Home/ School Partnership Policy



Roll number: 17479D

Principal: Aoibhínn O' Neill

Parent/Staff Communication Policy

Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Scoil Mhuire Lacken the Board of Management and the parent's association in the school year 2022/2023. It will be reviewed periodically from that date.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Scoil Mhuire Lacken. 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 Home/School partnership is envisaged as a positive working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a wiliness to listen and learn in the best interest of pupil's development and progress.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop & maintain 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 Parents' Council
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.
- Equip & replenish pupils with all of the appropriate school materials (copies, stationary, lunch box etc.)
- Notify the school at the earliest opportunity if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his education
- Provide an explanation via the Aladdin Connect App, when a pupil is late arriving to school / absent from school
- Show care and respect for school property and encourage their child/children to do likewise

Staff are encouraged to:

- Participate in any meetings with parents in a positive and respectful manner and, in keeping with Scoil Mhuire's Ehos affirm the role of the parent as the 'primary and natural educator' of their children (as per Article 42.1 of the Irish Constitution)
- Collaborate with the parents in an open two-way communication so that both parties are working together to develop the full potential of the student
- Be aware of the activities of the Parents' Council and link in with them where possible to support their fundraising activities

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Meetings for new Junior Infant Parents - 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 with Special Education Teachers.
- Consultation throughout the year.
- Written communication by note via the child's school bag/ Aladdin Connect App – this is used for consent forms, payments due, upcoming important events, important school information etc.
- By email (scoilmhuirelacken@gmail.com) to review and give feedback on draft policies before they are finalised and then ratified by the BOM.
- Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Regular notifications/ communications through Aladdin Connect App
- Homework diary 1st – 6th class (homework folder for infant classes), 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
- Involvement of parents in the 'Religion Grow in Love Programme' section for parents.
- Email queries will be addressed during the hours of 9.00am -3:30pm and within a reasonable timeframe. (contact outside of these hours are at school's discretion).
- Through the Parents' Association or by viewing draft policies on the school website, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of 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 Aladdin Connect / school website

- • Regular notifications through Aladdin Connect and the school website keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Parents are requested not to contact teachers for school related business via the teacher's personal phone number or email address.
- Parents need to provide a reason for their child/children's absence from school, using the Aladdin Connect App. The reasons are then kept on the school's database for TUSLA statistics. Under Section 20 of the Education Welfare Act, schools are obliged to notify TUSLA if pupils are absent for 20 days or more in a school year. Parents will be notified following a period of absence totalling 15 days and again at 20 days.
- The school values and welcomes the participation of parents/guardians in school fundraising events
- Involvement of parents in school activities when required (subject to Garda Vetting)
- Parental involvement and participation is particularly encouraged in certain areas of children's education, such as sacramental preparations, social personal and health education programmes, health promotion activities, sports events, green school projects, Science projects and other school initiatives.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Grandparent's Day, carol services, school concerts.

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time. Alternatively, parents may write a note via the school diary/or email class teachers to arrange an appointment with the teacher. (Parents at the start of the year are provided with class teachers email address)

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.

Where either/both parents is/are involved in new relationships, it should be noted that communications from the school to new partners will be limited to that which is expressly agreed between the parents and notified to the school or that which has been provided for by a court order. (See Custody & Separation Policy)

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, in November time for all classes. (In the event of unforeseen circumstances, they will be scheduled as soon as practicable possible) They will be initiated by the school staff and details regarding time, etc. will be communicated to parents. Meetings may take place in classrooms, support rooms, office or staff room. 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. These notes are the intellectual property of the teacher and are used to guide the teacher and parent through the meeting. These notes will remain on the child's file in school and will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Policy of the school. If a teacher feels it necessary, they may have a support person of their choosing present at meetings with parents.

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 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.

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. Scoil Mhuire Lacken has devised a report card using a template from the NCCA's website.

Formal Meetings – School Support Model

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **School Support Plan** take place during the same time period as class teacher parent teacher meetings. 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 staff(s) individually for parent/staff meetings. (See Custody & Separation Policy)

Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

1. The School encourages communication between parents and staffs.
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.

