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Parent/School Communication Policy

Introductory statement:

This policy was developed by the staff of Saint Michael's National School, in consultation with the Board of Management and the parent body. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and teachers on parent/teacher meetings and parent/teacher communication in our school. Effective communication between teachers, principal, school management and parents is imperative and is in the best interests of the pupil's education, care and wellbeing while in school.

Structures in place:

There are a number of structures in place to facilitate good communication links between parents and teachers:

- Annual updates of parent contact information.
- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants in June.
- Formal parent/teacher meetings each year.
- School report of each pupil at the end of each school year, which includes results of standardised tests for children in 1st-6th class.
- Meetings with parents whose children have special educational needs.
- Consultation throughout the year.
- Written communications (letters, text messages, Aladdin notices, emails, newsletters, SeeSaw/Class Dojo).
- The school website: book lists, calendar, list of holidays, policies and information on school activities etc. are published on the school website.
- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of relevant school policies.
- Regular emails keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Homework notebooks and Class Dojo/SeeSaw are used to relay minor messages between parents and teachers. Parents are requested to sign the homework notebook each night to confirm that homework has been completed.
- Reading Logs.
- Parents are invited to school services, concerts and other events.
- A school news section is included in Newslink (The Diocesan magazine).

It is important that the school is 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 the teachers.

When school/parent communication occurs:

Except in the case of emergencies or exceptional circumstances, parents can expect communications from school during the working day (approximately 8 a.m. - 4 p.m). Teachers are not obliged to respond to emails / messages outside of these hours and parents are asked to respect teachers' right to 'switch off' in line with Ireland's 'Right to Disconnect' Code of Practice.

The school email and SeeSaw / Class Dojo:

The school has email addresses and uses SeeSaw / Class Dojo to regularly communicate with parents. While the office email and SeeSaw/Dojo are suitable methods of communication for notifying the school of minor issues, such as queries around homework or changes to collection arrangements, it is not a suitable forum of notify the school of serious or sensitive issues. In these cases, parents are requested to contact the school, to make an appointment to meet with the class teacher or, in exceptional cases, to correspond with the principal or the Board of Management in writing. Where queries or concerns are sent via email or SeeSaw / Class Dojo, the parents will be sent a brief message asking them to contact the teacher involved to make an appointment.

Where issues arise involving incidents that have happened in school, parents are requested to contact the school and discuss these, rather than contact parents of other pupils directly. The school will then investigate the incident and follow it up in line with school policy. If contact with parents of other children is deemed appropriate, the school will arrange this.

The following provides a guide as to which method of communication is correct for different situations:

- **Aladdin:** All absences / early collections should be recorded on here
- **SeeSaw / ClassDojo:** Minor queries e.g. homework, forgotten lunch, changes to person collecting
- **Phone call / email :** to make an appointment for all other queries, concerns, issues

Social Media / WhatsApp / Parent class groups

Social media is not a place where issues should be discussed. WhatsApp groups are for parents to connect with each other to arrange out of school activities, such as play dates. Where issues arise involving incidents that have happened in school, parents are requested to contact the school and discuss these, rather than contact parents of other pupils directly. WhatsApp groups and social media should never be used to discuss school staff. Parents are strongly encouraged to speak with the school if an issue arises and to be mindful of people's (both pupils, staff and other parents) right to privacy.

Formal Parent/teacher meetings:

Formal Parent-Teacher meetings are held outside of school hours, usually in the Autumn term. Parents are given the date(s) as far in advance as possible and requested to sign up for a slot.

The aims of Parent/Teacher meetings are:

- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school.
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school.
- To establish ongoing positive relationships and communication with parents.
- To assist teachers/parents to get to know the pupils better as individuals.
- To assist pupils to realise that home and school are working together.

Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings:

Communication between parents and teachers is encouraged. A teacher or a parent may request a parent-teacher meeting at any time for reasons of teaching, learning, behaviour management issues or serious/sensitive issues relating to the child. Every effort will be made to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity. However, arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. Parents are welcome to speak to the principal or teacher(s) at an agreed appointment time. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door/ gate to discuss a child's concern/progress or any other issue is not possible for the following reasons:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are close by.
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door / gate.

