

# PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

## **Introductory Statement:**

The purpose of our policy on Parent/School Partnership is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/teacher meetings and communication in Ratoath Senior National School.

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.

This policy was reviewed by the Staff, Board of Management and the Parents' Association.

## **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 and in the Parents' 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 the class teacher at an early stage to avoid situations escalating
- Be aware of the role of parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help each child reach his/her potential
- Value and respect the input of parents as they know their child best

## **Structures in Place to Facilitate Open Communication and Consultation with Parents:**

- Meeting for parents/guardians of new third class children in September
- Parent/Teacher meetings one-to-one in November
- Parents receive a progress report on their child at the Parent/Teacher meetings
- Parents receive school report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Individual Education Plan meetings with parents whose children have special needs are held with the Special Education Needs teachers
- Teachers consult with parents throughout the year as the need arises
- Written communication between teachers and parents occurs when the need arises
- Through the Parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of 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 through the school website
- Regular notifications via letter, email, text and the school website keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- The homework diary is used to relay messages between parents and teachers. Parents are asked to sign a message as verification that the message has been seen.
- Parents are requested to sign the homework diary each night to certify that homework has been completed

- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school matches and competitions, class plays and the 6<sup>th</sup> class Graduation Mass

Parents are also welcome to make an appointment at any time throughout the year to meet with their child's class teacher. Teachers are not available to meet parents during school hours. If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, the parent is welcome to contact the school secretary to arrange an appointment for a mutually convenient time.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if a family event or situation occurs which may cause anxiety to the child and therefore may adversely affect the child's 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.

Ratoath Senior National School complies fully with the Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children document and the school has a Child Protection Policy in place. The school also follows the Child Protection Procedures for Schools as laid out by the Department of Education & Skills. Under the legislation the school is obliged to make a referral to TUSLA if a child makes a disclosure or if there is a concern in relation to child protection. The school does not investigate as this is the role of TUSLA and the Gardaí. The school merely makes the referral.

### **Parent/Teacher Meetings:**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes in accordance with 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 appointment times will be drawn up by the school secretary. The school will attempt to co-ordinate appointment times with siblings throughout the rest of Ratoath Senior National School and also with Ratoath Junior National School. Meetings will 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. A progress report on each child is issued at the Parent/Teacher meetings.

### **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 positive attributes about the children
- To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the children may have in school
- To review with the parent the children's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the children 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 children'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 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 learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of student's work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich teacher's knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

### **Report Cards:**

Schools should help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. Ratoath Senior National School has adopted the NCCA standard report template to assist teachers in reporting information about the progress of primary school pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests.

### **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

Ratoath Senior National School 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 - Individual Education Plan:**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings on the subject of the Individual Education Plan will take place in the first term. 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/Teacher Meetings:**

- Ratoath Senior National School encourages communication between parents and teachers
- Meetings with the class teacher in the morning to discuss concerns is discouraged on a number of grounds:
  1. Teachers cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent
  2. It is difficult to be discreet when the child's class is standing close by

3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to a teacher in front of his/her peers

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a class teacher urgently. Meetings, which are of an urgent nature, may need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to facilitate such a meeting making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any teaching and learning time. It may be possible for the information to be passed on to the Principal or the school secretary so as not to interfere with teaching and learning time.

### **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.

#### **Stage 1- Informal Stage:**

- A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint
- 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
- 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:**

- 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
- The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff member and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### **Stage 3:**

- If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board of Management:
  - a. Supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and
  - b. Arrange a meeting with the staff member, and where applicable, the Principal, with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within ten days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### **Stage 4:**

- If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within ten days of the meeting
- If the Board of Management considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff member and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the Board of Management meeting
- If the Board of Management considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - a) The staff member 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 of Management and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board of Management and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
  - c) The Board of Management may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting

### Stage 5:

Following the Board of Management's investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board of Management in writing to the staff member and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the Board of Management. The decision of the Board of Management shall be final.

### 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 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. Use of an aggressive tone is 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 be called.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff should not be asked by parents to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is requested 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.
- Should a parent need to have a discussion or a follow-up meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. Classes begin at 9.20a.m and finish at 3.00p.m and this time should not be interrupted.

### Safety, Health and Welfare at Work:

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for the Board of Management and for those who work in schools, as schools 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 Department of Education and Skills Circular 40/97 and Circular 61/17 - Assaults on Teachers/School Employees, 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 Ratoath Senior National School's Health and Safety folder, on the school website and in the Plean Scoile.

### Ratified by the Board of Management

|         |                                    |           |
|---------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Signed: |                                    |           |
|         | Chairperson of Board of Management | Principal |
| Date:   |                                    |           |

Date of next review: