



Áit do pháistí
A place for children

SCOIL BHRÍDE, ÁTH GARBHÁIN
ST. BRIGID'S SCHOOL, ATHGARVAN

Áth Garbháin, An Currach, Co. Chill Dara
Athgarvan, The Curragh, Co. Kildare

Parental Communication Policy

Rationale

This policy was developed to provide parents/guardians with an overview on how to communicate with the school and to establish guidelines and procedures to support a positive climate for communication within our school community. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents/guardians and staff on various types of parent/staff meetings and other forms of communication in Scoil Bhríde. 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.

Aims

- Develop a meaningful and effective relationship between home and school
- Outline the various forms of home-school communication
- Share the responsibility of maintaining the school's ethos, values and distinctive character
- Encourage positive and respectful participation in parent/teacher meetings and all types of communication
- Affirm the professional role of all staff members in the 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 teacher and all staff members in the school as outlined in our Dignity at Work policy.
- 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 Parents' Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes appropriate to their role as parents.

Staff are encouraged to:

- Establish effective communication with all parents/guardians of pupils in their class

- Keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress in all areas of their development
- Listen actively to parents/guardians, acknowledging any concerns and working collaboratively with the parents to resolve any issues.
- Be aware of the constitutional role of parents/guardians as primary educators and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help them reach their potential
- Value and respect the input of parents as the people who know their child best.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with parents/guardians:

1. School Newsletter

- The school sends an email to all parents/guardians through the Aladdin App on a monthly basis which includes information regarding any activities that may be taking place at that time, important reminders for parents/guardians, information leaflets of relevant events happening in the locality etc.
- Parents/guardians are automatically subscribed to this service on enrolment. Parents/guardians should ensure that they continue to be subscribed to this service in order to be aware of the many ongoing events within the school. Only the family email addresses that are given to the school on enrolment will be included in the subscription lists
- If parents/guardians are not receiving these emails, they are encouraged to contact the school office to remedy this situation

2. Emails, text messages and phone calls:

- The school may email home at various times for items that are not included on the newsletter. It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to ensure to check emails regularly.
- When appropriate, parents/guardians may also be informed of relevant school items via text messages through the Aladdin app.
- In the event that parents/guardians wish to contact the school, the following methods should be used:
 - Phone the school office on: **045 441645**.
 - Email the class teacher directly.

Teachers will share their email address with all parents of children in their class at the beginning of Term 1 each year. Emails should be sent between the hours of 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday. Emails will not be read outside of these hours and hence it is recommended that should parents need to send an email outside of these times, the *schedule send* function should be used to schedule the email to arrive between the aforementioned times. Teachers will endeavour to respond to such emails at their earliest convenience.

- Email the school office at: emerstuddert@scoilbhrideathgarvan.com.
- A note in the homework journal for the class teacher. Please remind your child to hand this to teacher.
- When necessary, parents will be contacted via phone call (e.g. injury or illness). It is recommended that parents/guardians save the school landline into their phone in case of an emergency phone call.

Please note:

- Staff will endeavour to reply to any queries as quickly as possible. This does not necessarily mean on the same day as we receive them. Teachers cannot reply to email or phone queries during teaching time.
- Staff are not permitted to provide their personal phone number to parents, communication must be carried out through the above channels only except in exceptional circumstances (where a child may have a chronic medical condition etc)
- All communication, electronic, written or otherwise should be respectful and kind. Parents are asked to bear in mind that the words they choose to communicate with can be impactful to the recipient. All communication should be in line with our Dignity at Work Policy at all times
- Change of details and Emergency Contacts: It is extremely important that families keep the school up to date with the following items:
 - Change of phone number
 - Change of email address
 - Change of home address
 - Change of family circumstances
 - New emergency contacts
- Only the emergency contacts and other significant family members detailed on Aladdin may collect children from school. In the event that we do not know who the contact is, we cannot allow the child to be collected by them from the school
- Order of Communication All initial parental communications must be made directly to the class teacher via email or a note. In the event that parents/guardians are writing to request a meeting with the teacher, a brief reason must be provided. Initial parental communications may also be made directly to the school secretary. In the event that parents/guardians are phoning or emailing the secretary's office to request a meeting with the teacher, a brief reason must be given.
- It is NOT appropriate for parents/guardians to contact the school principal before engaging with the class teacher first. Any emails or other messages in this situation will be passed directly on to the class teacher.

3. Meetings

3.1 Parent-Teacher Meetings

- Parent-teacher meetings for the families of all pupils will generally take place each November. At least one parent/guardian should attend these meetings.
- The main function of such meetings is to provide parents/guardians with an overview of their child's academic progress and general development
- In the event that parents/guardians are separated and would like individual parent-teacher meetings, the school must be informed of this on enrolment or in the event of a change in family circumstances. If the school is aware of this request, we can schedule separate parent/guardian meetings if required.
- Parent-Teacher meetings are generally scheduled for ten-minute slots. Parents/guardians should be mindful that meetings may run over and there may be some wait time for appointments. Meetings that run over time and still have unresolved issues should be finished in a timely manner and an appointment for another standalone meeting should be made.

3.2 Class Meetings

A meeting for parents/guardians of incoming Junior infants will generally take place in June prior to starting school. It is advisable that at least one parent/guardian attends this meeting.

3.3 Other Meetings

Meetings may be requested at any other stage in the school year by either staff or parents/guardians. The minutes of these meetings will be recorded by a member of staff to include any agreed actions and will be signed by all present. A copy of these minutes will be provided to parents.

