

St. Mary's N.S., Orila Tce., Cobh
Positive Communication Policy
April 2018

Introductory statement

The educational partnership between parent and teacher is of paramount importance in St. Mary's NS. Positive communication is a crucial key to this good partnership. A proactive respectful relationship between parents and staff will have a considerable impact on the quality of the relationship between pupil and staff member. A clear understanding of the policies and principles underlying the roles and responsibilities of both parents and staff can be accessed in the various school policies available on the school website, www.stmarysnscobh.com. Collaborative teamwork will maximise your child's Primary School educational experience.

This policy was developed by the staff of St. Mary's NS, the Board of Management and the parents association in the school year 2018. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Mary'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.

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.
- 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.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – May
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in October.
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings usually take place in September/October for pupils with special educational needs and review meetings happen intermittently as the need arise during the year.
- 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
- Written communication

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- School Website
- Through the Parents' Association , parents are often invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of certain school policies.
- Letters, newsletters and text messages keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Home work 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
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Open Night, Sports Day, school masses and school concerts
- Involvement of parents in the Grow in Love/Alive O section for parents

Parent/Teacher meetings

St. Mary's NS affords parents one formal parent/teacher meetings per year. You will receive notification of this meetings from the class teacher and it takes place in the first term of the academic year. Occasionally the school will request extra meetings for SEN or for emotional and behavioural reasons.

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.

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'

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work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staffs 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

Parents will receive the Annual School Report in June every year and parents may request a meeting if it is required for further clarification on aspects of the report.

The Dos and Don'ts of the Practice of Good Communication,

Here is a helpful list, which has been carefully compiled from the experience and the wisdom that hindsight brings. It includes input from staff, pupils, parents and the Board of Management of St.Mary's NS, whose commitment to the ethos of positive respectful communication is at the core of all our school business.

Do:

- know that our all policies and procedures in St. Mary's NS were designed to afford a happy & safe environment to facilitate a high standard of education to all our pupils
- get into the habit of using the homework diary (or writing a note in the case of Infants) to pass on a quick message to the class teacher
- read all communications from the school and know that you are responsible for keeping your contact details updated at all times.
- always make an appointment if you need clarification. Frequently your child's account may be lacking in contextual details or facts that may give rise to confusion and upset. Frequently the teacher may be lacking important information about your child. All can be easily sorted out with a friendly chat.
- always inform the class teacher/ principal if there are any circumstances, be they domestic, medical or otherwise, that may affect your child in any way.
- acknowledge that there are many sides to every story and that it can take some time to gather all sides and all facts. The class teacher can fill you in on the extra details in a follow up call/meeting and we find that this is usually very beneficial information for parents and pupils alike.
- acknowledge the school's role in investigating situations that occur in school and allow time for this to take place.
- be accountable always for your child's online activity. This is not the school's responsibility, though we will provide an annual training to parents on the topic of cyber safety which is also a part of the

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SPHE curriculum for the senior classes. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of keeping your children safe online.

- Always show respect on social media for all the members of the school community.
- appreciate that the school cannot give you information regarding another pupil and be assured that your child's information is considered confidential also.
- familiarise yourself with our comprehensive anti-bullying policy and acknowledge your responsibility as a parent in supporting same.
- discuss the difference between bullying and one off incidences with your child and encourage your child to **report**. Meet with the class teacher and collaborate on a plan of action. There will always be a follow up phonecall/meeting to review and assess the situation usually after a month has passed. In most cases the parent will state that the matter is resolved.
- acknowledge the role of the parent in ensuring your child is prepared for school everyday with everything that is required from sleep and nutrition to homework and schoolbag organisation. This simple, consistent form of parental support can be a powerful form of positive communication with the school.
- know that your child is your 'number one' priority and that you must be available or have a designated person available to collect your child in the event of sickness, injury or emotional upheaval.
- know that the class teacher or Special Education Teacher is the staff member available for meeting. Only where there is an issue which has **not** been resolved with the class teacher/SET should the principal be requested to meet (as per complaints policy).

Don't:

- use the school's email for communicating a complaint, nor as a forum for the expression of opinions. We like to give concerns the time they deserve. Make that appointment and be reassured.
- expect that the school has any legal right to investigate matters that occur outside of school.
- expect a staff member to be available to speak with you without a prior appointment.
- assume that nothing is being done. Communicate and acknowledge what has worked. With your child's teacher, collaboratively review and plan new strategies to further improve your child's schooling.
- be late collecting your child. Your child is your responsibility at 1.30/2.30pm. The school is very understanding about non-regular incidences, which can arise in everyone's life.
- assume that pupils of St. Mary's NS are the school's responsibility after 2.20pm (whether in uniform or not) unless they are in an after-school activity.
- expect a staff member to remain in a meeting where respectful communication is lacking. Personal or hurtful comments will not be sustained. In such incidences meetings will be rescheduled.
- expect that the school will inform you of every detail of your child's school life as it arises. There are not enough hours in the day for this. But the staff are available to provide information when you need them.

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Conclusion

In St. Mary's NS we have many SPHE programmes to teach our pupils the lifelong skills of resilience and wellbeing. Parents can encourage their children to understand that life can be full of ups and downs and help them cope with life as it is and prepare them for increased independence as they grow older. Parents can encourage their children to confide in a trusted adult, at home or in school, so that we as parents and teachers can develop their life skills at home and in school

A school environment is human in nature. We are people working with people coming from a myriad of different settings in any given day. As parents, pupils and teachers we can only do our best. We must all afford each other due regard for our human limitations and instead be proactive and collaborative in our support of each other.

It is wonderful when parents acknowledge the good work of your school as it means a lot! Positive feedback contributes greatly to the overall spirit within the school and everyone loves to hear they are doing a good job...pupils, parents and staff alike!

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: John Fitzpatrick Date: April 2018