

Rathfarnham Parish National School



PARENTS AS PARTNERS

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This policy on parental involvement in Rathfarnham Parish N.S was developed in collaboration with the Board of Management, staff and parents. It was devised with reference to a number of school policies and documents, including the Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy, Homework Policy and the Parent Teacher Association Constitution.

1.2 Rationale

This policy was developed

- to assist our school community in providing the optimum learning experiences for its pupils
- to explore how parents might best support the school and its pupils
- to outline roles and responsibilities
- to promote and develop home/school partnership in a range of ways
- in the context of ongoing School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and School Improvement Planning (SIP)
- with reference to DES Circular 24/91 *Parents as Partners in Education*
- with reference to the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

2. VISION AND AIMS

2.1 School characteristic spirit / ethos

Rathfarnham Parish National School is committed to ensuring that every child receives a quality education, working with parents/guardians to ensure that all children receive the maximum support in their learning. The school seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils. The role of parents as partners in education is acknowledged and respected, and parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school. It is considered crucial to the success of our pupils that parental interest and support is fostered at all stages.

2.2 Aims and objectives

In its Ethos and Mission Statement, Rathfarnham Parish National School states that it aims

- to fulfill the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of the pupils
- to provide stimulation and opportunities to enable the child to reach his/her full potential
- to foster a happy and relaxed environment that will be conducive to learning

The school is a community where all pupils are equally valued and respected. Pupils experience a sense of caring and belonging, they are treated fairly and their spiritual, moral and religious development is encouraged, as is their intellectual, social and academic development. Rathfarnham Parish N.S. is a school where the traditions and teaching of the Church of Ireland inform the position taken in regard to moral issues which arise in the teaching of secular subjects. In developing this policy, the school aims

- to build on the school community's commitment to supporting all its pupils
- to develop open and positive home/school communication
- to ensure an open and welcoming atmosphere for parents as well as children
- to review and develop procedures for the sharing of information on pupil progress and attainment
- to develop strategies to promote the role of parents as partners in our school
- to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents.

3. SCHOOL/FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Communication between school and home should be open and positive. The school acknowledges that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we endeavour to create an open and welcoming atmosphere, for parents as well as children. A variety of methods of communication are in place throughout the school.

There is regular communication between families and the school through the school office, the website, the principal and individual teachers and the PTA. Most home/school communication is done by telephone, e-mail, notes and direct meetings both formal and informal.

3.1 Ongoing School/Family contact

Parents are welcome in our school every Friday morning for 'Come and See' and are encouraged to keep in regular contact with class teachers and learning support/resource teachers. It is agreed that early communication often prevents difficulties arising later and is in the best interests of the children. Parents are encouraged to contact the school to arrange an appointment with class teachers, learning support/resource teachers or the principal if they have any queries or concerns.

Various means of communicating with parents are used by the school to circulate school and community information:

- **Aladdin for schools.** Through its database, the school can readily contact parents by phone, text and e-mail. Each class has a dedicated e-mail address and this can be used as an efficient and reliable means of direct correspondence.
- **Aladdin Connect.** Through this phone app parents can log on to the parent portal and access information on their child/children.
- **Homework Journal.** Pupils from 1st – 5th Class have a Homework Journal. Parents are required to sign the journal each evening, having reviewed their child's homework on that day. This resource is also used by parents and teachers for non-confidential routine contact.
- **Notes/forms.** Standardised forms are used to assist parents in providing the school with required information regarding absences from school, etc. Notes/forms are also used in communication regarding school-related bookings, etc (eg swimming lessons, school excursions).
- **Website** www.rathfarnhamparishns.com. The school website is regularly updated with latest news and notice of school events. Many school policies are also uploaded onto the school website.
- **Notice Boards.** Notice boards that are located throughout the school are regularly updated with information relating to school and community events. There is one notice board dedicated to PTA news and information.
- **Newsletters.** The principal coordinates a newsletter. Newsletters are uploaded to the school's website. From time to time children in 6th class will take responsibility for the production of the school newsletter.

3.2 Curriculum

Parents are advised of ways in which they can support their child's learning at general and individual Parent/Teacher meetings. The school's website also offers guidance, advice and support to parents and suggests websites and links for specialised information.