3.4 Informal / Unscheduled Meetings

Scoil Bhríde prides itself on providing a warm, welcome atmosphere to everyone in the school community. The school encourages communication between parents/guardians and staff. However, unscheduled meetings with staff where parents approach staff on yard, at the school door or outside of the school environment to discuss concerns or to make a complaint is not permitted for a number of reasons:

- Staff cannot adequately supervise children while at the same time speaking to a parent/guardian
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close-by
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent/guardian is talking to staff in front of their peers

Please Note: Behaviour at Meetings

- Positive and respectful communication is of vital importance in our school community. (Please refer to our Dignity at Work Policy for more details). This not only extends to the children but to all stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents/guardians 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 (please see our school's Code of Behaviour policy), 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 behaviour 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 may have to be alerted.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect whilst on the premises
- Staff should not be asked to discuss another parent/guardian's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is expected that parents/guardians respect all other children's rights to privacy as well
- Staff should not be asked to discuss any other staff member and will maintain a professional manner in respect to their colleagues at all times
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the duration of these meetings should be kept to a reasonable time. Times should be agreed beforehand and respected.
- No meetings, phone calls or videocalls should ever be recorded with any device, by any party. If a staff member becomes aware of this, the meeting will cease immediately and the Gardaí may have to be consulted by the school.

4. Report cards:

Parents/guardians receive a school report card for their children at the end of each school year. Report cards are issued through the Aladdin App. Report cards are not emailed or posted to parents.

- Report cards provide the following information
 - 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/guardians can support their child's learning
- Attendance statistics

4.1 Report Cards and Standardised Test Scores

- Standardised test scores will be included in report cards which will be issued to parents.
- If necessary, the school will endeavour to help parents/guardians to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests.
- Standardised tests provide a snapshot of children's progress. They should not be viewed in isolation. Children may have been unwell or preoccupied during the test.
- Best practice would recommend that standardised test scores should not be shared with children.
- Children should not do any extra preparation at home for standardised tests.
- Parents/guardians have the right to respond to report cards for a period of two weeks after receipt of the report in the post. This right to respond should be taken in the form of an appointment with the class teacher to discuss any queries about the report card contents.
- Report cards are sent via Aladdin.

5. School Support Plans:

- Meetings with parents/guardians whose children may have additional needs with the school Special Education Teaching (SET) team may take place throughout the school year. As part of this, parents/guardians are invited to contribute to their children's School Support Plans either in person or over the phone.
- Parents/Guardians of children with additional needs may also be contacted throughout the year for meetings and updates with regard to School Support Plans.
- Parents of children with additional needs may also be contacted to fill out relevant forms regarding applications for resources or assessments
- Copies of school support plans will be provided to families

6. Parents Association

- Through the Parents' Association, parents/guardians are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of various school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents/guardians in written format via email and/or the school website.
- According to the Education Act and the NPC (National Parents Council), the principal is

entitled to (but not required to) sit in on Parents' Association meetings as a guest. This guest status means that the meeting should not be treated as an opportunity to confront the principal on any potential complaints. (Please See our School Parental Complaint Procedure).

- Any parent/guardian is welcome to attend Parents' Association meetings at any time.
- The Parents' Association Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place in September of each year. This meeting will include the election of committee members (chairperson, treasurer, secretary) and the publication of Parents' Association accounts.

7. Website

- The school website can be accessed at: <https://www.scoilbhrideathgarvan.com/>
- The school website is designed to keep parents/guardians up-to-date with school holidays, school policies, staffing schedule and other school concerns such as school Lotto updates
- The school website will also provide details of the Board of Management members along with agreed Board of Management reports.

8. School Events and Garda Vetting:

- Parents/Guardians are invited to share their expertise with the school in a structured way (e.g. volunteering for after-school activities, acting as a once-off guest speaker to classes etc). Garda Vetting requirements will be communicated to parents/guardians prior to such events
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to help out in annual fundraising events if possible. Such events are crucial to continuing to provide activities and resources for the children. Garda Vetting requirements will be communicated to parents/guardians prior to such events.
- Parents/Guardians are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Curragh Walk, school sports day etc.

Please note: Legal Orders

In the event that parents/guardians are separated and there is an issue over custody, the following applies to all schools:

- The school cannot refuse parents/guardians the right to collect their child from school without a written legal order that specifically instructs the school to do so
- This legal order must be signed by a solicitor, a member of An Garda Síochána or a judge
- A copy of this written legal order must be provided to the school on enrolment or immediately after any change in family circumstances
- The school cannot accept any legal orders that do not reference school matters

Parental Complaint Procedures:


The Aims of the Parental Complaints Procedure:

- To encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- To allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action and by keeping people informed of progress
- To ensure a full and fair investigation;
- To have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- To respect confidentiality
- To address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

The Parental Complaints Procedure should be followed in the case of a conflict between a parent and teacher. The procedure places the emphasis on addressing staff relations difficulties in a consensus and voluntary type approach and it includes a mediation facility. If no resolution is reached after Stage 3, the BoM will investigate the matter and issue a binding judgement (Please refer to school *Parental Complaints Procedure*).

Communication, Ratification and Review:

This policy was formally adopted and ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde at its meeting on 29th May 2024 after consultation with staff and representatives of the Parents' Association. It will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review system in two years or sooner if necessary. A copy of this policy along with Parental Complaints Procedure and Dignity at Work Policy will be made available to the school's parent body on (a) the school's website and (b) in hard copy from the school office/principal.


Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 29th May 2024

Signed: Maureen Sheehan

Principal

Date: 29th May 2024