

**ST. FRANCIS XAVIER SENIOR SCHOOL**

**PARENT STAFF COMMUNICATION POLICY**



*This policy was ratified in 2018  
Revised: December 2022, January 2025  
Next Review Date: January 2027*

# Parent/Staff Communication Policy

## 1. 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. 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. Parents and teachers must communicate in a friendly and open fashion and always in an atmosphere of mutual respect. To promote this relationship positively and professionally, the Board sets out the following principles concerning 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 positively and respectfully, 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 number is communicated to the school secretary or updated via Aladdin.
- 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 in September each year allowing pupils time to settle into the school.
- Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings are held in November, organised via Aladdin.
- Pupil school reports are issued to parents in mid-June.

- Meetings with parents whose children have additional needs to discuss Individual Education Plans.
- Consultation throughout the year as required through pre-arranged meetings arranged through the pupils Homework Diary or through the school secretary or via Aladdin communication system.
- Members of the Parents' Association Committee participate in a policy sub-committee to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of relevant 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 and Aladdin messages 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 are 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 or parent email 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 impact your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education.***

*It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the school is made fully aware of, and kept up-to-date with any pupil's medical needs.*

**4. 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 student's progress by providing further information about the student's 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. 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. Meeting times will be made available to book through Aladdin.

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 joint 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 the same will take place in 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 emailing the school at [officesenior@sfxns.ie](mailto:officesenior@sfxns.ie), 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 outside the school premises. To assist the teacher in preparing for this meeting, parents are asked to indicate the purpose of the meeting - whether it be a curricular, behavioural 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 when 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. Complaints Procedure**

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and promptly.

Appendix 1 is the standard agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools. This is the formal complaint procedure as enacted on 1st January 2024.

## **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. Good behaviour of children in our school and adherence to our school Core Values (Respect, Honesty, Kindness, Safety and Hardworking) 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.
- All written communication, including emails, should maintain a factual and polite tone.
- 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. 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. 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.

### Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of St. Francis Xavier Senior School drew up this policy on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Revised by Staff and the BOM January 2025. These procedures will be reviewed by January 2027.

The Parent Communication Policy is communicated to Staff via the shared drive and Aladdin. It is shared with parents via Aladdin and the school website.

Signed:

  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 29/1/25

  
Principal

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> Jan '25

# Appendix 1

## Revised Parental Complaints Procedure



**Note:**

- A copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school. This procedure comes into effect on the 1st of January 2024.
- Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the school patron.

### Purpose/Objective

The parental complaints procedure was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the management bodies of primary schools, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023. It is designed to provide an open and clearly defined process to facilitate parents/legal guardians in raising concerns about their own child/children in an agreed, fair and transparent manner.

It is recognised that parents/legal guardians are the primary educators in a child's life and as such from time-to-time concerns may arise which they may need to engage with the school. It is expected that engagement will be timely, courteous and resolution focused to ensure that the important relationship between the parent and school can be preserved and respected. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively.

### Procedural Points

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns will be dealt with either informally or formally at the earlier stages of the procedure. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution at the earlier stages, the procedure does allow for the escalation of the matter to the Board of Management. This procedure sets out, in four stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed. It is expected the parties will follow each stage in sequence.

- Where the term written correspondence is used, this refers specifically to a letter or email correspondence from a parent/legal guardian(s).
- Only complaints about a teacher which are written and signed by a parent/legal guardian, and which relate to their own child, will be investigated.
- Where a complaint raised by a parent/legal guardian is deemed by the employer/board of management to relate to the following, this procedure will not apply;
  - matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
  - frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
  - complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.
- In all circumstances, any form of written correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be supplied to the Chairperson of the board of management **only**. Any deviation from this could be deemed prejudicial and as acting outside the scope of this agreement.
- **Days in this procedure refer specifically to school days.** A school day is a day on which the school is in operation. Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure.
- Group/collective complaints are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process.
- The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any stage.
- Issues should be raised in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child that issues are raised to achieve early resolution at the earliest possible stage with the teacher, ideally while the pupil is in that teacher's class.

## Formal Stage 1 Discussion



### 1.1 Parent/guardian meets teacher

A parent/legal guardian who wishes to make a complaint in respect of their own child, should, seek an appointment with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.



### 1.2 Parent/guardian meets Principal<sup>1</sup>

Where the parent/legal guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher, they should seek an appointment with the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Principal as appropriate.



### 1.3 Parent/guardian meets Chairperson

Where the complaint remains unresolved, the parent/legal guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Chairperson as appropriate.

#### Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved during this stage.

## Formal Stage 2 Written



### 2.1 Written complaint sent to Chairperson

If the complaint has not been resolved at stage 1, the parent/legal guardian who wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This commences stage 2.

### 2.2 Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher

The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay.



### 2.3 Chairperson convenes meeting(s)

The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2.1. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/parent/legal guardian and other school personnel as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

#### Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.

## Formal Stage 3 Board of Management

### 3.1 Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board

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.

### 3.2 Complaint concluded

Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that:

- The complaint is frivolous/vexatious;
- The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
- The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular, or;
- where recourse to law has been initiated.

Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be so informed within five days of the Board meeting.

### 3.3 Proceed to a hearing

Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows:

- the teacher 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 possible.

## Formal Stage 4 Decision



### 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.

<sup>1</sup>Where a complaint is received about a principal the above process commences at Stage 1.2.