

# **St. Francis Xavier Senior School**

## **Parent/Staff Communication Policy**

### **1.0 Introductory Statement**

This policy was developed by the staff, the Board of Management and the Parents' Association in the school year 2017/18. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/teacher meetings and parent/staff communication. 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 is at the centre of all our endeavours where we aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

**2.0** The Board recognises that a good open relationship with mutual respect between parents and teachers is of vital importance in promoting the proper development of each child in the school. It is important that parents and teachers communicate in a friendly and open fashion and always in an atmosphere of mutual respect. To promote this relationship in a positive and professional way, the Board sets out the following principles in relation to appropriate communication:-

#### **2.1 Parents are encouraged to:**

- Develop close links with the school.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, acknowledging the professional role of all staff members in the school.
- Become actively involved in the Parents' Association.
- Participate in relevant policy and decision-making processes.
- Ensure that any change of address or change of phone numbers are communicated to the school secretary.
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character.

#### **2.2 Staff are encouraged to:**

- Engage in any meetings with parents in a positive, professional and respectful manner.
- Collaborate with parents in an open two-way communication so that both parties are working together to develop the full potential of the pupil.
- Follow up on all agreed communication and actions.
- Be committed to the school remaining true to its ethos, values and distinctive character.

### **3.0 Structures in place to facilitate Communication and Consultation with Parents**

- Meeting for parents of incoming 3<sup>rd</sup> Class takes place June.
- Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings are held in November.
- Pupil school reports are issued to parents in mid June.
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs.
- Consultation throughout the year as required through pre-arranged meetings arranged through the pupils Homework Diary or through the school secretary.
- Members of the Parents' Association Committee participate in a policy sub-committee 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 are made known to all parents via the school newsletter.

- Regular newsletters to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school matters.
- The Homework Diary is used for general communication between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign the Homework Diary each night to certify that they have seen the completed homework.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school masses and school concerts.
- Involvement of parents in the 'Grown in Love' section for parents of the religion programme.
- Consultation will only take place with the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form, and other professionals approved by parents/guardians, in all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils.
- 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.
- Requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher individually for parent/teacher meetings should this be required.

***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.***

**4.0** The DES (Department of Education & Skills) 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:

#### **4.1 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. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staff knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

#### **4.2 Report Card Templates**

The school uses an NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) approved report template for the end-of-year report card. Report cards can be sent to both parents by prior arrangement. 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

### **5.0 Parent/Teacher Meetings**

#### **5.1 Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings are held once a year for all classes. Where possible, they will be held in the first term, towards the end of November for all classes. 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. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned.

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 ways in which parents can help their children.
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education.

## **5.2 Formal Meetings – IEPs [Individual Education Plans]**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** for pupils who require same 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.

## **5.3 Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

If a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they are invited to do so by prior appointment. If a parent wishes to speak with a teacher, an appointment must be made by phoning the school secretary or by writing a note to the teacher in the child's Homework Diary, giving at least one day's notice. This is to ensure no undue disruption of a class. Under no circumstances should teachers be approached on school matters at their home address. To assist the teacher in preparing for this meeting, parents are asked to indicate the purpose of the meeting - whether it be a curricular, behaviour or social matter - so the teacher can be prepared and have the relevant information at hand to assist with the meeting.

Meetings with the class teachers at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are not suitable for the following reasons:

- ❖ Teachers cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- ❖ It is difficult to be discreet when others (parents/pupils) are standing close by.
- ❖ 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 school 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.

## **6.0 Complaints Procedure**

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and promptly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

### **Stage 1- Informal Stage**

- A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should firstly phone the school secretary to request an appointment with the **class teacher**, stating the nature of the concern: social/behavioural/academic/yard etc.
- The class teacher/school secretary will phone the parent to agree an appointment time.
- The Class Teacher and Parent meet with a view to addressing the concern. From time to time a member of the senior management team may attend these meetings.
- Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the matter with the class teacher, a meeting should be arranged with the **Principal**.
- If the matter 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**

- If the matter 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.
- The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

### **Stage 3**

- If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
  - a. Supply the staff with a copy of the written complaint and
  - b. Arrange a meeting with the staff, 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**

- If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting.
- If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
- If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - The staff should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint.
  - 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
  - The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

## 7.0 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. staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. The behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance. In addition, 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 (Parents; Staff; Board of Management) 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 may 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.

***It is expected that when stakeholders meet that, as partners in education, we aim for the betterment of the children in our care.***

## 8.0 Access to the School Building

In adherence with our Health & Safety Policy, all parent/public access to the school is via the main reception door and not via the external classroom doors or the school yard. Parents and members of the public are requested to sign in at reception on arrival to the school.

Should your child forgets his/her lunch, copies, sports gear etc. these can be left in the Office with the School Secretary.

## 9.0 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, which come 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 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.

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018. It is due for review in May 2021.**

