

Communication Policy

Introduction

This Policy is an amendment of previous policies first written in 2008 and updated in 2013.

School of the Holy Spirit is a special school for students aged between 4-18 years which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and nurtured.

Rationale

It is generally accepted that good communication between all of those involved in our school i.e. Board of Management, teachers, SNAs, students, parents/guardians and ancillary staff is a vital part of our school.

Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children. Teachers are recognised as professionals in education and work in partnership with parents. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective.

Regular orderly parent-teacher communication is welcomed throughout the duration of the pupil's education at the school and home-school links are actively encouraged.

Members of the BOM, teaching staff, support staff, administrative staff and maintenance staff strive to create an open and welcoming atmosphere where good communications are fostered and developed.

Aims of the Communication Policy

- To build a community which is supportive of pupils, staff and all members of the school community who serve the school.
- To establish procedures for the sharing of information in relation to pupil progress, needs and attainment.
- To enrich and optimise the educational opportunities provided for our pupils by accessing the skills and talents of all the school community.
- To promote a culture of partnership in the education of our children.

Parents

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
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them

Staff

The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2012) applies to all teachers in School of the Holy Spirit. The role of the teacher is to educate. The ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust underpin the standards of teaching, knowledge and skill, competence and conduct.

Respect

Teachers uphold human dignity and promote equality and emotional and cognitive development. In their professional practice, teachers demonstrate respect for spiritual and cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment.

Care

Teachers practice is motivated by the best interests of the students entrusted by their care. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice.

Integrity

Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in integrity. Teachers exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions.

Trust

Teachers relationships with students, colleagues, parents, school management and public are based on trust. Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty.

Structures to Facilitate Communication and Consultation

- Board of Management meetings
- In-school Management meetings
- Post Holder's Meetings
- Principal/Deputy Principal meetings
- Teacher Staff meetings
- S.N.A Staff Meetings
- Teacher Section meetings
- SNA Staff meetings
- General staff meetings
- Class Team meetings
- Formal parent/teacher meetings
- Specially convened parent/teacher meetings
- Unscheduled parent/teacher meetings
- Parent's Association meetings
- Meetings with professionals
- Pre-enrolment parent/guardian meetings
- Complaints Procedure

- Health & Safety Committee meetings
- Covid-19 Committee meetings
- Action Group Meetings
- Student Council meetings
- End of year handover meetings, teachers
- End of year handover meetings, by SNAS

- Primary Principal's Forum- Kilkenny City
- Deputy Principal Network

- Intercom system

- Noticeboards
- Digital screen in staffroom
- Emergency alarms
- School Website
- Senior School Blog
- Learning platforms (classdojo, googleclassroom)
- Digital Platforms eg Zoom , MS Teams etc.
- Aladdin Connect
- Aladdin Noticeboard
- Emails/Text a parent
- School based text groups - teachers ,SNAs
- Information letters

- Parent's Information Evenings
- Assemblies
- Religious ceremonies
- Fundraising events
- School Leaver's events
- Exhibitions
- Graduation night

- Annual Summer Reports
- IEP information gathering sheets
- IEP target sheets
- School Newsletter
- Home-school communication forms
- School diaries.

Some communication structures explained:

1. Board of Management Meetings

The staff representatives on the Board of Management, which are the principal and the teacher representative ,liaise between the staff and the Board of Management.

A summary report after each meeting is shared by the principal with the teachers.

Where appropriate , parents/guardians can communicate with the Board of Management by letter and this correspondence will generally be considered at the next scheduled Board of Management meeting.

It should be noted that the Complaint's Procedure should be followed if a complaint is made , where the Board of Management is only involved when resolution with the teacher and principal has been exhausted.

2.Principal/Deputy Principal Meetings

These meetings may be formal and informal meetings. Ideally the Principal and Deputy Principal meet each morning to plan the work of the day and discuss current issues and organisational matters. At times, longer meetings are required to plan/discuss curriculum and organisational development. Generally, an informal close of the day meeting also takes place.

3.In-school Management Meetings

These meetings are held every second Monday in the Principal's office at 3pm.

