

# ST.BRIGID'S GNS

ST. BRIGID'S ROAD, KILLESTER, DUBLIN 5



## Working Together

### PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

#### Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff of St. Brigid's GNS in consultation with the Board of Management and the Parents Association in the school year of 2016-2017.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Brigid's GNS. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. All of the stakeholders in St. Brigid's GNS aim to work for the benefit of the children and their learning.

#### Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with 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.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school.

#### Staff 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 of new Junior Infants – June & September.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November.
- Meetings with parents whose children have special educational needs and also when developing individual education plans.
- Written communication.
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year.
- Through the Parent's Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies.

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- Regular newsletters to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class Homework diaries are used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers.
- Notes re absences from school: these need to be sent to teachers on the pupils return to school stating the reason for the absence. (Journals should not be used for this purpose). The notes are then kept by the teacher for National Education Welfare Board statistics at the end of the year. Under the Education Welfare Act, schools are obliged to notify the Education Welfare Officer if pupils are absent more than 20 days in a year from school. Letters will be kept on file. There is no need to phone the school about pupil absences.

**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.**

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.

## Parent/staff meetings

The aim of Parent/teacher meetings is:

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

## 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.

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- the child's learning dispositions.
- the child's social and personal development.
- ways in which parents can support their child's learning.

## Formal Meetings

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings take place in November. Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the Individual Education Plan 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. Requests for meetings with teachers/Principal should be put in writing (by email or a note in the child's homework journal) or by phone (secretary's office). A brief indication of the reason for the meeting (homework, social, behavioural, home issues) should be given.

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, or placed in the child's schoolbag as appropriate.

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

## Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

St. Brigid's GNS encourages communication between parents and staff.

Meetings with the class teachers in the class line in the morning/afternoon to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds

- A staff member cannot adequately supervise their student/class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when there are potentially 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. 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.**

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## PARENTAL 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. *Note: This is a procedure reached through national agreement between the INTO and the CPSMA and was written to deal with complaints about teachers.*

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

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly meet with the teacher by appointment (telephone/email to secretary or a written request) with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher he/she should arrange to meet with the Principal/Deputy 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 staff member 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 authorization 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:

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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

1. 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 of high 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 members of the school community are responsible for their own behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- 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.
- Treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Teachers should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The teachers of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- Ensure the length of meetings are to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.
- If a parent needs to meet with a teacher, an appointment should be made before or after school hours and at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved. Classes begin at 8.35am and finish at 1.15pm (Junior & Senior Infants) and 2.15pm (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> classes). **Meetings will not be conducted over the phone.**

**Ratified by the Board of Management on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2017**