



# St Francis National School

Rock Road, Blackrock, County Louth, A91 NH0V  
 Tel: 042 9366993 Email: admin@stfrancisns.ie Web: www.stfrancisns.ie

## Parent/Staff Communication Policy & Grievance Procedures

*In reading this policy, it should be noted that the term "Parent(s)" also includes Guardians and should be interpreted as such.*

This policy was developed by the staff of St Francis NS, the Board of Management and the parents.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St Francis 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.

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### Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in any correspondence, conversations or 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's Parent Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

## **Access to the School**

All appointments with teaching staff and/or school principal must be made through the school office or via the Aladdin Connect App. Our school day begins at 8.45am. Any child arriving after 9.00am must come through the front door and sign the late book in the office.

## **School Communication**

We understand that parents play a pivotal role in their children's education and as such we encourage open communication between home and school. Open communication is an important factor in encouraging positive behaviour and relationships in the school.

Parents are encouraged to talk in confidence about any significant developments, past or present, in a child's life which may affect the child's learning or behaviour.

Parents are asked to allow time for pupils and teachers to settle into their new class in the month of September.

## **Methods of communication:**

- Parent/Teacher annual meeting
- Parent/Teacher appointment made through the office or through the teacher via the Aladdin Connect App. Please indicate the reason for the meeting (academic/social/health/personal). This helps the teacher prepare for the meeting.
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- Aladdin Connect App (At least one parent or guardian must have access to the app on their mobile device)
- See-Saw Classroom App
- School phone
- School website
- School Facebook (closed group)
- School email (school/principal/teacher emails are on the website)

## **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
- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
- Consultation throughout the year by appointment only
- Written communication: this is usually done via the Aladdin Connect App. In line with our Green School ethos, we encourage digital rather than printed communication.
- Pupil absences and the reason for them are communicated between home and school via the Aladdin Connect App.

- Through the Parent's Association Meetings and WhatsApp group, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies. The necessary policies are posted on the school website as they are updated.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school masses/concerts
- Invitations to participate in paired reading project
- School Facebook page managed by the PA and the school office, its purpose being the promotion and celebration of school activities

**Personal messaging with staff on Facebook and social media regarding school related matters is not permitted.**

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, they can contact the teacher directly via Aladdin Connect, by phone to the school office or directly by email to arrange a suitable time.

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 their education. In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents 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. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. If necessary, meetings may take place via phone call. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

1. To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
2. To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
3. To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
4. To help children realise that home and school are working together
5. To meet demands for accountability
6. To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
7. To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
8. To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
9. To learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing

10. To identify areas of tension and disagreement
11. To identify ways in which parents can help their children
12. To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education

*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 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 students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich the staff's knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

### **Report card templates**

Schools should help parents to fully understand the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. The National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (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.

### **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

### **Special classes/Special Education Teaching Parent/Staff Meetings**

Parent/staff meetings on the subject of the Individual Education Plan/Student Support File will take place during the year. 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. 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 aim to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc., this can be done through the school office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays.

### **Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures for Parents**

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with respectfully, informally, fairly, and quickly. If the complaint involves other pupils, this will be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Behaviour Policy. Appropriate action will be taken for all parties involved but we will only report back to you on **your** child.

The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management. Unwritten complaints may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

still unresolved the parent should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

#### **Stage 1**

1. A parent who wishes to make a complaint should make an appointment with the class teacher, through the school office, with a view to resolving the complaint. The nature of the complaint should be briefly, but clearly, stated in advance, either verbally or in writing to the teacher. **Classes begin at 8.50am and finish at 2:30pm and this time should not be interrupted.**
2. Any parent approaching the principal with a complaint will be reminded that it is more appropriate to discuss and hopefully resolve the issue with the class teacher in the first instance.
3. Parents are asked to treat the staff member with respect. Meetings will be cancelled and the Board of Management will be informed if parents do not conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

4. Where the parent is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher they should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it. An appointment should be arranged through the office, briefly, but clearly outlining the nature of the complaint.
5. Parents are expected to treat the principal with respect. Meetings will be cancelled and the Board of Management will be informed if parents do not conduct themselves in a respectful manner.

### **Stage 2**

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further they 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.

### **Stage 3**

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board of Management,

- 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.

### **Stage 4**

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management
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 and the complainant should be informed that 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 their case to the board in response to the written statement of the complainant. 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.

## **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 as soon as possible. (For clarification ref circular 0049/2018 Re Teachers and Principals and Circular 0072/2011 re Special Needs Assistants).
2. The decision of the board shall be final.

### **Complaint regarding an SNA or other Staff Member:**

If the complaint by the parent is against an SNA or secretary (or other staff member), then Stages 1 to 5 above in so far as they are relevant and appropriate apply.

### **Complaint regarding the Principal:**

If however, the complaint by the parent is against the principal two different courses of action may apply depending on whether (a) the complaint is about the principal's handling of an original complaint against a teacher or other staff member or (b) if the complaint refers to the principal's own conduct of his/her work in the school.

- If (a) (handling of a complaint) the Chairperson, on learning of this complaint should meet with the principal and decide whether the principal is acting in compliance with stages 1 to 5 above. If satisfied that this is so, then the parent will be so informed.
- If the Chairperson isn't satisfied, then the principal should be instructed to act in compliance with stages 1 to 5 above, and the parent informed accordingly.
- If (b) (principal's conduct) the principal is also entitled to Stages 1 to 5 as set out above, with the following accommodations given, his/her central role in such stages.
- In Stages 1 and 2 the principal shall try to reach a solution to the complaint with the parent, keeping note of his/her proposed solutions and according actions.
- If there is no solution following Stages 1 and 2, the parent should be directed by the principal to make a complaint in writing to the Chairperson, who will deliberate on the complaint in the manner set out.
- Stages 4 and 5 apply to the principal.

### **Users Code of Behaviour**

Parents must sign up to a user's code of behaviour for school social media when accepting a place for their child in St. Francis NS (WhatsApp groups, our Facebook page, Aladdin messaging and school email etc.). Any unkind or defamatory comments or comments in breach of Child Protection (e.g. naming a pupil in a post) will be removed. (Repeated instances will result in a user's removal from the group). Failure to accept these protocols will result in the user's removal from the group or Facebook page.

## 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.

Parents are expected to treat the staff member with respect. Meetings will be cancelled and the Board of Management will be informed if parents do not conduct themselves in a respectful manner.

### Communication

This policy will be available in the Plean Scoile and on the school website.

### Responsibility for Review:

All members of staff, Parent Association, BoM.

### Timeframe for Review:

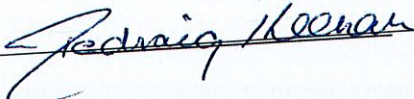
This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as required to meet the needs of the school.

Next review: April 2025

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## Parent/Staff Communication Policy & Grievance procedures

Ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson, Board of Management)