To make an appointment with a staff member please contact the school office on (049) 4337822 Our secretary is available Mon- Friday 9.30am – 13.00. Appointments can also be made by writing a note in your child's homework diary. **Please do not phone the school during the school day and ask to withdraw a staff member from their classroom as teachers are not permitted to leave their classroom to take calls.**

To contact the principal about a particular matter please send an email to with the relevant details to scoilmhuirelacken@gmail.com and the principal will arrange a suitable time to discuss your query. This is for urgent queries only. Parents are encouraged to contact the class teacher first before approaching the principal.

During times of school holidays, the school phone is not monitored. During holiday times please send an email to scoilmhuirelacken@gmail.com giving a brief details and the principal will endeavour to reply as soon as possible.

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. Due to the duty of care held by each teacher for their pupils, staff reserve the right to accept or decline an urgent request to meet a parent based on the circumstances. **Parents must be mindful that 'Health and Safety' and 'Child Protection' will always take precedence.**

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 (Appendix 1)

It is acknowledged that disagreements and/or complaints may arise from time-to-time. The primary thrust of the Home/School Partnership outlined above is seen as supporting a preventative rather than a curative response to the difficulties that may occasionally arise.

It is envisaged that all disputes/challenges should be addressed initially at a more informal level, usually involving contact and communication between parent(s) and teacher(s). Experience has shown that where a mutually respectful willingness among parent(s) and teacher(s) exists to discuss difficulties and to engage in a solution-driven approach to addressing such disputes/challenges, then the majority of such matters are resolved speedily and to the satisfaction of all involved.

Where a satisfactory resolution of the issues is not achieved at the more informal level, then parent(s) and/or teacher(s) may wish to pursue the matter further and involve themselves in a more formal approach to seek resolution of the matter. This more formal approach is outlined in Appendix 1 and has been agreed between the INTO and CPSMA.

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 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

- 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 9:20 am and finish at 3:00pm and this time should not be interrupted.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

Boards of Management are responsible for ensuring the health, safety, wellbeing and educational progress of students. They also have a duty under Section 8 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of employees.

The Department of Education and Skills has acknowledged that on very rare occasions there may be incidents of assaults on school employees. The Board of Management (B.O.M.) of Scoil Mhuire Lacken is cognisant of its duty to provide a safe place of work for its employees. The BOM is cognisant to protect school employees from the risk of violence of any kind, be that in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. The BOM is anxious to ensure that every effort would be made to create and maintain a culture in Scoil Mhuire Lacken where acts of violence are not tolerated and where incidents, when they do occur, are effectively and speedily dealt with.

The BOM has adopted the guidelines outlined below to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to:

(a) Provide a safe place of work for employees

(b) Prevent or minimize the risk of assault on employees and

(c) To support staff members who have been assaulted or threatened with assault and to ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard against a recurrence.

Success Criteria:

The school evaluates the success of this policy through:

- Positive and supportive engagement and participation of parents, staff, Board of Management members and pupils in the education process
- The extent to which there exists a mutually-beneficial, supportive and positive atmosphere and relationship among all members of the school community
- Feedback, as appropriate, from all members of the school community
- Indications that the smooth and efficient running and organisation of the school is enhanced through the implementation of this policy
- The indications that the facilitation and implementation of the Home/School Partnership Policy are enhancing the learning opportunities of the pupils of the school.

Complaints Procedure. Appendix 1

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. *Note: This is a procedure reached through national agreement between the INTO and the CPSMA and was written to deal with complaints about teachers. Because of the special nature of our school and the large numbers of 'non-teaching' staff, the word 'teacher' has been replaced with 'staff member' throughout.*

Stage 1-informal stage

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the staff member with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the staff member he/she should approach the **Principal** with a view to resolving it (*or the **class teacher** if the complaint is against an SNA. In this instance the class teacher will work with the parent/guardian and SNA to try to reach an amicable resolution).*
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 member 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 authorization of the Board:
   a. Supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and
   b. Arrange a meeting with the staff member, 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 member 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 member 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 investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff member and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

This policy was created in February 2023

This policy ratified by the BOM on 08/02/23

This policy is to be reviewed again in 2 years (2025/2026)

Signed (Chairperson): Thomas Gallagher

Signed (Principal): Aoibhinn O Neill

Date: 08/02/23