St. Dympna's N.S. Kildalkey

Communication Policy

St. Dympna's N. S.
Athboy Road,
Kildalkey,
Co. Meath.
C15R2AV
046 9435286
www.kildalkeyns.com

Introduction

This policy has been formulated by St. Dympna's N.S. to facilitate good communications between staff and between staff and home. It also highlights the importance of confidentiality in all matters. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour Policy and Complaints Procedure.

Rationale

This policy's purpose is to provide information and guidelines to staff about in-school communications, and to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Dympna's N.S..

St. Dympna's N.S. strives to provide a well ordered, caring, secure atmosphere for its pupils and staff. This is achieved through promoting the individual and collective personal and professional development of staff through regular structured staff meetings and Board of Management (BoM) sponsored staff development programmes.

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.

The Communications Policy recognises and endeavours to adopt the values that are set out in the ethos of the school for those at work in the school. It attempts to support and sustain a harmonious environment in which the potential of all staff is nurtured through the cooperation between staff, pupils, parents, board members and all other relevant parties.

Aims:

This policy was designed in order to promote and support sound communication structures in the following areas:

- Staff communications
- Communications with Parents/Guardians
- Within the wider school community (Board of Management, Parents' Association) and staff/parents/guardians
- Facilitate good communication between staff within the school, and between staff and parents
- Outline procedures for communicating with parents
- Have regard for the integrity of pupils' welfare regarding confidentiality
- Offer protection for those volunteers who give their time to the school
- Provide assurance and confidence to parents in general that those who volunteer are unambiguously bound by strict guidelines and have due respect for your child's privacy.

Behaviour in the School of All Members of the School Community

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the school community e.g. the staff, family members, visitors, psychologists,

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therapists etc. Everyone entering the school grounds should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in the 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 members of the school community are responsible for their own behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- All members of the school community 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 exceptional circumstances, in the interest of safety and/or of the wider school community in the school may deem it necessary to call the Gardaí.
- All members of the school community must treat our children with the utmost respect.
- 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 9.20am and finish at 2.00pm/3.00pm. This time should not be interrupted.
- When members of the school community have a formal meeting, 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

All members of the school community are expected to familiarise themselves with this Communications Policy. It is considered that everyone has a responsibility to make themselves aware of where and how to seek information and updates as the need arises and should seek to keep themselves informed.

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 Managements 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.

Things the school needs to know

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that may cause anxiety to your child and could affect their education. Your first point of contact should always be your child's class teacher.

The school should at all times know who is collecting your child. The school secretary should have a list of people and their contact information who you have authorised to collect your child. Should this change the onus is on you to inform the school secretary of the change. You can provide this information by email or by dropping in to the school office.

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Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorised/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorisation by the parent immediately. In an emergency situation, the parent must leave a message on the answering service or speak with the principal/teacher.

Separation in the home

The staff of St. Dympna's N.S. encourages parents experiencing separation to come and speak confidentially to the class teacher and/or Principal. It is our aim to handle such matters with sensitivity and compassion, and ultimately, our primary concern is for the well-being and overall development of the child.

The following are the key procedures in place with separated parents of pupils in the school:

- When a child spends time in two homes, it is requested that the school be provided with both sets of emergency/contact numbers
- Regarding the collection of children from school - it is requested that the school be informed of any changes in collection arrangements in writing
- For the child's sake we recommend that both parents attend parent teacher meetings together. Each parent has a right to attend such meetings and receive school reports unless there is a court order to the contrary.
- It is assumed that when we wish to communicate with parents regarding their child, the parent who is contacted (i.e., the parent with whom the child principally resides) will inform the other parent of meetings, arrangements etc. Special requests for separate communication can be accommodated.
- Regarding notes, school communication via schoolbags, school reports etc., it is assumed that the parent with whom the child principally resides will keep the other parent informed. The school can provide such information to both parties if requested to do so.
- The parent/guardian of each child has full responsibility for informing the school in writing of any change in circumstances at home e.g., separation, divorce, custody arrangements.

