



Gowran National School,
Gowran,
Co. Kilkenny.
056-7726221
Roll Number-18064c

Parents in Partnership and School Communication Policy

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

This policy was drafted through a collaborative process involving staff, parents and the Board of Management.

It was made available for review to the Parent Association and ratified by the Board of Management.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and communication in Gowran 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
- Parents and teachers must participate in meetings **in a positive and respectful manner**. Aggressive behaviour, in any form, will not be tolerated by the Board of Management. ***In order to meet it's obligations under the Health and Safety Act while also taking into consideration Circular 40/97, a Board of Management may instruct staff to refuse to meet a parent who has acted in a physically or verbally aggressive manner. All communication regarding children's progress will be sent to parents/guardians in writing.***
- 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.

STAFF ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- Establish good communication with parents/guardians of pupils in their class.
- Keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress and behaviour both positive and negative.
- Listen to what parents/guardians have to say and encourage them to bring any concerns to you at an early stage to avoid situations escalating.
- Be aware of the role of parents/guardians as prime educators and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help her reach her potential.
- Value and respect the input of parents as they know their child best.

STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO FACILITATE OPEN COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS:

- ✚ Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – mid June.
 - ✚ Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November. ***If deemed necessary by a teacher or the principal, meetings will take place with another teacher/the principal present.***
 - ✚ Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
 - ✚ Meetings with parents whose children have special needs with resource teachers.
 - ✚ Consultation throughout the year.
 - ✚ Written communication/Text messages.
- **Teacher's work email addresses are also communicated to parents.**

These email addresses have been put in place to develop seamless communication between parents and teachers.

These email addresses are intended for basic school queries such as homework, absence notes, details of extra-curricular activities etc...

They are not intended for communication of grievances/complaints or issues which are causing general upset. If a parent has a grievance or complaint or a concern around their child's learning or welfare (*including alleged bullying behaviour*), they should email the class teacher or the secretary and request a telephone call or a face to face meeting as per the *Nationally Agreed Complaints Procedure*. **See Page 4, 5 & 6 below.**

Airing concerns or facts via a face to face meeting or phonecall gives all parties an opportunity to listen and respond, therefore providing the best chance of a resolution being reached.

The school also has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is available on the school website or on request by emailing secretary@gowranns.ie
In all instances of alleged bullying, the principal will be informed by the class teacher.

As an employer, the board of management recognise that, similar to many forms of electronic communications, there is a risk that the nationally agreed procedures below may not be followed or of employees being subjected to frivolous or vexatious complaints or allegations.

To protect employees, the board of management may instruct a staff member to block direct communications with a specific individual.

In this instance, the board of management will still encourage and foster respectful communications to and from *all parents* in the school.

If the parent has a grievance/complaint or a concern around their child's learning or welfare (*including alleged bullying behaviour*), they should contact the secretary and request a telephone call or a face to face meeting as per the *Nationally Agreed Complaints Procedure*. **See Page 4, 5 & 6 below.**

If requested or deemed necessary by a teacher, principal or parent, meetings will take place with another teacher/the other parent or the principal present.

- ✚ Throughout the school year, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies when appropriate. 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
- ✚ Regular notifications (text or written) and the school website keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- ✚ Homework diary, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers.
- ✚ Parents are invited to share their expertise with their child's class teacher in a structured way
- ✚ Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. sports day, school masses and school concerts, sports days, coffee mornings, carol services etc.
- ✚ Involvement of parents in relevant activities.

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Parents of Infants are also welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. Infant teachers will be available between 2.00pm and 3.00pm for this when necessary.

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, she can contact the school secretary or email the school to arrange a suitable time for a phone call or a face to face meeting.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to the child and therefore may adversely affect 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 the first term, towards the end of 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. Parents will be given the opportunity to select preferred times on a note from the class teacher within the outlined time frame as per circular. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings may take place in classrooms and resource rooms. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children. The HSCL(where applicable) will try to ensure that all parents attend and will liaise with parents and staff to rearrange appointments where necessary.

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 all positives about the child
- 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 about the progress that their children are achieving in the education system. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that staff 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 learners engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of students 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

Gowran NS uses standard report card templates for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school.

FORMAL MEETINGS:

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in November. 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 September/October. 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:

- The School encourages communication between parents and staff at all times, however it must be appreciated that the class teacher has full responsibility for his/her class from 9.20-3pm.(2pm for Infants)
- Teachers appreciate the need for parents to communicate informally outside of formal PT meetings and are always open and willing to meet parents at a time suitable to all parties.
- Meetings with the class teacher at the classroom door to discuss concern is discouraged on a number of grounds:
 1. Staff cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
 2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.
 3. It can/may be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.
- *During a Parent-Teacher Meeting (**Formal or Informal**), it is not appropriate for the specific child and/or other children to be present. This can hinder the benefits of open and honest communication between parent and teacher. It is the responsibility of the parent to decide how much feedback to share with the child. It is at the discretion of the class teacher.*

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

Complaints are infrequent, but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

The INTO and Primary School Management reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure.

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Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the board of management, except where those complaints are deemed by the board to be:

- on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills;
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher s/he should approach 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

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the board of management.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:
 - a. supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - b. arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher 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 referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.
3. If the board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - a. the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
 - b. the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;

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- c. the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
- d. the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
- e. the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and
- f. the meeting of the board of management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.
3. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
4. Primary School Management or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months’ notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement ‘days’ means school days.

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 working in Gowran NS should feel safe. Anybody entering our building should also 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 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 discussed properly and be resolved. Classes begin at 9:20 am and finish at 3:00pm 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 the BOM and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

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It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats (written or otherwise), 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 or accessed upon request from the school office.

The Board of Management of Gowran NS shall, if necessary, consider and implement measures which will prevent or minimise the risk of assault, physical, verbal or otherwise, to the employees of the Board. The effectiveness of agreed procedures shall be reviewed where necessary.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management