



# Effective Communication Policy

## Introductory Statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Scoil Bhríde, Straffan and the Board of Management, in conjunction with school parents in the school year 2024/25.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on effective and appropriate communication strategies in Scoil Bhríde, Straffan. 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:

- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of ensuring that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character.
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of staff members in the school
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents

- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November for all classes.
- Parents receive a school report for their child at the end of each school year.
- Open Day in June for new junior infants and their parents.

- Meetings with parents of children with special needs in developing and sharing School Support Plans (SSPs)
- Ongoing consultation throughout the year
- Written communication via written messages in homework diary/copy, emails, Seesaw, Aladdin Connect App, Principal messages on the App.
- Through the Parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to initiatives and projects in the school.
- Parental voice is sought through school surveys, Google Forms and sharing of draft policies through the Parent Association for parental input.
- Regular messages through the school app to keep parents up to date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Parents are invited to help and support events throughout the year e.g. Book Fairs, school concerts, parent talks etc.

## **Parent / Teacher Communication**

### **1. Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

*The class teacher, who has the most contact time with a child, other than their parents, is the FIRST and most important point of contact for every parent.*

The School encourages communication between parents and staff. If a parent has a concern about any issue, they are advised to contact the school secretary to arrange a meeting with the class teacher, (face to face/phone/online) at a mutually suitable time. When speaking to the school secretary, parents should give a brief description of the issue involved so that both parties can be prepared for the requested meeting. The teacher will endeavour to deal with the matter promptly.

Meetings with the classroom teachers at the class door or at the line in the morning or afternoon to discuss a child's concern/progress are not facilitated due to:

1. Staff members cannot adequately supervise their classes 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 in such a public way

If the Principal is contacted directly about an issue of concern to a parent, she will refer the matter back to the class teacher to be dealt with. Where the issues raised with the teacher

have not been satisfactorily resolved, the Principal will then get involved in helping to find a resolution as laid out in the **Parental Complaint Procedure** (available on the school website).

The exception to this is where child protection issues of any sort arise and the Principal's involvement is required as Designated Liaison Person.

## **2. Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year as per Circular 14/04. They will take place towards the end of November. Parents will receive an invitation, via Aladdin Connect, to select a suitable time from the available slots. The Special Education Teacher will also be available for formal parent/teacher meetings. In the case of separated parents, requests can be made, by both parents, for an individual meeting with their child's teacher(s). In exceptional circumstances, separate meetings can be facilitated for separated parents in the best interest of the child.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is to:

- establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- inform parents on how their children are progressing in school.
- help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- help children realise that home and school are working together.
- share the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- discuss emerging needs and develop a Classroom Support Plan where necessary
- learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing
- identify areas of tension and disagreement
- identify ways in which parents can help their children
- negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy

*Meetings will be scheduled for ten minutes per child. If a follow-up meeting is required, the school will endeavour to facilitate the same.*

## **3. Formal Meetings - I.E.P.s / Support Plans /Review Meetings**

- Formal timetabled meetings to discuss and draw up an Individual School Support Plans / School Support Plus Plan will be held in November.
- The parents voice is sought through phone calls and pre planning questionnaires.

- The Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher, in consultation with the Principal, Deputy Principal and parents will draw up the Support Plan/ Care Plan where required.
- Recommendations from outside professionals, such as psychologists, occupational therapists etc., will be reflected in the support plan.
- Where a need arises, support planning meetings and review meetings will be arranged with parents at other times throughout the year.
- These meetings will be attended by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, Special Education Teacher and the parents.
- Following the meeting, a report on the meeting will be sent to parents and uploaded to the student's support file.

*If a parent wishes to arrange a meeting with the Special Education Teacher at any stage during the year to discuss their child's progress, they may do so by prior appointment.*

#### **4. Updating of Information**

The school should be informed immediately if a situation arises (in or outside school) that could potentially cause anxiety for a child and 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. In this regard, it is vital that the child's and parent/ guardian's contact details are fully up to date. This can be done through the Aladdin Connect app or by contacting the school office.