Communication methods:

Joining the School Community

Parents of children who are new to the school receive a parents' booklet which includes information on notes for parents, the general aims of the school, school expectations, Our Golden Rules, Aladdin Connect, home school links, the school uniform, lunches, health, attendance, personal accident insurance, supervision, child safeguarding, First Holy Communion/ Confirmation, Board of Management, Code of Behaviour, homework, bullying, booklists, mobile phones, litter, headlice, traffic, emergency closing, sport, student council, mini scientist competition, music and drama.

School Calendar

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The Calendar outlines the dates of the three terms, mid-term breaks etc. It is issued to all parents/guardians, it can be also found in the school diary and via Aladdin Connect.

General Communication

News Updates with information on events and school activities are uploaded regularly to the school website. Aladdin is used for reminders and emergency updates. Individual teachers may send electronic notes messages pertinent to their class re class trips or events via Aladdin. Parents/Guardians should also check school bags regularly for any communications requiring a signature.

Online and Social Media Communication

St. Dympna's N.S. has a dedicated official school website.
Parents are requested to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters and the achievements of our children.
The school name or anything that identifies the school should not be used online or on social media (for example class Facebook page which might be set up by parents) by members of the public, including parents, without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. St. Dympna's N.S. will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

Absences

Absences can be noted via the Aladdin App.

In-School

The following tools of communication are in place in St. Dympna's N.S.

- Oral communication between staff
- Staff meetings
- Staff emails - with 'scheduled send' function used as necessary to protect personal hours
- Collaborative use of Google Drive
- Oral notices to teachers by the Principal
- Announcements/discussion in Staff Room at break times
- Staff Room notice board
- School-related events
- Assembly
- Regular classroom visits by the Principal
- Board of Management meetings and shared report
- In – school communication WhatsApp group

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Home-School

Parents/Guardians 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 setting up and participating in the school 'Parents' Association' (P.A.) if possible
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them
- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies.

The following measures endeavour to ensure cooperation between school and home:

- Consultation throughout the year
- Aladdin Connect App for home - school communication
- Seesaw App for homework purposes for Infant and Autistic classes, online portfolios for 1st to 6th
- Regular school Board of Management meetings with a report shared with families/staff
- Parent - teacher meetings are usually held in November annually
- Support Plan meetings for parents of children with additional educational needs
- School reports at the end of the academic year (mid-June) with time for questions/feedback
- Meeting parents/guardians face to face (by appointment only)
- Phone calls to school (secretary) 046 943 5286
- Emails
- School events
- School website www.kildalkeyns.com

The school endeavours to be as environmentally friendly as possible, as such, we are attempting to use electronic communications vs paper.

The school may email parents about special events throughout the year via the school principal or secretary.

Parents may email the school with general questions about school activities. The school principal or secretary will respond to these queries by email. Email enquiries may only be sent to the following email addresses principal@kildalkeyns.com / kildalkeyns@live.ie .

We request that any specific incident or questions relating to a child's progress be made directly to the child's class teacher. Class teacher emails are shared on the school website.

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Meetings

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time or email the class teacher directly.

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 address or contact designated on file (Pupil Information Form and aladdin.ie) will be consulted by staff.

Parent – Teacher Meetings

Formal parent - teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes **(DES Circular 14/04).** They are usually held in November. 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 preferred times on Aladdin Connect. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. Meetings may take place in classrooms or support rooms. 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 home and school
- To let parents/guardians know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents/guardians 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/guardian the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- To review with the parent/guardian the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent/guardian's perspective
- To learn more about parent/guardian opinions on what the school is doing
- To identify areas of tension and disagreement
- To identify ways in which parent/guardian can help their children
- To discuss jointly decisions about the child's education

Reporting to parents/guardians

Parents/guardians 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

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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 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 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. Our school presents parents with information about standardised tests in the end of year report card, which is communicated to our families in June.

