



## **Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh**

### **Parent Participation and Communication Policy**

#### **Introductory statement**

This policy was developed by the Teaching Staff, Parents Association and BOM of Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh during the school year 2014/15. The school has a long and proud history of Parental involvement with the school, stretching back to pre-BOM days. Many local residents proudly recall their involvement with the school over the years. It is right and proper that, in this document, we recognise and salute their contributions and the many facilities which they provided for the school

#### **Rationale and Relationship to the School Ethos**

As a Catholic school, we believe that the school is not an isolated unit but a union of many people who come together to give it its life and meaning. The triple partnership of Home, School and Parish is essential if the school is to live up to its Mission Statement

#### **Aims**

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to Parents and Staff on Parent/Teacher meetings and Parent/Teacher communication in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh. 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 to achieve the optimum educational experience for each child. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and of his/her learning and to be ever mindful of the school motto "Mo Chumas Abú"

#### **Definitions**

**Parents / Guardians.** 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 School Staffer

**School Staff.** For the purposes of consultation with Parents / Guardians, only Teachers are authorized to discuss matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of Pupils. Parents / Guardians should not engage SNAs or other Non-Teaching Staff in conversation about a child's wellbeing or education. The school takes no responsibility for information not directly communicated with a Teacher

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

1. Develop close links with the school, and with their children's Teachers
2. Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school
3. Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children - Mo Chumas Abú
4. Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and

distinctive character. We are a Catholic School with high expectations for all of our Pupils, in accordance with their individual abilities and potentials. We have due regard to the development of the many aspects of their development - spiritual, moral, physical, emotional, artistic, cultural and intellectual - and we seek to address all of these aspects of their development

5. Become actively involved in the school/Parent association
6. Share their talents and abilities with the school through volunteering to assist in class or after-school activities
7. Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them and their children

**Parents are responsible for ensuring that the school has up-to-date contact information for Parents / Guardians. The need for this information cannot be over-emphasised and can be a matter of urgency in the case of an accident or other emergency. Please ensure that the school has current**

- 1. Mobile Phone Number of Parents / Guardians / Emergency Contacts**
- 2. Home / Work Telephone Numbers**
- 3. Postal Address**
- 4. e-mail address (from Sept 2014)**

### **Welcome for Parental Visits to the School and Child Safety and Supervision**

We welcome Parents who wish to meet with Teachers or conduct business at the School Office. However, for child safety and supervision concerns, the following controls are in place:-

1. Only School Staff (Teachers and SNAs) are permitted to be on the playgrounds during assembly in the mornings and during break times.
  - This allows the Teachers on supervision duty to clearly see the children and to identify problems which might arise.
  - The presence of Parents or Visitors at these times can cause a distraction to Supervising Teachers.
  - Parents who wish to speak briefly with a Teacher or whose child is reluctant to join the class line should wait in the office foyer until the bell rings and the Principal or Deputy Principal will be in a position to assist
2. All visitors to the school should report to the school office and should not try to enter the school unaccompanied.
  - The external doors are closed for safety during school time and unknown persons should not have unaccompanied access to internal areas of the school

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

1. Meetings for groups of Parents of new Junior Infants
2. Parent/Teacher meetings in November
3. Parents receive an annual school report for each Pupil at the end of the school year
4. Meetings with Parents whose children have special needs
5. Consultation throughout the year, as required, between Parent and Teacher. Such consultation can be initiated by either Parent or Teacher, or by the Principal
6. Communication through
  - a. Written Notes
  - b. School Website [www.bsrac.ie](http://www.bsrac.ie)
  - c. E-mail (increasingly used to communicate with individual Parents)
  - d. Text-a-Parent for short message alerts
  - e. NOTE. The school does not communicate with Parents through interactive social media. Our preferred method of dialogue is face-to-face conversation**
7. Through the Parents' Council, 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 through the Parents' Council Website.

8. Homework diaries are used to relay messages which are signed between Parents and Teachers for children in classes from RI to RVI. Parents are requested to sign the diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
9. Parents are invited to events during the year e.g. school concerts and class plays
10. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the "Alive-O" and other Religious Programmes:-
  - a. Parental involvement with Infant Alive O homework
  - b. Parish level programmes for First Communion and Confirmation Classes – Do This in Memory and You Will be My Witnesses

Parents of Infants are welcome to make an appointment any time throughout the year. Infant Teachers will be available between 1.30 and 2.30p.m for such appointments

If a Parent wishes to consult with a Teacher, s/he 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.** Any issue which affects your child's learning or happiness in school should be brought to the attention of the Class Teacher or Principal immediately. This can be done at short notice by

1. A note in the Homework Diary
2. A phone call to the Principal
3. Arranging a meeting with the Class Teacher

### **Parent/Teacher meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes (DES Circular 14/04). Where possible, they will be held in the first term, towards the end of November. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. 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

*DES 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:

## **Sharing Information for the benefit of our Pupils**

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 Pupils' own self-assessment data, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of Pupils' work. In turn, Parents will often be able to enrich Teachers' knowledge of their Pupils' progress through providing further information about the Pupils' learning at home.

## **Report cards**

The report cards were developed through a process of consultation with Schools and Parents and took account of research commissioned by the NCCA. Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh has used these Report Cards since June 2012

The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:

1. The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
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

## **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.

1. 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
2. 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 - IEPs**

Formal timetabled Parent/Teacher meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** will take place twice during each school year. 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/Teacher Meetings**

1. The School encourages communication between Parents and staff
2. Meetings with Class Teachers at the classroom door to discuss a child's concern / progress are discouraged on the following grounds
  - a. Staff cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a Parent
  - b. There is insufficient time and opportunity for the Teacher to prepare for such an impromptu meeting
  - c. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
  - d. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her Parent is talking to his/her Teacher 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**

1. A Parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the **Class Teacher** with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the Parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the Class Teacher he/she should approach the **Principal** with a view to resolving it
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.

#### **Stage 2-formal stage**

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

#### **Stage 3**

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

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the Teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - (a) The Teacher should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
  - (b) 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

- (c) The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

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

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

Positive and respectful communication is expected at all times in the school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. Teaching and Non-teaching 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 rare cases, the Gardaí might be called.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Teaching Staff should not be asked to speak about another Parent's child. The Teaching 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
- Teachers are generally available to listen to a very quick issue in the morning or after school in the school foyer. In the case of an issue which is expected to take more than 2 – 3 minutes, an appointment should be arranged at the office. This ensures that issues can be resolved without disrupting the teaching day. Classes begin at 8.50 am and finish at 2:30pm 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:**