*It is imperative that there is an up-to-date emergency contact detail on every child's file.*

#### **5. End of Year Report Cards**

The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents and take account of research commissioned by the NCCA. Scoil Bhríde, Straffan has adapted one of these templates for use. The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:

1. The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum including the communication of Standardised Test results where applicable.
2. The child's learning dispositions
3. The child's social and personal development
4. Ways in which parents can support their child's learning

## **6. Best Practice For Dropping in Forgotten Items**

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. In order to preserve the integrity of the school day, all children should take responsibility for organising themselves and remembering their belongings before coming to school.

## **7. Emails and Phone Calls to Staff**

*Teachers' primary responsibility is to the teaching and learning in their classroom and the supervision of the children in their care.*

With this in mind, parents are reminded that messages and e-mails sent to teachers and S.N.A.s during the school day, **will not** receive an immediate reply. Staff will undertake to reply to all messages received, at their earliest convenience.

If a parent/guardian wants to contact the teacher or leave an urgent message for their child, they should phone the main office and the school secretary will relay the message to the relevant person. *Parents are reminded that Seesaw and Google Classroom are not appropriate platforms for communicating to teachers and will not be responded to.*

All staff members and parents/guardians have a right to their discrete free time. With this in mind, communications to the school and from the school should take place during normal working hours. Contact at night, early morning, at weekends, on days off and during holidays should never take place. When emailing staff, parents are asked to schedule all emails that are being sent outside of the normal working day.

*We ask you strongly to respect this and we undertake to do likewise.*

Staff members' private mobile phone numbers, email addresses or social media accounts, including WhatsApp, should never be used to contact staff in relation to school business. All contact with staff should be via email through the main school email address: secretary@straffanschool.com

### **Communication between Staff:**

The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms.

- **Staff Email:** Each staff member is assigned a school email address. This is for staff's professional use and is used for school/professional work only. Teachers may use this email address for liaising with parents and/or the wider school community. The use of the email for students and parents is at the discretion of each class teacher.
- **Google Drive** - School documents are shared between teachers, SNAs and Secretary on Google Drive.
- **Aladdin** - Staff communicate important school related messages via Aladdin.
- **The Intercom** is used for messages that need to be communicated to students and staff.
- **Whats App groups** are used to communicate school related news and arrange meetings.
- **Croke Park hours** are used for peer planning meetings, School development Planning and staff meetings, held on the first Monday of every month and other appointed Mondays. Additional Croke Park Hours are used for Morning Supervision.
- **Teachers at each class level meet** informally on a regular basis to collaboratively plan for their respective classes.
- **Class Teachers, SET and SNAs meet** formally twice a year to plan and review School Support Plans.
- **DP meets** regularly with SNAs and SET.

### **Ancillary Staff**

Our caretaker, secretary and cleaners play an important role in ensuring that the school operates in an effective and efficient manner. All requests for support from our ancillary staff should be conducted in a courteous and respectful manner at all times.

Classrooms and learning support rooms should be left tidy and orderly at the end of each day, to communicate respect to the cleaners working in our school.

### **Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

Effective communication between SNA, class teacher and parents is of paramount importance. SNAs play an important role in ensuring that the students with additional needs can participate to the best of their ability in school life.

A monthly meeting, using Croke Park hours, of the SNAs is held after school on the first Monday of every month when teachers do their peer meetings.

All communication regarding the progress of all children should be relayed by the class teacher to the parent. It is not the role of the SNA to deliver such information to parents, unless requested to do so by the class teacher.

### **Communication among Students:**

To assist in creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for learning, all students are expected to treat one another, school staff, parents and school community in a loving and respectful manner in line with our Care Schools Mission.

Learning good social and interpersonal skills with one's peers is an important part of school life. Everybody in our school community is required to treat all students with consideration and respect and to have regard for the rights and feelings of others.

Our students are afforded the opportunity to communicate their ideas to each other and the staff through class discussions, debates, Green Schools Committee, Student Council, Playground Committee etc.

