



# Lismullen National School

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Principal: Violet Molloy Deputy Principal: Jenny Dempsey



## Communication Policy

Ratified: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023

## **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

This policy was developed by the staff and the Parents Association in the school year 2023.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Lismullen N.S. 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.

## **STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO FACILITATE OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants in May
- One to one parent/teacher meetings in November
- Parents receive a school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
- Consultation throughout the year
- Written communication via email (see Appendix 1)
- Through the PA, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies.
- Regular emails and newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Homework diary 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents are requested to sign the 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
- It is not feasible to facilitate daily communication between teacher and parent

All parents are welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the teacher or 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 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. Parents will be allocated a time for their meeting. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. 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:

- 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 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 make reference to standardised test results according to school policy.

### **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. 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 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

## **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-School Support Plans**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the School Support Plan will take place in September and March. 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.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. Please refer to our Parental Complaints Procedure Policy.

### **Giving Feedback**

- Be clear about what you want to say in advance
- Start with a positive. If the positive is registered first, anything that follows is more likely to be listened to and acted upon
- Focus on the behaviour rather than the person. It is important to describe what a person is doing that you like or dislike, rather than to comment on what you think of that person
- Refer to the behaviour or skill you wish to reinforce or see changed. It is not helpful to give a person feedback about something on which they cannot change. Give them feedback on something which they can work
- Offer alternatives. If you find it necessary to offer negative feedback, then do not simply criticise, but rather suggest what the person could have done differently.
- Give the feedback as soon as you can after the event. The only exception to this would be when you might be so angry, that you would be unlikely to give constructive feedback

## **STAFF COMMUNICATION**

Good teams share a common purpose and vision. Staff collectively decide the values that drive our school. All staff members should feel safe to say what they feel and think. A staff member should not dismiss or rubbish what another staff member is proposing. Instead, the most unlikely suggestions should be treated as valid and worthy of staff consideration.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AMONGST STAFF**

### **Steps to address any issues**

The Board will refer to 'Working Together – Procedures & Policies for Positive Staff Relations,' (Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2000)

However, the Board may also seek advice and then refer to 'Disciplinary procedures for teachers in primary, voluntary secondary, and community and comprehensive schools,' (Department of Education & Skills Circular 0060/2009), as necessary.

## **PARENTS ASSOCIATION**

The Parents Association (PA) have a class representative for each class (see Appendix 3) and a whats app policy (see Appendix 2) used to communicate between parents.

## **BEHAVIOUR OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

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. 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
- Parents are also expected to be polite and respectful in email correspondence
- Posting of slanderous comments on social media platforms/what's app groups about members of staff will also be deemed as a serious breach of the Code Of Behaviour and may result in the staff member and /or Board taking legal action.
- 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.

## **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.

## **THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT**

Following the publication of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect, in April 2021, a recommendation followed that all workplaces should work to develop a Right to Disconnect Policy. Our policy takes into account the particular needs of the business and its workforce.

- The right of an employee to not routinely perform work outside their normal working hours;
- The right to not be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours;
- The duty to respect another person's right to disconnect (e.g. by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours).

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

In school management and teachers

## **RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION**

State when the BoM officially ratified the policy. Make provision for the circulation of the ratified policy. Provide the policy to all new applicants on enrolment.

## **REVIEW DATE**

This policy will be reviewed as requested or required.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1

Amanda	Walsh	amandawalsh@lismullenns.ie
Angela	Lyons	angelalyons@lismullenns.ie
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Pamela	McGuinness	pamelamcguinness@lismullenns.ie
Paula	Tyndall	paulatyndall@lismullenns.ie
Pamela	Downey	pdowney@lismullenns.ie
Violet	Molloy	principal@lismullenns.ie



## **Lismullen Parent's Association**

### **WhatsApp Policy**

Class WhatsApp groups are a very useful and efficient way of communicating to the whole class. The aim of using WhatsApp is to send messages to the entire group, which are relevant to school. The messages in the class WhatsApp groups come from parents in their personal capacity or are sent on behalf of the Parents' Association. The Lismullen NS neither sends nor monitors messages on WhatsApp.

