



### **Introductory statement**

This policy was developed by the staff of Ballyagran NS, the Board of Management and the parents association in the school year 2018-2019.

When school closures were mandated by the government lockdown, a remote teaching and learning approach was adopted by all staff and parents to facilitate a new way of communicating, using digital software, devices and programmes.

This policy was reviewed in August 2020 in collaboration with education partners, to reflect the impact that Covid 19 would have on how we communicate. Guidance issued by DES and NPHET has had a significant say in how we approach the new school year and how we intend to communicate as a school community when we return to school.

The purpose of a communication policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Ballyagran 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.
- 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.
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

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

- The school will use phone, email, Text-a-parent and where appropriate, paper notes to communicate with parents on an ongoing basis.
- We will send a monthly newsletter via email to inform parents of news and developments. (This may be reviewed when the school Lotto resumes.
- Public Meetings for parents of all classes will take place via Zoom for the foreseeable future.

- Parent/teacher meetings in November will now take place via phone (*or as advised by the school*). All P/T meetings will be virtual as in line with our Covid Response Policy parents cannot enter the school grounds or premises without a prior arranged appointment.
- Parents will receive a school report of each pupil in June of each school year as per usual.
- Meetings with parents with any concerns will be facilitated where possible via phone/virtual/digital – please contact us through the office, email or Seesaw with due respect and consideration for the personal time of teachers.
- Regular consultation throughout the year with parents of pupils with special needs will be conducted via phone/online.
- Written communication – only written notes *e.g. in a pupil's homework journal*, through the school website or through the [info@ballyagrannationalschool.com](mailto:info@ballyagrannationalschool.com) email address will be accepted. It is not appropriate or acceptable for parents to contact school staff on their personal phones to discuss school related matters, either in or out of school time.
- It is not appropriate to contact staff members on social media to discuss school related matters.
- 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 weekly newsletter
- Weekly newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns. As we rely on hard copies to communicate this information, we are currently making arrangements to have this switched to email form.
- Homework sheets (jnrs & snrs) will now be emailed weekly by your child's class teacher. No school bag, or items other than the child, their hand towel and their lunch box will pass between home and school daily. Homework will be organised in due course.
- Parents are ordinarily invited to events throughout the year *e.g. Sports Day/Family Fun Day, school masses and school concerts*. However for the moment and as a result of dealing with Covid-19 these events will be virtual where possible, or kept to small groups where social distancing can happen.
- Involvement of parents in the 'Religion Grow in Love Programme' section for parents

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary or email the respective teacher using the format outlined below to arrange a suitable time.

*e.g.* [dcarroll@ballyagrannationalschool.com](mailto:dcarroll@ballyagrannationalschool.com)

***First letter of the teacher's name followed by their surname @ school email address .com***

SNAs will refer parents to teachers to discuss queries or concerns pertaining to a child's education or progress. Bus Escorts will also refer parents with any queries or concerns to the relevant teacher. Messages from home to school should come directly from parent to teacher via agreed channels. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers, to ensure that pupils are not privy to this communication. Home-school communication of this nature should not be made accessible to the pupil themselves. This system is intended to safeguard the child from unnecessary anxiety or confusion. *During Covid-19 restrictions, all home-school communication will take place via email now – no physical books to pass between home and school until further notice.*

**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.

**Parent/Teacher meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes (Circular 14/04). Where possible, they will be held 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. **During Covid-19 restrictions, all “meetings” will take place via phone call.**

PT meetings should take place immediately after school time, (occasionally P/T meeting may need to take place during the school day depending on the nature of the communication).

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.

If it is found that an issue requires more time to discuss further, or a review is recommended, a further discussion will be arranged with the class teacher to ensure that PT meetings do not run over a reasonable time frame and impinge on the agreed schedule of meetings. Again, **during Covid-19 restrictions, all “meetings” will take place via phone call.**

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.

*Circular 56/2011 Initial Steps in the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy Strategy* has been adopted by the Board of Management. References to parent/school communication are:

**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 and documented progress on objectives and milestones reached in their short and long-term planning, examination of students’ own self-assessment data, documented observations of the learner’s engagement with tasks, 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 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 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

All primary schools **must** use one of the report card templates (available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)) for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular.

**Formal Meetings**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings will provisionally take place in late November (see above). Further details will issue closer to this date. 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/guardian email or posted to their home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents. Please do not send in items with your child. Instead return items in the post, leave in the bunker inside the school wall for collection (if appropriate) or arrange via phone/email to get it to your child's teacher.
- 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. This will not be facilitated or arranged unless requested. **During Covid-19 restrictions, all "meetings" will take place via phone call.**

**Formal Meetings-IEPs**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** will take place in September/October and will be reviewed in January/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.

IEPs are now referred to as SSPs (Student Support Plans) and meetings to review these plans will not take place until October at the earliest this year.

**Informal Parent/Staff Meetings –**

***No informal meetings will be encouraged to take place due to Covid-19 restrictions (see Covid Response Plan/Policy for further details around parent access to school grounds).***

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 endeavour to facilitate an urgent phone call if it is possible at the time. All other calls of a non-urgent nature will have to wait until the teacher is free to return your call. This request will also be extended for calls relating to the principal.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc, this can be organised by calling in advance the secretary's office. Late items or items needed to be returned to the school such as signed or completed forms etc, can be emailed, or posted or alternatively they can be left in the bunker inside the school gate in the morning for collection by the staff. Please do not go into the school reception area or call to the secretary without an appointment.

Under normal circumstances, parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays. Punctuality is also encouraged.

**Important:** Anyone who has travelled to a country not a Green Listed Country (keep abreast of current changes to this list) must self-isolate for the mandatory 14 days. Please do not ignore this measure.

### **Complaints Procedure**

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these be dealt with in an informal, fair and timely manner. 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, firstly contact the **staff member** with a view to resolving the complaint – through the agreed, current communication channels.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class staff he/she should contact 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-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 (via email) 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 and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### **Stage 3**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, 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 may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

### **Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School**

Positive, timely 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 are reminded that aggressive or inappropriate language at school matches will not be tolerated.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect at all times.
- All parents are asked to engage directly with their relevant staff member and not through channels such as parent nominees to the board of management, parents' association representatives, other staff members e.g. SNAs, bus escorts, secretary or other teachers.
- 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 members 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 9:10 am and finish at 2:50pm and this time should not be interrupted.

### **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for BoMs 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. A copy of this circular can be found in the school's Health and Safety folder.

### **Review, Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Ballyagran NS Board of Management at its meeting held on Wednesday 12th August 2020. It was subsequently edited and then circulated to the school community (BoM, Staff and Parents) in advance of the beginning of the school year.

It will be reviewed as NPHET advice changes or as DoES guidance dictates.

Signed: *Cn J Shire*

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Date: 02/12/2020

Signed: *Diarmuid Carroll*

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Date: 02/12/2020