**4.6 Parent/Staff Communication Policy**

**Introductory statement**

This policy was developed by the staff of Saint Kilian’s NS, the Board of Management and the Parents Association in the school year 2013/14. It was revised in September 2018, November 2021 (Covid) and again in March 2024.

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

**Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents**

* Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – mid June
* There is a follow up information meeting and coffee morning in October.
* Individual parent teacher meetings for parents of Infants in January/February
* Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November for 1st to 6th.
* Members of the Parents Assoc and the Board of Management meet once annually with a jointly planned agenda, to discuss ideas for working together, to share information and to exchange views.
* Parents receive School Feedback Forms once every two years. The feedback we receive is then used to drive change in the school.
* Parents receive school reports during the second last week of the school year to facilitate further discussion if needed
* Meetings with parents whose children have special needs are organised when formulating Support Plans.
* Through the Parents’ Assoc, 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 the school newsletter
* Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays, children’s work and projects at school and school concerns. The Parents Assoc contribute regularly to these newsletters. The school circulates a newsletter fortnightly.
* General letters are sent home when needed on Aladdin
* Aladdin is an excellent tool for communication between home and school.
* The school’s new website stkiliansnsmullagh.ie is designed to keep parents informed with the business of the school and classroom activities.
* The Parents Assoc manage their own own Facebook and Instagram pages
* Homework books 2nd – 6th class are used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign books each night to certify that homework, spellings, reading etc… have been completed. These books have been customised to suit the needs of our school and each child receives 2 copies through book rental
* Children from Jnr Infants to Sixth create SALF folders in our school. The folders provide evidence of the children’s achievements and confirmation of the decisions they have made to identify this work as achievement. Parents are encouraged to celebrate the work done in the folder with their child. Parents may be invited into classrooms to view SALF folders.
* Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. sports days, book fairs, 6th class coffee mornings and bun/cake sales in aid of Vincent de Paul, school masses, pantomimes and concerts
* There are regular meetings and masses for children receiving the sacraments
* Parents are encouraged to participate in the Oxford Reading Tree programme. Parents and teachers communicate daily through the reading record.
* The Board of Management annual report is circulated to all parents in an effort to keep parents informed of the work of the board.
* The school informs parents of a change of teacher when an absence exceeds 5 days.

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). They will be held in the first term, towards the end of November for all classes other than Infants which are held in January/February. 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 a note from the class teacher. 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 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 pupilss’ progress through providing further information about the students’ learning at home.

**Report card templates**

Schools should help parents to fully understand 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- Support Plans**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Support 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 teacher at the classroom 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 (Discussion)**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the **staff member** with a view to resolving the complaint. Meetings may be arranged by contacting the school office. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.
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. Further meetings can be convened by the principal as appropriate.
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.  Further meetings can be convened by the chairperson as appropriate.

**Stage 2-formal stage (Written 10 days)**

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. This commences stage 2.
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff member without delay.
3. The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the chairperson with the staff member/parent/legal guardian and other school personnel as deemed appropriate.

**Stage 3 (Board of Management, 20 Days)**

* 1. If the complaint remains unresolved following stage 2 and the parent/ legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of receipt of this written statement. At this meeting, the Board can decide to proceed to either stage 3.2 or 3.3
	2. Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that: a) The complaint is frivolous/vexatious; b) The complaint has already been investigated by the board; c) The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular, or; d) where recourse to law has been initiated. Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be informed within five days of the Board meeting.
	3. Proceed to a hearing Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows: a) the staff member should be informed that the complaint is proceeding to a full hearing and the Chairperson must ensure the teacher has been supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board.

b) the Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent/ legal guardian is entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.

c) the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their case to the Board. The teacher is entitled to be represented by a friend or a union representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking. d) the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer in response to the complaint. This written statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with any third party.

e) the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in 3(b), (c) and (d) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1 in so far as is possible.

**Stage 4 (Decision, 5 days)**

4.1 Written decision from Chairperson The Board will consider the complaint and the response

 provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of

 the Board in writing to the teacher and the parent/legal guardian(s) within five days of the

 meeting held at stage 3.3.

4.2 Complaint concluded The decision of the Board shall be final.

In the event that the complaint is made about the principal, the process begins at stage 1.2.

**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
* Staff members 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 may 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 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.

**Ratified by the Board of Management**

**Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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

**Revised March 2024 to reflect Revised Parental Complaints Procedure.**