1. The class WhatsApp group is set up by the Parents Association Committee with the class representative as administrator.
2. These groups are intended as a convenient way to distribute important school information to parents quickly and efficiently and for parents to communicate easily with each other regarding class matters, e.g. homework, school events
3. It is not necessary to respond to every post unless it is requested e.g. RSVP, request for volunteers.
4. If your message is not relevant to the majority of group members, please consider if it is more appropriate to reply by way of a personal message. In the event of too many messages being posted that are only relevant to a minority of group members the group administrator may request the conversation be continued outside the group.
5. Please respect the time you post. Early in the morning, late at night and during school holidays are discouraged where possible.
6. The group should not be used to post private or confidential messages or express personal opinions or gossip. Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members and may not be representative of the whole group. Group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group.
7. Inappropriate posts include - posting promotions, using inappropriate language, personal attacks or insulting messages, bullying of any member, voicing grievances with the school or with individual members of the group.
8. For individual concerns, please raise these directly with the parent concerned, teacher or, where necessary, the Principal.
9. Please do not use the group to discuss non-school related issues.
10. The group administrator will have the right to restrict admission, remove or ban anyone from the group without any notification.
11. By accepting a request to join the group participants agree to these group rules. Please note, by accepting the request to join, you are sharing your phone number with other parents within your child's class. Once you join, you always have the option to leave the group.

### **The WhatsApp groups could be used in the following situations:**

- Sharing of PA news/fundraising/information,
- Requesting for volunteers for school based activities,
- For whole class invites to birthday parties,
- To arrange class parents' nights out,
- In situations where parents are running late or unable to make school pick up times, they can use WhatsApp to ask other parents to help out,
- To enquire about the homework for that evening.

### **We recommend not using the class WhatsApp groups for the following:**

- Political posts such as canvassing for support for a particular candidate or political cause, or for disseminating information on political events such as rallies and marches,
- Posting comments about Lismullen NS teachers and members of staff, whether positive or negative,
- Posting comments about any parents or students in the school,
- Sharing memes, YouTube clips or internet jokes,

### **Some things to bear in mind when posting on WhatsApp:**

- Remember that your post will be seen by up to 60 people and that children in the school may inadvertently view these also.
- Always use respectful language in your post- if you would not be comfortable posting it on the school wall with your name under it then don't send it.
- Ask yourself if it is necessary to post a response to a question if it is in the negative. For instance, if you can't help out a parent in a situation it may be easier not to respond. It is worth bearing in mind that these days people are often on five or six WhatsApp groups between class groups, children activities, family groups etc. This means that people may be receiving large amounts of notifications every day.
- Consider alternative methods of communication such as email for sharing information on external events etc.
- Use the Private Messaging function if you just want to communicate with a small group or individuals in the group.

Issued by Lismullen National School Parents' Association

## **Lismullen Parent's Association**

### **Class Representative Policy**

#### **Parent Class Representative**

Each class has one parent/guardian representative on the Parent's Association Committee. As Class Representative you automatically become a member of the Parent's Association Committee. The Class Rep role is primarily a communication link between parents/guardians and the PA Committee, ensuring that suggestions, ideas, issues and concerns are brought to the PA Committee if appropriate and resolutions are fed back to the people who raised them. Class Reps also facilitate communication of information from the PA Committee, Class Teachers, School and the National Parents Council when required.

#### **Term as Class Representative**

The National Parents Council (NPC) advises that the members of the Parent Association committee should not hold the same officer position for more than **three consecutive years**; this is to ensure that parents are represented by an evolving and developing committee. (Working Effectively as a Parents Association, p. 23)

Therefore a Class representative should step down from his/her role after three years but in the second year inform parents that a new class representative will be required for the following year.

Some of the tasks undertaken by class reps are outlined here

- Attending monthly committee meetings (minimum of 4/9 per school year, should not miss 3 consecutive meetings or should step down from role).
- Communicating information from PA to parents/guardians.
- Maintaining communication with parents in class regarding issues they would like brought to the PA Committee
- Coordination of parent volunteers when needed (First Communion Party, Happy to Help List, Post office etc)
- Supporting PA and school activities during the year
- Welcoming new parents.
- Promotion of good relations among the school community

Parents and guardians should be aware that certain issues that may be raised should be referred directly to the Class Teacher, Principal or Board of Management as they are beyond the remit of Class Reps or the Parents Association.

It is unreasonable and inappropriate to ask or expect Class Reps to deal with issues surrounding parents/ teachers/ children/ school policies or to ask them to approach a Teacher, the Principal or Board of Management on behalf of a group of parents regarding concerns.

These may include such matters as

- Complaints
- Policy matters
- Concerns around individual children

If Class Reps are ever unsure about any aspect of their role at any time – please don't hesitate to contact the Chairperson or another member of the Parents Association Committee.

Issued by Lismullen National School Parents' Association