- The teacher cannot respond adequately to matters of a serious nature, when the other children are listening to the conversation.

Meetings with Special Education teachers:

Parents of pupils who are in receipt of extra learning support are required to meet with the special education teacher in order to discuss the learning needs of their child. Parents are expected to participate as partners in the formulation of Student Support Plans if their child is in receipt of additional support, except in the situation where support is provided as a once off or in the very short term.

Complaints Procedure:

There is an agreed procedure for dealing with complaints. Parents should refer to the school's Complaints Procedure, which is available on the school website or on request.

Communication with the Board of Management:

The Board of Management is a corporate entity. This means that once they are elected, they act together as a unit. There are two parent nominees on the Board of Management. The parents' nominees on the Board of Management "are not on the Board to represent parents but are there as representatives of parents. These parents are full members of the Board and their role is to bring the parental perspective on all issues" (NPC, The Board of Management in Your Primary School: A Guide for Parents).

Board meetings are confidential and the board members cannot discuss information they have received at Board meetings or any on-going issues within the school with anyone outside Board of Management meetings, for them to do so is unsafe legally. The Board does, however, agree a report at the end of the meeting and this is the information which may be communicated to the school community.

The Board of Management communicates with the school community through the Principal as Secretary, the Chairperson and the Honorary Treasurer. The school and wider community also communicate with the Board of Management through these officials. Any written correspondence for the Board's attention should be addressed to the principal who acts as Secretary to the Board. Such correspondence will be dealt with by the Board under the appropriate heading at its next meeting, or at an emergency Board meeting, if appropriate. Under no circumstances should any correspondence or communication, no matter how important, be made directly with individual board members for reasons outlined in the previous paragraph.

Communication with the Parent / Teacher Association:

The P.T.A. Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) is held at the start of each school year and all parents are invited to attend and are encouraged to stand for nomination for places on the committee. At this meeting, the previous committee give a report on the activities of the P.T.A. and present the accounts. The P.T.A. communicates with parents through the school communication channels or the P.T.A. email address.

Child Safeguarding Issues within the school:

Communication re reports to Tusla:

In accordance with the DES guidelines on child safeguarding, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, the school has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a deputy Designated Liaison Person. The role of the DLP is to

- To act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns
- To ensure that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the HSE Children and Family Services or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Síochána. (Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, p 14)

The board have appointed Ms Gleeson as the DLP and Ms. Mullane as the deputy DLP.

In the event of any parent/guardian having a child protection concern, the following action should be taken:

- A report should be made to the DLP in the first instance or, if they are not available, to the deputy DLP. Such reports will be dealt with promptly, confidentially and with sensitivity. The DLP or deputy DLP will inform the reporter if a report has been made to TUSLA on the foot of the information given and/or investigation undertaken. If a report is not made, the reporter will be informed in writing of the reason(s) for this and advise the reporter that they are still free to contact Tusla for advice. In all events, the Board of Management will be made aware of all reports made to the DLP and the outcome.
- In the unusual/exceptional event of a report being made directly to TUSLA or the Gardaí, the DLP or deputy DLP must be informed immediately of the report and given a copy of the report. In such an event, it is imperative that the Board of Management are informed immediately so that they are in a position to deal with the issue as events unfold.

The following important points should be noted:

- The school staff has a statutory obligation to report any child protection issues to Tusla. Through the DLP or Deputy DLP
- The most frequent reason for reports being made to TUSLA is non-attendance at school for more than 20 days.
- In the event of a report being made, the principal as Designated Liaison Person will request a meeting with all parties involved, to inform them of the content of the report, unless doing so would endanger the child.
- Once a child protection issue has been referred to TUSLA, by whatever means, the school's role in investigating the matter ceases, as it then becomes the statutory responsibility of TUSLA to conduct the investigation

First created: June 2022

Signed: _____



The Very Rev'd Niall J. Sloane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

3/10/2022.