

O'BRENNAN National School

Kielduff

Tralee

Co Kerry



Parent/Staff Communication Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was developed by the staff of O'Brennan National School, the Board of Management and the Parents Association in the school year 2013/14.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in O'Brennan 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.

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/Parent Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them
- Abide by school rules

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
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs
- Consultation throughout the year
- Written communication
- Through the Parents' Council, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all 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 via text/note

- The school website keeps parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Homework diary 1st – 6th class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Sports Day, school masses and school concerts/carol services
- Involvement of parents in the 'Religion Alive O/Grow in Love Programme' section for parents

Parents of Infants are also welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. Infant teachers will usually be available between 1.40 pm and 2.40 pm but a prior appointment must be made for this when necessary.

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary 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 his/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 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 a preferred date on a note from the school and the school will do their best to accommodate this date. Meetings will take place communally in the PE Hall. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children. A short written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher.

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 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

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 staffs 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 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

All primary schools **must** use one of the report card templates (available at www.ncca.ie) for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular.

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-IEPs

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

1. The School encourages communication between parents and staff.
2. Meetings with the class staff at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:
 1. Staff cannot adequately supervise his/her 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 be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

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 secretary's 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.

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

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.

Stage 2-formal stage

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 staff 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 staff 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 further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
 - a. The staff 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

Following the Boards investigations, 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.

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 eg 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. 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
- Staffs 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 resolved. Classes begin at 9:00 am and finish at 2:40pm 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 Boards of Management and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

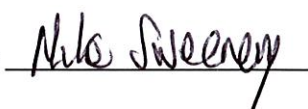
It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

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 at Appendix 1 to this policy.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was last reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 18th October 2016.

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: 
Principal

Date of next review: September 2019



Note: This electronic version was re-typed from the original in March, 2006

Circular 40/97

**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

PRIMARY BRANCH

**CIRCULAR LETTER TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPALS OF
NATIONAL SCHOOLS**

ASSAULTS ON TEACHERS/SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The Minister for Education wishes to bring to the attention of the school authorities his concern at the increase in the incidents of assaults on staff in primary schools. Violence in the workplace is an issue of grave concern for employees and employers alike. As in other workplaces, school employees are also the victims of violence in the workplace. During the course of their work, 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.

The Minister is anxious that every effort would be made to create and maintain a culture in schools where acts of violence are not tolerated and where incidents, when they do occur, are effectively and speedily dealt with.

In this context, the Department of Education wishes to draw the attention of Boards of Management to the following issues:

- the Board's duty to provide a safe place of work for employees
- measures to be taken to prevent or minimise the risk of assaults to teachers or other staff employed in schools
- measures to be taken in support of staff who have been assaulted or threatened with assault; and ensuring that appropriate action is taken to safeguard against a recurrence.

1 Board's Duty to provide a Safe System of Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for Boards of Management and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 requires employers to ensure the safety and health of their employees. It requires employers to draw up a Safety Statement:

- Identifying the hazards
- Assessing the risks to health and safety
- Putting in place appropriate safeguards

In the Education Sector violence should be considered as a potential hazard and assessed accordingly and where there is a risk to health and safety from violence appropriate safeguards must be put in place. Account should be taken of the specific circumstances that pertain in each school.

There should be consultation with those at risk concerning the measures to be taken and monitoring their effectiveness. Information should be given to staff on protection and preventative measures which are essential.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 1993, provides that the Health and Safety Authority must be notified when an accident/ incident occurs in the workplace which requires treatment from a registered medical practitioner or treatment in hospital. An accident or incident which results in an employee being absent from work for 3 days or more must also be reported to the Authority.

2 Preventative Measures

Boards are urged to consider and implement measures which would prevent or minimise the risk of assault to the employees of the Board. The effectiveness of agreed procedures should be reviewed where necessary.

(a) External Liaison

Bearing in mind that communication between home and school should be frequent, open and positive, Boards in consultation with the principal and staff of the school should promote good practice for the conduct of communication between home and school.

