

Home/School Communication Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy has been developed by the staff, parents and Board of Management of Listellick National School in January 2016. The purpose of this policy is to provide information guidelines on Parent/Staff meetings and Parent/Staff communication in Listellick National School.

We strive to achieve mutual support between staff and parents so that the education of our children can be efficient and effective. We encourage and operate an open door policy and all parents/guardians are encouraged to develop close links with the Principal and teaching staff and to share the responsibility for the education of the children.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication with parents:

- Formal parent/teacher meetings are held annually in November where parents/guardians and class teachers are given the opportunity to meet on a one to one basis. However parents are free to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child's progress.
- All teachers are available to meet parents/guardians by appointment.
- Parents/guardians of children with special educational needs meet with teachers throughout the year to discuss and monitor progress.
- End of Year School Reports are issued annually.
- A Homework Diary is used from 1st to 6th class to relay messages between teachers and parents/guardians. Messages are signed. Infant teachers use weekly Homework Sheets to communicate with parents/guardians.
- Our school website, www.listellickprimary.com, informs parents/guardians about school matters, activities and upcoming events.
- Our website includes a link to the School Blog where photos of school life are posted and updated regularly.
- The Principal sends out Newsletters during the year to keep parents/guardians informed about school matters, activities and upcoming events.
- The school calendar is issued at the beginning of every school year to keep parents/guardians informed of school events, holidays and planned school closures. This calendar is also available on the school website.
- Parents/guardians receive Newsletters, flyers etc. via email.
- A text service is used to provide reminders and emergency updates to all parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians are invited to all school services, school concerts, Christmas Plays, Sports Days, and Open Days etc.

Illness and Absences

If your child is sick or absent from school for any reason, you will need to send an explanatory note to the class teacher. This note can be sent on your child's return to school. 1st to 6th classes have a section at the back of their Homework Journals where you can fill in the absence details (please leave the note in the diary).

Parents/guardians of Junior and Senior Infants are asked to send a short handwritten note to the class teacher. Reasons for absences will be recorded on our attendance system. Please note that you do not need to ring the office every time your child is absent.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

The aims of Parent/Teacher meetings are:

- To let parents/guardians know how their children are progressing at school
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside of school
- To establish an ongoing relationship with parents/guardians
- To help teachers and parents/guardians to get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together

Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings

Arranging parent/teacher meetings while children are in school is difficult. Informal communication can take place when children are assembling at school in the morning or when going home in the evening. This informal chat is important and often unavoidable. However meetings with classroom teachers at the classroom door during class time to discuss a child's concerns/progress are discouraged for a number of reasons:

1. A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent/guardian.
2. It is extremely difficult to be discreet with so many children close by
3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent/guardian is talking to a teacher at the classroom door.

Occasions can occur where a parent/guardian needs to speak to a staff member urgently and these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The principal will, where possible, facilitate such meetings and make every effort to minimise disruption.

Family events/situations which impact your child

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. Please note that this applies to serious situations only.

Approaching other people's children

As the Board of Management is responsible for the Health and Safety of all staff and students, parents/guardians are requested not to approach or reprimand another person's child while on the school premises or on school related activities.

Dropping off equipment during school day

Parents/guardians wishing to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc. must do so through the school office as it is important to keep classroom interruptions to a minimum.

Procedure for dealing with complaints

The Board of Management of Listellick National School has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teacher's union and management bodies, which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998. The purpose of the procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in 5 stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint. Complaints are rare but we wish these complaints to be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

INTO/Management Bodies Complaints Procedures for Primary Schools:

Introduction

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
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school
- 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

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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

- 2.1 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.

- 2.2 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 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

- 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

- 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 3.1 (b)
- 4.2 If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the teacher and the complaint should be so informed within three days of the Board meeting.
- 4.3 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
 - (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 meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1 (b)

Stage 5

- 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 meeting of the Board
- 5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final
- 5.3 The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years
- 5.4 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 importance in our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders i.e. 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

- 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 may need to 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/guardians 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.
- Teachers are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning or after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment convenient to both parties should be arranged. This ensures that issues can be resolved.
- Classes begin at 8.55am and finish at 1.40pm (infants) and 2.40pm (1st to 6th) and these times should not be interrupted.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in February 2016 and will be reviewed as and when the need arises.

Signed

(Chairperson BOM Listellick N.S.)