Middle management constitutes the Principal, Mrs. Karen Lowther, Deputy Principal, Mrs. Angela Lennon and two postholders - Ms. Annmarie Butler (AP 1 Post) and Ms. Geraldine Nolan (AP 2 Post)

4.Post Holders Meetings

Post holders meetings are held formally at the beginning and end of each school year and may be convened if necessary, during the year. These meetings are between the individual post holder and the Principal to discuss the specifics of the post holder's duties. The Principal records and files the minutes and supplies the teacher with a copy.

5.Critical Incident Communication Protocol.

In the event of a Critical Incident occurring, a Critical Incident Policy is in place. This outlines the communication protocol under such circumstances, the Critical Incident Team and their responsibilities.

6.Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year in November, for all classes in accordance with DES guidelines. Details will be organised by the teacher in consultation with parents/guardians. The school will coordinate times where siblings are concerned.

Parents will be given at least one week's notice. School strongly encourages all parents/guardians to attend and participate in these individual consultations.

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

Teachers use prepared guidelines for these meetings and IEP goals are discussed and developed. Each teacher will supply the Principal with a timetable for the meetings and the Principal will be available during the meetings to talk to parents/guardians who wish to do so.

7. Arranging to meet the class teacher

If a parent/guardian needs to meet their child's class teacher, they are most welcome to do so.

Parents/guardians can arrange an appointment through the child's learning platform or through the office.

Parents are reminded that School of the Holy Spirit is always prepared to listen and it is the policy of the school to resolve difficulties at an early stage in the interests of students.

Regretfully, teachers are unable to enter into consultation with parents/guardians during formal teaching time between 9.15am and 2.55pm. A message may be delivered through the learning platform or through the school secretary.

In the event of an emergency occurring during school holidays or outside school hours, contact with the Principal may be made via email or the school answering machine service.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to a student and may therefore adversely affect his/her day in school. In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of our students, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be contacted.

8. Annual Summer Report

School of the Holy Spirit produces formal school reports in mid-June every year using a template as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie). The report covers: -

- The student's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- The student's learning dispositions

- The student's social and personal development
- Ways in which parents/guardians can support their child's learning.

9. Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings

Good practice dictates that if a parent/guardian/teacher requests a meeting that it is at a mutually convenient time which has been agreed by both parties. A note, phone call or message requesting the meeting is generally acceptable with an explanation given for the request.

The teacher will record the meeting on a Parent Contact Form which is signed by the Principal and placed in the dedicated file in the office.

10. Specially Convened Parent/Teacher Meetings

On occasion, specially convened parent/teacher meetings are necessary. They may be to inform, discuss, plan or evaluate issues arising for their child in the areas of Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, behaviour, mental health issues, medical conditions, attendance ,etc.

These meetings will be organised through the Principal and may involve participation of both the Principal and class teacher with parents/guardians and/or other professionals. A record of the meeting will be kept by the Principal.

11. Impromptu Parent/Teacher Meetings

Occasions occur when a parent needs to speak to a teacher 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 students in the class do not lose out on any learning time.

12. Parent's Association Meetings

These meetings may occur outside school time. The location of the meetings may also change. Notification of the time and venue is given by the appointed association member.

13. Meetings with Professionals

Professionals who attend to students in the school, assess, devise and review programmes. Consultation with teachers is seen as a vital part of this process and is arranged at the convenience of both parties.

The teacher in question records the meeting and files it in the Professionals Meeting folder in the office.

14. Teacher Staff Meetings

These meetings occur at least once a term, in line with DES Guidelines. They are scheduled in advance and are timetabled from 3-5pm on the appointed date. The meeting is recorded by teachers on a rotational basis.

15. Teacher Section Meetings

The school is divided into 4 sections :-

- Junior Section, usually Classes 1-3
- Middle School Section, usually Classes 4-7
- Senior School Section, Junior Cycle, usually Classes 8-12
- . Senior Cycle, usually classes 13 and 14

The Section Meetings occur twice termly to discuss, plan and evaluate curriculum practices in the individual Sections. The meetings are minuted on a rotational basis and circulated to each teacher and the Principal by the recording teacher.

16. SNA Staff Meetings

These meetings occur at least once a term. They are scheduled in advance and timetabled from 3.15 pm onwards on the appointed date. The meeting is recorded by the Principal.

17. Class Team Meetings

Class teams are comprised of the teacher and 2/3 SNAs and a team meeting is held weekly from 3.00-3.15pm in class and recorded by the teacher.