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
As all primary schools **must** use one of the report card templates, the Principal and staff of St. Dympna's N.S. have chosen the template which currently best suits the needs of the school.

Formal Meetings

Formal timetabled parent / teacher meetings take place in November. However, if a parent/guardian 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 which may not be emailed will be sent to the child's home address or contact designated on file (Pupil Information Form and aladdin.ie), unless otherwise requested by parents

Formal Meetings - Support Plan Meetings
Formal timetabled parent/guardian/staff meetings on the subject of the **School Support Plans/School Support Plus Plans** will take place in October.
Support Plan meetings take place as the need arises in each class. The parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the child's class teacher and support teacher. An Additional Needs Assistant may also attend this meeting if appropriate. Any other relevant professionals will also be invited to attend (Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist, etc.) 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.

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Informal Parent/Guardian/Staff meetings

The School encourages communication between parents/guardians and staff.
Meetings with the class staff at the class door/in the yard to discuss a child's concern / progress are prohibited 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/in the yard.

Occasions occur where a parent/guardian 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. However, this may not always be possible.

Regarding the collection of children at Infant level from school - it is requested that the school be informed of any changes in collection arrangements.
If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc, this can be done through the secretary's office.

Special Needs Assistant Communications

Information received on children, and observations made in classrooms, need to be handled sensitively and carefully and are often only to be shared with particular members of staff.
SNAs may be closer to parents than teachers, as they may themselves be from the immediate community, and may, or might have been, themselves parents/guardians of pupils in the school.
It is very important therefore, that the SNA recognises the rules of confidentiality which govern their role as a member of the school staff. No discussion of the child, the teacher, the class or the events of the school day should take place without consultation and agreement with the class teacher.
Parents/Guardians with questions or issues about school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the principal. This applies to direct face-to-face communication or indirect telephone communication.

Complaints Procedure:

Please refer to Complaints Procedure Policy.

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Staff Communication:

- The school has adopted 'Working Together – Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations'. It may be downloaded from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (I.N.T.O.) website.
- In addition to the formal communication that takes place during staff meetings, the Principal undertakes to make himself available to any member of staff who wishes to discuss school matters with them.
- The whiteboard / noticeboard in the staffroom will be used for general updates and information.
- Emails are used for various correspondence, using 'Scheduled Send' to protect personal hours. **Emails should only be sent from 9am-4:30pm.** Outside of these hours the Schedule Send function should be used.
- Principal will inform staff of emergencies, such as school closure, through text/staff 'WhatsApp'.
- All staff/Principal meetings will have an agreed agenda and will be minuted for the records.

Procedures for Staff Meetings:

- Staff meetings are held frequently. This is a collaborative exercise with each staff member having the opportunity to nominate items/issues for inclusion on the agenda.
- Additional meetings are held as the need arises for teaching staff (at least once a month as part of the Haddington Road Agreement - and an account of these hours/meetings will be recorded for the BoM).
- Staff are asked to submit any items for the agenda to the principal prior to the meeting. Some additional items are decided upon at meetings of the Board of Management (BOM) or by the principal.
- An agenda is drawn up by the principal beforehand and distributed to each staff member.
- Minutes are taken by a member of staff. The minutes of the meeting are recorded with a clear statement of the decisions made, actions to be undertaken and the delegation of responsibilities. The principal keeps a hard copy record of all staff meetings including the date, details of the meeting and the meeting's duration.
- SNAs and ancillary staff are required to attend staff meetings if issues relate to their work/responsibilities are included on the agenda. These issues usually have a * next to them on the agenda so that when they have been discussed and decisions taken, SNAs and other ancillary staff can leave and be assigned to other pre-agreed arrangements.
- Additional Haddington Road Agreement meetings will be held throughout the year to serve the purpose of whole school planning, policy formulation and Continuous Professional Development (C.P.D.) as required. An annual plan for the use of these hours will be agreed by staff at the start of each year.

