develop close links between home and school
- Enable parents to collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Outline the various forms of home-school communication
- Share the responsibility of maintaining the school's ethos, values and distinctive character
- Encourage positive and respectful participation in parent/teacher meetings,
- Affirm the professional role of all staff members in the school
- Encourage active involvement in the school/parents' association
- Encourage participation in policy development and decision-making processes.

Forms of Communication

- Written communication – Aladdin/emails/texts
- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – Term 3 prior to starting in the school
- Individual Parent/teacher meetings annually (Junior Infants – 6th Class)
- Staff meetings during Croke Park Hours
- **AS class** will have more frequent meetings, if required, with Principal or deputy principal and the staff within the class.
- Parents receive a written school report at the end of each school year for each of their children.
- Meetings with parents whose children have additional needs
- Parent/Teacher consultation throughout the year, if required by appointment only

- **AS class**- staff communicate daily with family through a communication journal.
- Through the Parents' Association, 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 website
- Termly newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school information
- School Homework diary can be used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents are requested to sign the diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school concerts etc.
- Parents Association AGM

Parents/guardians are welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. If a parent wishes to contact a teacher or staff member, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time convenient to both parties. In Scoil Mhuire NS. our Policy is to first speak with the teacher/staff member by phone, if required an in-person meeting can then be arranged via the school secretary.

It is very important that the school is immediately informed of family events/situations that occur which may cause anxiety to the child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education. In all matters pertaining to the well-being and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians will be consulted by staff.

In the case of separated parents, they shall both be contacted when the child starts in the school or when the school is informed of the separation to identify the most appropriate communication arrangements for their particular situation. Both parents will be sent a copy of the end of year report unless otherwise requested in writing and agreed.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes. Meetings for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class will be arranged via Aladdin connect. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings may take place in classrooms or support rooms. Parents can enrich teachers' knowledge of their child's progress by providing further information about his/her learning at home.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To inform parents how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that parents and teachers are working together
- To inform parents of problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- To discuss 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 make joint decisions about the child's education
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- Parents can enrich teacher's knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

Reporting to Parents/Guardians

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents to support their children by sharing useful information with parents about the progress that children are achieving in the education system. Teachers draw on the following sources of evidence:

- conversations with the child
- teacher's observations on the child's progress in reaching objectives laid down in the teacher's short-term and long-term planning
- examination of students' own self-assessment data
- teacher's observations of the child's engagement with tasks
- outcomes of assessments, tests and other tasks
- examples of students' work.

End of Year Reports

End of year reports are sent home each June to inform parent of their child's progress during the year. The school uses the template laid down by the NCCA. They also have additional useful information for parents on their website www.ncca.ie. The teachers will report under the following headings:

- Your child's learning dispositions
- Your child's social and personal development
- Your child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- You and your child's learning

Meetings with a Support Teacher

These meetings pertain to children with additional needs who have been allocated additional hours by the SENO (Special Educational Needs Officer). A meeting between parents and the support teacher is arranged for September/October in order to discuss the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). 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 Meetings with Parents/Guardians (Junior infants to 6th class)

The school encourages communication between parents and staff. However, meetings with the teacher cannot be arranged during teaching time (9.20-3pm).

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

- Teachers cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

Keeping in mind that schools are very busy places, parents are asked, whenever possible, to contact the secretary to arrange an appointment to see the class teacher or principal. (Parents can share the topic of the requested meeting and length of time required, with the secretary to enable the school to prepare adequately)

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, if possible, 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, dancing equipment, sports gear etc, this can be facilitated through the secretary's office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

Informal Meetings with Parents/Guardians (AS Class)

1. The school encourages communication between parents and staff. However, meetings with the teacher cannot be arranged for during teaching time.
2. Meetings with the teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress

are discouraged on a number of grounds:

(a) Quiet drop off and collection is encouraged due to potential sensory overload for children

(b) Communication will be addressed through the journal however, the principal is open to meeting with parents as and when the need arises.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent in Scoil Mhuire; however, we aim to resolve any matter informally, fairly and quickly. Appendix 1 outlines the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in Scoil Mhuire NS. These steps are followed when dealing with any form of complaint between adults in the school community. Please also refer to Scoil Mhuire Parental Complaints Procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

Positive and respectful communication is of great importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the partners in education e.g. the staff, parents, board members, parent association, and the wider community. 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 partners in education are responsible for their own behaviour in the school.

For example:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with dignity and 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 all children attending our school with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff will only discuss school matters relating to the parent/guardian's own child or their own concern. Parents do not make representation for other parents within a class. The school staff will respect the child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When meetings are arranged, the topic of the meeting must be made clear beforehand, and an agreed reasonable duration for the meeting. Every effort should be made not to exceed the agreed time frame.

- Communication is a joint venture. If parents have questions or queries they must make an appointment with the class teacher or principal. Parents do not make representation for other parents within a class.
- Staff are generally available to listen to a quick question/issue immediately after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment must be made via the secretary at a convenient time for both parties. Classes begin at 9.20 am and finish at 3.00pm and this time must not be interrupted.

Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) is an important piece of legislation for Boards of Managements and for those who work in schools. 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, Health & Safety Policy, Complaints Procedure Guidelines, and the Dignity and Respect in the Workplace Policy which deal with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours.

Success Criteria

- Record of number and nature of complaints and how they were resolved.
- Feedback from the school community/visitors to the school that a positive, welcoming atmosphere can be felt in the school.
- Feedback from school staff, parents, pupils, etc on how the policy is working.
- Good relationships and good communication between parents and school staff.

Review

This Policy was reviewed and ratified by the BoM on: 14th December 2023

Chairperson BoM: *Sr Carmel O'Halloran* Principal/Secretary BoM:
Caragh Sugrue

Sr. Carmel O'Halloran
Caragh Sugrue

This policy will be reviewed November 2025.

Appendix 1

Complaints Procedure for Adults

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that they be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. These steps are followed when dealing with any form of complaint between adults in Scoil Mhuire NS.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

1. If Party A wishes to make a complaint, they should firstly speak with Party B with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where they are unable to resolve the complaint, Party A should speak with the Principal with a view to resolving the matter
3. If the complaint is still unresolved, Party A, if they so wish, should speak with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the matter.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and Party A wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge a formal written complaint 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 Party B in question and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3 – Formal Stage

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
 - a) Supply the Party B with a copy of the written complaint and
 - b) Arrange a meeting with Party B, 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 – Formal Stage

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, Party A and Party B 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 shall be followed:
 - a. Party B shall be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
 - b. He/she shall be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and shall be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
 - c. The Board may arrange a meeting with Party A, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

Stage 5 – Formal Stage

1. Following the Board's investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to Party A and Party B within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.