



# **Limerick Educate Together Policy on Working Together: Parent-Staff Communication**

## **Introductory statement**

This policy was developed by the staff of Limerick Educate Together, the Board of Management and the Parents Association in the school year of 2018-2019.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Limerick Educate Together. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. Everyone associated with Limerick Educate Together aims to work for the benefit of the child and his/her learning.

## **Parents are encouraged to:**

- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos values and distinctive character
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

### **Staff members are encouraged to:**

- Participate in any meetings with parents in a positive and respectful manner and, affirm the role of the parent as the 'primary and natural educator' of their children (as per Article 42.1 of the Irish Constitution)
- Collaborate with the parents in an open two-way communication so that both parties are working together to develop the full potential of the student
- Be aware of the activities of the Parents Association and link in with them where possible to support their fundraising activities.

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

#### **Parents**

- Meeting for new parents
- Details of classroom staff communicated to parents at beginning of school year and any regular updates re temporary, substitute or work experience personnel as they change. Advance notification to be given where possible if a regular member of staff is leaving so that parents can prepare the student for the imminent change
- Parent Teacher meetings annually in the first term or early in the second term for infants
- Meetings between parents and the multi-disciplinary team (including Occupational, Speech & Language therapists and Social workers) working with the student to ensure agreement on goals being worked towards
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Communication and consultation throughout the year (For example: communication book, reports from SNA, in certain circumstances, and reports from teacher)
- Thorough on-going communication between the Principal and the Parents Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of relevant school policies
- Any policies under review will be made known to all parents through the website or be available in hard copy on request through the school office
- On-going class bulletins and updates on Aladdin
- Termly newsletters to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns

- Regular emails and texts to inform parents of various matters
- Homework (and communication diaries, in certain circumstances) are used to relay signed messages. Parents are requested to sign the diary each day to certify that homework has been completed and communication book/weekly reports have been checked.
- Parents invited to certain events throughout the year e.g. assemblies, plays, sports day
- 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 staff.

### **Parent/staff meetings**

The aim of Parent/Staff meetings is:

- To promote and support ongoing relationships and communication with parents
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To inform staff on how children are coping outside school
- To help staff/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.

## **Parent-School Communication**

This policy is structured in accordance with Circular 56/2011 *Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*, which identifies a number of key areas of parent-school communication.

### **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. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that staff 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 students' own self-assessment data, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staffs' knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

### **Report card templates**

Schools should help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. The NCCA has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents and take account of research commissioned by the NCCA.

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.

Limerick Educate Together uses a recommended report card template (available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)) for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular.

### **Formal Meetings-IEPs**

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Individual Education Plan** (for children with SEN) take place during the first term. 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.

- 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.
- In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/staff meetings.

### **Informal Parent/Staff Meetings**

1. Limerick Educate Together encourages communication between parents and staff
2. Meetings with the class staff in public areas of the school to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds
  - A staff member cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
  - It is difficult to be discreet when there are other parents and

children standing close by

- It could cause distraction 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 member of staff 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. A parent wishing to speak to a member of staff urgently should in the first instance indicate the request to the school secretary. The school secretary will pass on the request to the Principal if the staff member being sought is a teacher, SNA or therapist.

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 Board of Management of has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teachers' union and management bodies, which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998

### **Stage 1-informal stage**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the staff member with a view to resolving the complaint
2. a. Where the complaint regards and SNA and the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the staff member directly he/she should approach the **class teacher**. In this instance the class teacher will work with the parent/guardian and SNA to try to reach an amicable resolution).
  
- b. Where the complaint is in regards to any other member of staff, and it cannot be resolved directly with that member of staff then the parent/guardian should approach the **Principal**.

### **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 staff member and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 working days of receipt of the written complaint or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

### **Stage 3**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorization of the Board:
  - a. supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and
  - b. arrange a meeting with the staff member with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 working days of receipt of the written complaint or as soon as is practicable thereafter.
  - c. The staff member is entitled to be accompanied by another person to the meeting.

#### **Stage 4**

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 working days of the meeting or as soon as is practicable thereafter
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff member and the complainant should be so informed within 3 working days of the Board meeting or as soon as is practicable thereafter
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - a. The staff member 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
  - d. Agreed written minutes will be kept of all meetings

#### **Stage 5**

1. Following the Board's investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff member and the complainant within 5 working days of the meeting of the Board or as soon as is practicable thereafter. The decision of the Board shall be final.

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

Positive and respectful communication is of utmost importance to our school. This is something we work on with the students in the school but this also extends to all of the stakeholders e.g. the 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 and is a major part of our education model, 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, 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 duration of meetings should be kept to a reasonable time period
- Classes begin at 8:40 am and finish at 2:20pm and this time should not be interrupted if possible.

**Reviewed by the Board of Management on:**

Chairperson	Marek McGann
Principal	Michael Quealy
Date	12.11.20