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Board of Management Communication:

- The Chairperson of the BoM and the Principal will be scheduled to speak/meet formally once per month, at least a week in advance of the monthly BoM meeting, to discuss and agree the Agenda for the upcoming BoM meeting.
- The staff nominee on the Board of Management and the principal liaise between staff and the BoM.
- The Treasurer on the BoM will meet monthly with the school secretary to review the school accounts.
- The Agenda for the BoM meeting will be circulated via email to all BoM members at least one week prior to the scheduled BoM meeting.
- All apologies from any BoM members unable to attend should be emailed to the secretary of the BoM ahead of the meeting.
- If documents are shared prior to the meeting, please communicate all comments or state you have none by replying to the author/sharer.
- All emails will be acknowledged by each BoM with a reply to the sender.

Procedures for Board of Management meetings:

When meetings are held remotely, to ensure confidentiality of these online / video conferencing meetings, all BoM members will be required to accept the following conditions of online / video conferencing BoM meetings -

- Video function must be used at all times, so all BoM members are visible to the group
- No meetings may be recorded
- Mute function is used on microphones during the meeting, unless a member is actively contributing to the discussion
- 'Gallery View' will enable all BoM members to view all participants at the meeting
- At the conclusion of the meeting, each member will state when they are leaving the meeting

However, once per term, a BoM quorum (at least 5 members) will be required to meet in person (with appropriate risk mitigation) to be presented with the Child Protection Oversight Report (C.P.O.) by the school Principal. The C.P.O. reports are not to be presented during a remote online meeting.
The BoM prepares a summary report after each meeting which is disseminated with the school newsletter/website to staff and parents/guardians.

Where appropriate, parents/ guardians can communicate with the BoM by letter and this correspondence will generally be considered at the next scheduled BoM meeting. It should be noted that the Complaints Procedure should be followed if a complaint is being made, where the BoM is only involved when resolution with the teacher and the principal has been exhausted.

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Parents' Association (PA)

- The PA will become a member of the 'National Parents Council'.
- The PA will hold an Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) and elect a Chairperson and establish a formal Committee.
- The PA will be provided with a dedicated school email address for all formal communication.
- The principal liaises with the Chairperson of the PA at least termly at a scheduled meeting.
- The principal liaises between staff and the PA.
- PA meetings will be held once per term at least and will be minuted.
- A report of the meeting will be shared with the whole school parent body.
- The PA communicates with parents / guardians regularly.
- The PA has representatives in each class who are responsible for communicating with their class about PA events and seeking volunteers.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality pertaining to all school matters is of paramount importance to all those who work or visit our school, and especially those who are in contact with staff and students. For staff, this is explicitly stated in their contracts of employment as well as the school's Child Protection Policy.
This is also imperative in the case of visitors (e.g. guest speakers, parent/ guardian volunteers, coaches, etc.) who have direct contact with pupils. Discussion about a child's progress or anything that has happened in the school with any party other than the classroom teacher or principal is not tolerated.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All members of the school community have a role in the implementation of this policy.

Success Criteria:

- Clear communications facilitated amongst all members of school community
- Participation and delivery by all staff at staff meetings
- Cooperation and consensus
- Monitoring and assessment of procedures
- Yearly home/school meetings
- Yearly report cards
- Staff 'feel good' factor
- School 'feel good' factor

Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 23rd of May 2023.
Ratification by the Board of Management

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The Board of Management of Kildalkey National School ratified this policy on 23rd May 2023.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: Mary Reidy Date: **23-05-2023**

Principal: Nodlag O'Neill-Forde Date: **23-05-2023**

Log of Actions:

Formulated by staff in April 2023.
Reviewed by staff on 25th April 2023
Consulted with Parents' Association May 2023
Ratified by the BOM on 23rd May 2023
Reviewed by staff on 14th May 2024