



# **Communication Policy of St. Nicholas' National School**

## **Introductory Statement:**

This policy was developed by the staff of St Nicholas' N.S. in consultation with the Board of Management and the parent body. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/teacher meetings and parent/teacher communication in St Nicholas' N.S.

The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. Effective communication between teachers, Principal and parents is imperative and is in the best interests of the children's education, care and wellbeing while in school. It is important that the school is informed of factors which may affect a child's learning, health & wellbeing e.g. health issues or family events/situations that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education or wellbeing. 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 the teachers. Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children. Teachers are recognised as professionals in education and work in partnership with parents.

## **Aims of Communication Policy:**

- To build a school community which is supportive of all its members.
- To develop close links between home and school and promote a culture of partnership.
- To establish procedures for sharing of information in relation to pupils to enrich their educational experiences and to develop their full potential e.g. to let parents know how their children are progressing in school; to inform staff on how children are coping outside school; to establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents, to help teachers / parents to get to know the children better as individuals, to help children realise that home and school are working together.



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

### **Written Communication:**

- As a Green school we aim to be a paperless school (we rarely send notices on paper)
- Class Dojo (our online platform of choice) is a very important means of two-way communication between parents and the class teacher. It also is an opportunity for parents to get a snapshot of some of the work and classroom activities that take place.
- Aladdin is used by school to disseminate essential information, to send reminders, request payment, gain permissions etc. It is also the forum whereby parents communicate absences or inform school that their child will be late or needs to leave early.
- A monthly newsletter will also be disseminated via Aladdin.
- Our school website provides a link to download school policies, calendar for the year, enrolment forms, etc.
- Twitter is used to tweet / retweet important community information, student achievements and items of interest for parents.
- School reports are made available on Aladdin at the end of the academic year.
- Homework notebooks are used to relay minor messages between parents and teachers. Parents are requested to sign the homework notebook each night to confirm that homework has been completed.
- A school news section is included in Newslink (The Diocesan Magazine).
- Parents are invited to school services and other events.

### **When School / Parent Communication Occurs:**

Except in the case of emergencies or exceptional circumstances, parents can expect communication from school during term time during the working day (approximately 8:30am to 4pm). Teachers are not obliged to respond to emails / messages outside of these hours and parents are asked to respect teachers' right to switch off in line with Ireland's 'Right to Disconnect' Code of Practice.

### **Formal Meetings:**

- An Induction Meeting for parents of junior infants takes place each year.

- One-to-one formal Parent / Teacher Meetings take place usually in November every year. An Aladdin notice giving the dates and time blocks of the meetings is issued on Aladdin Connect. Parents may also be allocated an additional time to meet with their child's support teacher. This meeting may be through an online platform. If custody of a child is shared, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher individually for parent / teacher meetings.
- Pupils who are in receipt of School Support Plus will have reviews bi-annually in order to review their support plans. These meetings require collaboration between home, school and outside professionals. Usually one formal in person meeting will take place along with more informal phone calls, exchanging of files and relevant information etc, when necessary.

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

#### **Parental Concern**

When a concern arises, a parent should, either contact the class teacher or office and make an appointment to meet with the class teacher, or in exceptional cases, to correspond with the principal in writing.

Where issues arise involving incidents that have happened in school, parents are requested to contact the school and discuss these, rather than contact parents of other pupils directly. The school will then investigate the incident and follow it up in line with school policy. If contact with parents of other children is deemed appropriate, the school will arrange this.

Communication between parents and teachers is encouraged. A teacher or parent may request a parent-teacher meeting to discuss the pupil's wellbeing, pupil progress, behaviour or a serious / sensitive issue relating to the child. Every effort will be made to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity. However, arranging a meeting during the school day while children are at school is difficult. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door / school door to discuss a child concern / progress or any other issues is not possible for the following reasons:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his / her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are close by.
- The teacher cannot respond adequately to matters of a serious nature when other children are listening to the conversation.

#### **Teacher Concern**

If a teacher has a concern, they will usually make a phone call to the parent. They will always ask if it is a good time to speak before continuing with the conversation. Parents have a right to request a call back if the time is not convenient or a remote / face-to-face meeting may be arranged where necessary. A meeting will then be scheduled either in person or a video conference.

Our Code of Behaviour, Dignity in the Workplace and Communication Policy will guide how meetings should proceed. Please avoid approaching staff on arrival or departure from school or when they are on yard duty. It is neither fair nor respectful as at that time they may not have time nor be prepared for a meeting. Written records of meetings / phone calls will be filed in the pupil files for each pupil.

### **Other Communication:**

- Parents can be contacted directly via Aladdin message or email.
- School e-mail address is [stnicholasadare@gmail.com](mailto:stnicholasadare@gmail.com).
- School website is active [www.stnicholasadare.ie](http://www.stnicholasadare.ie).
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have worries / concerns in relation to their child.
- Parents are advised that they must notify the school on Aladdin if your child / children are absent from school. The school is obliged to notify the NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board) if a child misses 20+ days in a year.
- 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.
- During the school day, parents are not permitted to go directly to the classrooms without prior arrangement.

### **Parents' Association:**

The Parents' Association AGM is held early in the first term. All parents are invited to attend and are encouraged to stand for nomination for places on the committee. At this meeting, the previous committee give a report on the activities of the PA and present the accounts. The PA communicates with the parents using the school communications channels, usually Aladdin.

### **Parental Complaints:**

If parents wish to make a complaint it is necessary to first approach the child's class teacher. If they are not satisfied their complaint is resolved after this meeting, they

can then approach the Principal. Most complaints will be resolved informally at this stage. However, if parents are still not satisfied the matter has been resolved, they can consult the official Complaints Procedure for Primary Schools agreed by the INTO outlined below.

### **Stage 1**

1. A parent / guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly 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 he / she 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.
- 4.

### **Stage 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. The Chairperson will 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**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
  - a. Supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and
  - b. Arrange a meeting with the teacher, and where applicable, the Principal 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.
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants
4. further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - a. The teacher 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 and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting.
- c. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

1. Following the Board's investigation, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

## **Child Safeguarding Issues Within the School**

Communication re reports to TUSLA:

In accordance with the DES Guidelines on child safeguarding, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, the school has appointed a Designated Liaison Person and a deputy Designated Liaison Person. The role of the DLP is to:

- Act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff members or volunteer who has child protection concerns.
- To ensure that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred to promptly to the designated person in the HSE Children and Family Services or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Síochána (Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, p.14).

The BOM has appointed Ms. Brown as DLP and Mrs. Quinlivan as DDLP.

In the event of any parent / guardian having a child protection concern, the following action should be taken:

- A report should be made to the DLP in the first instance or if they are not available to the DDLP. Such reports will be dealt with promptly, confidentially and sensitively.

The following points should be noted:

- The school staff has a statutory obligation to report any child protection issues to TUSLA through the DLP or DDLP.
- The most frequent reason for reports to TUSLA is non-attendance at school for more than 20 days.
- In the event of a report being made, the DLP will inform the parents unless to inform them would endanger the child.

- Once a child protection issue has been referred to TUSLA, by whatever means, the school's role in investigating the matter ceases, as it then becomes the statutory responsibility of TUSLA to conduct eh investigation.

This policy shall be revised regularly by the Board of Management of St Nicholas' N.S.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson *James Clarke*

Date : 08/02/2023

Mr. James Clarke

Principal *Tanya Brown, Acting Principal*

Date: 08/02/2023

PP - Mrs. Theresa Quinlivan