*Scoil Bhríde actively discourages student group chats on **social media platforms** or **Whatsapp Groups** in line with legal child safeguarding parameters.*

### **Communication with Others:**

#### **1. Communication with External Agencies:**

- **NEPS:**

The Principal and Deputy Principal liaises with National Educational Psychological Services with regard to making referrals where necessary. One-to-one meetings with Parents/Guardians to discuss assessments are organised by the Principal/Deputy Principal. The necessary paperwork in relation to an assessment is undertaken by the Principal/Deputy Principal in consultation with the class teacher of the child in question. All communication with external agencies is done through the school.

- **Tusla:**

The DLP, the Principal, liaises with the services of Tusla with regard to child welfare. This includes the National Education and Welfare Officer regarding child attendance at school and social services regarding child protection.

- **Health Care Professionals:**

Meetings with healthcare professionals (eg. CDNT, Primary Care, Teacher for the Deaf O.T., Physiotherapists etc.) are attended by the Principal/Deputy Principal, the class teacher, the SNA and in some cases, the child's parent. A record of the meeting will be uploaded to the relevant student's file.

## **2. Newly Appointed Teachers/Substitute Teachers**

All new teachers and substitute teachers are also supplied with a school padlet containing updated Child Safeguarding Statement along with timetables, policies, procedures, class lists etc.

Newly appointed teachers are mentored by the Professional Support Team (PST), most notably in relation to on-going planning and probation. Supports are provided if required. On-going evaluation and support is provided by the PST in the form of observation of classes, team teaching with newly appointed teachers and constructive feedback given periodically.

## **3. Students on Placement**

All student teachers on placement will be supplied with a pack containing updated Child Safeguarding Statement along with timetables, class lists etc. The teacher, to whom they have been assigned, will be responsible for mentoring them and communicating all relevant information. Supports are provided if required. On-going evaluation and support is provided by the class teacher in the form of observation of classes, support with planning and constructive feedback given periodically. Students are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to commencing work experience in line with the Work Experience Policy.

## **Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School**

Ensuring a courteous and respectful environment, in line with the Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour Policy, is central to the creating and maintaining of a positive culture among the 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. Our school strives to be a place where both adults and children feel safe, secure and respected. 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 which is also outlined in the Parental Code of Conduct as part of the Code of Behaviour Policy).

- 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 Garda Síochána could be called
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises or grounds
- All written messages sent to staff should be written in a respectful and courteous manner. When writing messages, parents/guardians should keep in mind that written messages containing information relevant to the future care needs/education of a student, may be uploaded and saved to a student's file.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child or another staff member. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's and adults' rights to privacy
- When stakeholders meet, it is important for all parties to be punctual. All mobile phones should be switched off to ensure that the meetings are not interrupted. Duration of meetings should be agreed beforehand.

### **Social Media Comments:**

The school only uses the school website and Aladdin Connect to relay news and to celebrate or notify people of events taking place in the school. The school does not use Social Media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc to share school information. We would ask that social media platforms, as well as personal social media accounts (including WhatsApp,) are NEVER used for commenting in a negative way on school matters or members of the school community. All stakeholders have a right to their reputation.

School staff is not permitted to use Social Media to show class content. Teachers would require permission from the BOM in order to share content on personal social media sites.

The school's ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** (available on the school website) outlines a mechanism for dealing with an issue of concern or a complaint as speedily as possible and at the simplest level. We strive to deal with any issues that may arise at a very early informal stage if at all possible in line with this procedure.

### **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work:**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. The act recognises 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.

### **Personal and Confidential Information:**

All personal data collected is protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

The privacy of personal communications is preserved in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom the information is transmitted in line with the Data Protection Policy.

Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted under the Acceptable Usage Policy of the school.

### **Implementation, Review & Communication:**

This policy was considered and ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_. It will be monitored on an ongoing basis and reviewed once every three years or sooner if necessary. This policy will be reviewed again in the school year 2027/28 or sooner should the need arise.

It is available to view on the school website.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

*Chairperson, BOM*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_