Information from the Principal is delivered and issues arising in the class are discussed and plans made. Matters raised in the meeting may be brought to the Principal by the class teacher.

18. General Staff Meetings

These meetings are for the entire school staff - teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff-to discuss housekeeping and social matters. An agenda for the meeting is circulated a few days beforehand. The Principal records the meeting.

19. Pre-enrolment Meetings

The Principal and class teacher meeting parents and prospective students in June every year. Parents/guardians bring their child's school passport (all information) to this meeting and general school-related conversation is held. Parents or Guardians and the new student receive a tour of the class and wider school environment with the Principal or relevant class teacher.

All Permission and Medical forms required by the school are filled out by parents/guardians at this meeting.

20. Complaints Procedure

The Complaints Procedure for primary Schools may be viewed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of this policy.

21. Health and Safety Committee Meetings

The committee is comprised of 2 teachers (LW and AM). They monitor the health and safety noticeboard and add updates, carry out pregnancy risk assessments, follow up on any hazards or near misses on the school campus. They check each class for the fire evacuation information and supply new forms each year. Each year they focus on a specific aspect of health and safety and report to the Principal.

22. Covid-19 Committee Meetings (school years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022)

The committee is comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Lead worker Representative (a teacher), the Assistant Lead Worker Representative (an SNA), a member of the Health and Safety Committee, the Caretaker and a Parent Representative from the Board of Management.

Meetings are planned as needed to discuss and plan for all Covid-19 related matters.

23. Action Group Meetings

Each action group is ideally comprised of a primary and a secondary school teacher. Action groups meet usually at least once a term. They aim to drive each area forward within the school, in line with best practice. The current school action groups are:

- ICT
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- IEPS

- Wellbeing
- Health and Safety

The action group focuses can change in line with the needs of the school at any given time and following consultation with teachers.

24. Student Council Meetings

Each year in September the senior classes (Classes 8 to 14) vote to elect a Class Representative. This class representative sits on the committee for one year. The person who comes second in each class vote becomes a deputy member to cover in the event of the Class Representative not being able to attend a meeting.

The committee meets on alternate Fridays in the Sacred Space to discuss issues raised by their class peers. Ms.Yvonne Lulias facilitates the discussions. The group also discuss any upcoming activities that they are going to run e.g. a soccer tournament, the end of year magazine.

Each member is assigned a task for the coming fortnight.

On occasion the Principal or Deputy Principal may attend meetings.

25. Social Committee Meetings

The social committee is elected every year for the school year ahead. The work of the committee is to organise the celebration of birthdays, births, weddings, retirements and school anniversaries. A Christmas and end of year celebration is also organised by the committee.

The organisation of celebrations and the collection of monies to fund celebrations is also undertaken.

Upcoming events, general information and wellbeing messages are arranged by the social committee on the Social Committee Noticeboard in the staffroom.

26. End of Year Handover Meetings

These meetings occur in June each year between the teachers of each student and the class teacher to whom the student is moving. The purpose is to discuss critical information on the student's strengths, challenges, learning style and areas of particular importance to their education and emotional well-being in school. An end of year handover form is also completed by SNA to SNA at the end of each school year.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are many ways to communicate, and on many different levels, it is also acknowledged that in each communication, there are two parties. We should always treat each other with dignity and respect:

- We listen to the opinions of others and act sensitively
- We communicate in a trustworthy and genuine way
- We ensure that appropriate information is shared honestly
- All communication is open and consistent
- When we talk to others, we are clear and transparent about what is happening

Success Criteria

- All stakeholders are familiar with and co-operate with the established school communication systems.
- There is respectful communication between parents and school staff.
- There is positive feedback from the school community and visitors regarding a welcoming atmosphere and communication experience.
- The Complaints Procedure is followed and recorded as per 'INTO/CPMSA Complaints Procedure for Primary Schools'.

Implementation/Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 8th June 2022.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in September 2025.

Signed: 
Chairman Board of Management

Date: 08/06/2022

Signed: Karen A. Lawther
Principal

Date: 08/06/2022

Appendix 1.

Brief Department of Education & Skills Guidance Document for Parents who wish to make a Complaint about a Teacher or other staff members of a School

Introduction

This guidance note aims to generally inform parents about who they should contact to make a complaint against a teacher or other staff member of their child's school; as well as providing guidance on options they may choose to follow, likely timeframes involved and how they can appeal a decision of a school in relation to their child's education.