In this context schools should develop and circularise to parents, policies to deal with the following matters:

- Admitting parents/visitors to the school

Parents who wish to have a consultation with a class teacher should be encouraged to make a prior appointment with the relevant teacher. In urgent cases where a pre-arranged appointment is not appropriate, parents should be encouraged to report in the first instance to the school secretary/principal. The practice of parents approaching classrooms directly during teaching time should be discouraged. Specifically, access to teachers should be on an "appointment only" basis where the circumstances of a meeting are likely to provoke a confrontation.

- Parent/teacher meetings

Arrangements for the conduct of formal parent teacher meetings should be addressed in the School Plan. Parents should be given adequate notice regarding the timing of such meetings and encouraged to raise issues of concern. Where sensitive issues are the subject of discussion, arrangements should be made for conducting such interviews in privacy. Conducting interviews at the classroom door, while simultaneously supervising a class of children is not conducive to open communication. Particular care should be taken to ensure that parent/teacher consultations do not take place within the hearing of other pupils and/or parents.

- Code of Discipline

Under the terms of Circular 20/90 schools are requested to develop a Code of Behaviour and Discipline for Pupils. This Code should be developed by the principal and staff in consultation with parents and approved by the Board of Management. Once finalised, this Code should be notified to parents. Any sanction imposed on a pupil should be in accordance with the Code of Discipline. Procedures for suspending pupils should be clearly set out in the school's Code of Discipline and should be adhered to.

- Complaints Procedure

Boards of Management should have in place a clear procedure for the processing of potential complaints. Some Managerial Associations have already negotiated such a procedure with the INTO. The terms of the complaints procedure should be notified to parents and parents should be encouraged to utilise stages of the procedure where necessary.

(b) Internal Procedures

The issues of internal school procedures should also be discussed from time to time at staff meetings. Staff should be familiar with all relevant procedures.

In circumstances of increased risk (e.g. schools for young offenders) training should be provided for staff:

- in identifying potentially violent situations, and
- in calming down potentially violent situations.

Specific examination should be given to circumstances where staff are:

- working alone on the school premises
- working in an isolated part of the school premises
- engaged in out of class activities
- working with pupils with behavioural difficulties
- engaged in home visiting.

3 Steps to be followed in the event of an assault

Boards should develop a clearly defined procedure to be implemented in the event of an assault on an employee. This policy should include a clear commitment on the Board's part to be fully supportive of staff who have been subject to violence.

It is accepted that judgement will have to be exercised in each case. However, the following elements should be included in each procedure

- (i) The incident should be immediately reported to the principal teacher/other colleague.

The details of the incident should be recorded in an Incident Book kept for this purpose in the workplace. Situations in which members have been intimidated or threatened with physical violence should also be recorded.

- (ii) Where necessary immediate medical assistance should be sought.

- (iii) The matter should be reported to the Gardaí, where appropriate. This report would normally be made by the teacher who was assaulted.

- (iv) The Board of Management should be notified of the incident and where necessary an emergency meeting of the Board should take place. The Board should notify its legal advisors of the assault. The Board's insurance company should also be notified.

- (v) Where the assault is by a pupil the matter should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Discipline and as provided for in Rule 130(5) of the Rules for National Schools.

- (vi) Repeatedly aggressive pupils should be referred, with the consent of parents, for psychological assessment in order to assess the pupils' social and emotional needs and to determine how these can be best met.
- (vii) Where the assault is committed by a parent/guardian, the parent/guardian should be immediately instructed in writing not to make direct contact with the teacher/school pending full consideration of the matter by the Board. Subsequently the Board should correspond with the parent/ guardian stating:
 - that the Board considers the assault unacceptable
 - what action the Board intends to take
 - outlining what pre-conditions should be met before access to the school is restored.
- (viii) Applications for leave of absence, in relation to a member who has been assaulted, should be forwarded to Primary Payments Section, Department of Education, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Each application will be assessed on its merits.
- (ix) Where an employee's personal property is damaged in the course of an assault, compensation for its replacement value may be paid by the Board of Management under the extended school Protection Policy.

John Dennehy,
Assistant Secretary.

September 1997.