3.3 Special Educational Needs

Home-school communication is vital in dealing with all special needs issues. Throughout the school year, learning support and resource teachers include Parent/Teacher meetings in the planning and monitoring of these pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Parents are consulted in planning and implementing programmes for pupils' Learning or Resource Teaching Support. They have an active role in devising an IEP in consultation with their child's class teacher and special education teacher who has responsibility for developing the plan and overseeing its implementation. Ongoing consultation helps greatly in supporting the aim to reach each child's specific learning targets.

3.4 External Agencies and Professionals

A number of external agencies and professionals work directly and indirectly with the school, from time to time. Such agencies include:

- The Department of Education and Skills (DES)
- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Child and Family Agency (Túsla)
- The Health Service Executive (HSE)

Officers and other professionals within these agencies that may have contact with parents include:

- **Educational Psychologist**

Children within the school may be referred by the principal to the NEPS' Education Psychologist for assessment, following consultation with parents.

- **Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)**

Following a diagnosis of a low-incidence disability, applications may be made to the NCSE for appropriate individual in-school support. Such applications are administered by the SENO assigned to the school.

- **Education Welfare Officer**

The NEWB's Education Welfare Officer communicates with parents whose children have missed more than 20 school days in a school year, or other such matters of welfare concern.

- **Nurses**

Nurses and other personnel from the HSE visit the school to administer national programmes such as vision and hearing tests, and to administer vaccinations. All such interventions must have parental consent.

3.5 Induction meeting for new parents (scheduled)

An Induction meeting is held in May/June each year for the parents and guardians of the Junior Infant class(es) for the coming school year. The meetings are attended by the principal and the junior infant class teacher, and may be attended by representatives of the Board of Management and the Parent Teacher Association. Parents receive an Induction Pack that includes general up-to-date information as well as introductory information for those who are joining the school community for the first time.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide parents with information on how the school works, main policies and classroom practice. It also aims to allay any fears and anxieties parents may have and to help the smooth transition for children from pre-school to primary school. Refreshments are provided after the meeting during which parents meet each other informally, make contact and in many cases arrange for children to meet prior to starting school.

3.6 Parent/Teacher consultations (scheduled)

All parents have an opportunity to have an individual meeting with their child's class teacher and learning support/resource teachers (as applicable) to discuss their child's academic and social progress. Parent Teacher meetings are usually held in November. Parents are facilitated in arranging suitable times for the meetings especially when accommodating siblings. To meet the needs of parents who are unable to attend on the specific date(s) of the Parent/Teacher meetings, teachers make every effort to arrange to meet them at an alternative time.

Pupils in 5th & 6th class are invited to and encouraged to attend the parent teacher meetings with their parents. This is to involve the child in his/her learning and to encourage self-reflection.

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To share information on how children are progressing in school
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To identify strengths and weaknesses
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To inform the parents of standardised test results.

3.7 End-of-Year Reports

Parents receive an End-of-Year Report on their child in June every year. The format for the report has been adapted from the NCCA report form templates. This report outlines each pupil's progress for the year, including their performance on standardised tests in 1st-6th class as outlined in the school's Assessment Policy. An explanatory letter from the NCCA is also included with the report to explain standardised test scores.

Reports are distributed prior to the end of the school year to facilitate parents who may have a query or require clarification. Such queries should be referred directly to the Principal who will address them as soon as possible, in consultation with appropriate teachers.

3.10 Complaints procedure

The Education Act 1998 provides the legal framework for the delivery of education to the children in our school. The Board is the employer of all staff in the school.

In the event that a parent has a concern or complaint about a member of staff, it should be brought to the attention of the teacher/staff member in question first. If not resolved, it should then be referred to the principal. A complaint against the principal should be brought to him/her initially. All staff are expected to deal with concerns as soon as they are raised in order to avoid issues escalating. Any complaint against the school or an individual member of staff must be addressed through the agreed staged Complaints Procedure that must be strictly adhered to by all parties involved. see <http://www.education.ie/en/parents/information/complaints-bullying-child-protection-discrimination/complaints-procedures.pdf>

4. PARENTAL ROLES WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Meaningful involvement by parents and guardians is a crucial element in the success of a school as a vibrant and effective learning community. The following structures have been put in place to facilitate parental involvement in the general life of our school:

- Board of Management (BOM)
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Policy development and implementation
- Representatives of other agencies, eg National Parents Council representative
- Guest speakers / Visitors

4.1 Board of Management (BOM)

(ref *Education Act and Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, DES, 2007*). Boards of Management, including elected parent nominees, were introduced in 1975. Boards of Management of primary schools are appointed for a 4-year term. The term of office for current Boards of Management is from 2015 to 2019.