Making a Complaint

The 1998 Education Act provides the legal framework for the delivery of education to children through recognised schools. All recognised schools are legally owned by the school patrons or trustees; and managed by a school's Boards of Management which is also the employer of teachers in a school.

Accordingly, parents wishing to make a complaint against a teacher or school should contact the relevant school authorities. The complaint procedures adopted by most schools are those that have been agreed between the teacher unions and school management bodies. The details of these procedures for primary schools are attached in Appendix 2. These procedures lay out the stages to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage.

Under the 1998 Education Act, the Minister for Education and Skills provides funding and policy direction for schools. Neither the Minister nor the Department have legal powers to either:

- instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regards to individuals complaint cases, or
- to investigate individual complaints

While the Department does not pass judgment on individual complaints it can clarify for parents and pupils how their grievances and complaints against

schools can be progressed. If you require any further clarification please contact Parents' and Learners' Unit, Schools' Division, Department of Education and Skills, Cornamaddy, Athlone, (090) 6484099.

Appealing to the Ombudsman for Children

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children may independently investigate complaints about schools recognised with the Department of Education and Skills, **provided the parent has firstly and fully followed the school's complaints procedures**. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that a child has, or may have been negatively affected by the action of a school.

The office can be contacted at: Ombudsman for Children's Office, Millenium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1, (Ph) 1800 20 20 40 or (01) 865 6800, E-mail: oco@oco.ie

Complaints relating to Child Protection or Allegations of Child Abuse

The Department of Education and Skills, (including staff of the Inspectorate or National Educational Psychological Service) does not investigate allegations of child abuse. Statutory responsibility for child protection rests with TUSLA. Accordingly, the way of reporting a child abuse allegation is to contact the TUSLA Duty Care Social Worker.

Any allegation of child abuse received by staff in the Department is dealt with in accordance with the Department's *Child safeguarding Statement*. Under these procedures the Department does not pass judgment on the allegations brought to its attention and ensures that the details of the allegation available to the Department are immediately passed on to the relevant investigatory authorities, including TUSLA and/or An Gardaí. The Department cannot guarantee confidentiality to complainants alleging child abuse as the information it receives must be passed on to the relevant authorities for investigation, including any details of the person making the allegation.

Parents who are dissatisfied with how a school investigated a child abuse allegation should report this to TUSLA. If you wish to report a concern the contact details are below.

Kilkenny is located in a TUSLA Area comprising of Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary. The duty social work office covering Kilkenny is located in Tipperary. Child and Family Agency ,

Yellow House,
Wester Road,
Clonmel,
Co Tipperary. E91 PR83

Telephone: 052 6177302

1. **Suspension, Permanent Exclusion or Refusal to Enrol**

Parents can appeal a decision by a school's Board of Management to permanently exclude their child from its school, to suspend their child from attendance at its school for a total of 20 days in any school year, or to refuse to enrol their child. Under Section 29 of the 1998 Education Act parents may appeal these decisions by school authorities to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. The appeal may be heard by a committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills for that purpose. Further information about Section 29 appeals, including the process and application forms can be obtained from the Department's website www.education.ie.

If you wish to make an appeal under Section 29 please contact: Section 29, Administration Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 H30Y or by email to: section29@education.gov.ie

Discrimination

Under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008 discrimination is unlawful on nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, membership of the Traveller community and race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin). If you feel that your child has been discriminated against in their education; and you have previously raised this matter with your school and remain unhappy with their response, you may refer the matter to: **Workplace Relations Commission - Information and Customer Service**, O'Brien Road, Carlow. R93 E920

Tel: (059) 917 8990 **Locall:** 0818 80 80 90

Further information about the complaints procedure and complaint forms can be obtained at <https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/>

Appendix 2.

The INTO and CPSMA reached agreement on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure. In this agreement 'days' means school days.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the board of management, except where those complaints are deemed by the board to be:

- on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills;
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, 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 s/he 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

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the board of management.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:
 - a. supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - b. arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher 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 referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.
3. If the board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - a. the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
 - b. the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
 - c. the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
 - d. the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
 - e. the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and

- f. the meeting of the board of management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.