The Board manages the school on behalf of the Patron and is accountable to the Patron and the Minister. The Board must uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school and is accountable to the Patron. The principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and is accountable to the Board. The Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure stipulates that parents' nominees on the Board of Management, along with all other members, should

- uphold and support the ethos, culture and traditions of the school
- be aware of his/her collective and individual responsibilities
- have a specific role/function in the management of the school
- support new members in understanding the functions of the Board, and the relationship between the Board and the pupils, teachers, staff, Patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

The two parent nominees on the current Board of Management were elected in accordance with the Procedures and Guidelines for Boards of Management. They are:

- Dervla Cole
- David Johnston

4.2 Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Rathfarnham Parish NS has an active and supportive Parent Teacher Association. A copy of the constitution and general activities of the Parent Teacher Association is provided in Appendix 1. All parents are automatically members of the PTA. A PTA committee is appointed annually at the association's Annual General Meeting, held in October each year.

4.2.1 PTA committee

Membership

The PTA committee consists of 8 parents/guardians (elected annually) and two teacher representatives.

Committee members may stay for a maximum 3-year term, which ensures a roll-over from one year to the next so that existing members share their knowledge and experience with newcomers. Ad hoc sub-committees may take responsibility for specific events and often co-opt others to help, thereby sharing the workload. A number of events are coordinated by parents of a particular class, eg the Book Fair, the Christmas Fair, Sponsored Walk, social evenings and the annual Sports Day. Parent information evenings are also organised through the PTA.

Fundraising

Through its efforts, the PTA supports the running of the school by providing funding towards resources and equipment such as ICT; classroom and PE equipment; supplementary Sports coaching; gymnastic tuition; Library resources; materials for Visual Arts, Music, and Drama; and a playground development programme, as well as invited guest speakers, etc.

Rathfarnham Parish NS is fortunate to have a very positive, enthusiastic and active PTA, and it strives to involve as many parents as possible in various ways throughout the year. In recent years the PTA committee promotes positive contact between parents of each class and the committee, through a class representative. This helps the PTA liaise with a wider group of parents and helps to get the best possible involvement in PTA activities. PTA class representatives give back-up and support for the PTA committee and provide a valuable conduit for information relevant to school activities.

4.3 School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

School Self-Evaluation is a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal review. It is carried out by the Principal, Deputy Principal and teachers, under the direction of the Board of Management and the Patron. Consultation with parents and pupils is an important element in the process, from initial evidence gathering through to implementation and monitoring stages. Various consultation approaches are used, including on-line questionnaires and surveys, focus groups and reflection sheets.

4.4 Policy development, review and implementation

In tandem with SSE, school policies require constant development, review and revision. Parental input in this process is appreciated. This may be done through the PTA committee or specially-arranged sub-committees.

School policies are available to parents, either on the website or through the school office. It is important that parents are aware of these as, on enrolment, they agree to support the Board of Management in its running of the school and to follow school policies.

4.5 Guest speakers/Visitors/Helpers

Parents as a group have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children. It is our policy to invite parents to share their skills with us at a school and a class level, while respect for the professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibilities of the Patron, the Board of Management and the Principal is always an important consideration.

Curriculum implementation can be supported and enhanced by identifying parents with particular knowledge or skills in various curriculum areas. Parents help with reading in the junior part of the school as well as accompanying teachers and other staff on school trips. At different times parents come into the school to talk to children about their occupations/share talents and support particular work in the school.

5. SUCCESS CRITERIA

Practical indicators of the success of this policy include

- benefit to pupil learning
- increased parental involvement in school activities
- feedback from parents/staff.

6. RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION

This policy was reviewed and amended by the Board of Management in 2018. It was communicated to parents through the school website and via the school office.

8. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed and revised as deemed necessary by the Board of Management. It is scheduled for a comprehensive review in 2020

APPENDIX 1: Constitution and Rules of Rathfarnham Parish N.S. PTA

APPENDIX 2 References

Education Act, 1998

Education Welfare Act, 2000

National Parents Council: working effectively as a parent association, 2004

Boards of Management of National Schools, Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, DES, 2007

Looking at our school, an aid to self-evaluation in primary schools, Evaluation Support and Research Unit, 2003

School Self Evaluation Guidelines DES 2013

Your child in the primary school, tips for parents, INTO. www.into.ie

The what, why and how of children's learning in the primary school (DVD), NCCA, 2006

Primary Curriculum - suggestions for involving parents