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## **Home/School Partnership Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy was developed by the staff of St. Brigid's B.N.S. 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 B.N.S.

The Home/School Partnership is envisaged as a positive working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to listen and learn in the best interests of pupils' development and progress.

It is recognised that good home-school links contribute greatly to the quality of education received by children. To maintain these links, an open cordial relationship exists between parents and teachers which recognises and values the respective roles of each.

### **Parents are encouraged to:**

- Develop and maintain 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 Parents' 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
- Equip pupils with all the appropriate school materials (books, copies, writing materials, etc) required during the school day, including a healthy, nutritious lunch and full uniform/tracksuit
- Notify the school at the earliest opportunity if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his education
- Provide a note of explanation when a pupil is late arriving to school, absent from school or not in correct/full uniform/tracksuit
- Show care and respect for school property and encourage child(ren) to do likewise
- Refrain from bringing family pets on to the school premises (even if on a lead)
- Facilitate the child(ren) reaching their full potential and gaining maximum benefit from their time in school by ensuring that pupils attend regularly and punctually throughout the school year. The practice of taking pupils out of school at any time during the school year in order to facilitate family holidays should be avoided. It is not school policy to provide work for these pupils who take holidays during term time. Taking pupils out of school early during the school

day (unless it is absolutely necessary for attendance at medical appointments etc.) should also be avoided. Whenever possible, parents should request from other professionals that appointments be arranged for after-school times

- Leave the school building/grounds promptly when ‘dropping-off’ pupils especially those young pupils who may experience some ‘separation anxiety’ in the earlier part of the school year. Further contact will be made with parents if the need arises

### **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 and new pupils throughout the school – May & June
- Formal Parent/Teacher meetings one-to-one in November
- Meetings with parents whose children have special educational needs and also when developing individual education plans
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Through the Parents’ Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. Mandatory policies are available to view on the school website [www.stbrigidsbns.ie](http://www.stbrigidsbns.ie)
- Ongoing communication throughout the school year by means of newsletters, TextAParent.ie, homework journals, phone calls, notes, etc.
- 1st-6th class Homework diaries are used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers
- Written notes re absences from school: these need to be sent to teachers on the pupils return to school stating the reason for the absence. The notes are then kept by the teacher for TUSLA statistics at the end of the year. Under Section 20 of the Education Welfare Act, schools are obliged to notify TUSLA if pupils are absent for 20 days or more in a school year. Letters will be kept on file. There is no need to phone the school about pupil absences A standard letter will be issued to parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern following a period of absence totalling 15days.
- The school values and welcomes the participation of parents/guardians in school fundraising events e.g. Book Fair, Cake Sale, Bingo
- Involvement of parents in school activities e.g. library, sports, Maths for Fun, Credit Union (subject to Garda Vetting)
- Parents are invited to events throughout the school year e.g. Grandparents’ Day, school masses, Christmas shows
- Participating in the preparation of children for the sacraments – the implementation of the ‘Do This in Memory’ and ‘You Shall Be My Witness’ programmes

**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 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.

Where either/both parents is/are involved in new relationships, it should be noted that communications from the school to new partners will be limited to that which is expressly agreed between the parents and notified to the school or that which has been provided for by a court order.

### **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 their children are making 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 staff's knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

### **Parent/Teacher Meetings**

The purpose of Parent/Teacher meetings is:

1. To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents
2. To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
3. To help staff/parents get to know the children better as individuals
4. To help children realise that home and school are working together
5. To identify ways in which parents can help their children
6. To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education

### **Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings:**

- Communication between parents and teachers is encouraged at all times to foster good relations between home and school
- *Parents are asked to please make an appointment (by phone call, by visit to the secretary's office or by note in the Homework Journal) to meet with the child's teacher if/when needed.* Pre-arranged appointments facilitate better quality communication between the parent and teacher, rather than the more rushed and distracted type that takes place when the teacher has to supervise the pupils in the class from the classroom door while at the same time communicating with a parent. Pre-arranged meetings allow for more discreet communication and avoid potential embarrassment for a child when his parent is talking to the teacher at the classroom door
- It is understood that from time-to-time certain 'sensitive/urgent' situations (eg serious illness of family member, family crisis, etc) will arise which will require a parent to arrive at the school without appointment and such situations will of course continue to be facilitated. Outside of

such situations parents should not arrive at the classroom door unannounced/without appointment, to seek a consultation with a staff member.

- 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.

- **Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings:**

- Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings take place in November. These meetings will be initiated by the school staff and details regarding times etc. will be worked out by the class teacher in consultation with parents.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to select preferred times on a note from the class teacher. Teachers will do their very best to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned.
- In relation to SEN pupils, formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the Individual Education Plan take place in September/October.
- 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) 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 or placed in the child's schoolbag as appropriate, unless otherwise requested by parents in writing.
- In the case of married but separated parents, requests can be made in writing by both parents to meet their child's teacher individually for meetings.
- In the case of unmarried separated parents, requests may be made in writing by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings, subject to the natural father having established his 'guardianship, custody and access rights' through the court and/or by means of statutory declaration made by the natural mother.

### **End-of-year school reports**

- An end-of-year school report is issued by post to parents in June
- All communication from the school will be posted to the child's official home address as given on the enrolment form
- In the case of married but separated parents, a written request may be made by both parents to have a copy of the end-of-year report posted to their address
- In the case of unmarried separated parents, a written request may be made by both parents to have a copy of the end-of-year report posted to their address subject to the natural father having established his 'guardianship, custody and access rights' through the court and/or by means of statutory declaration made by the natural mother.

## **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.

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

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This is something we strive to achieve 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. 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.
- Teacher's 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 8.50am and finish at 1.30pm (Junior & Senior Infants) and 2.30pm (1st-6th classes).
- All visitors to the school should adhere to protocol on entry to the school premises ie press the entry buzzer, identify themselves and sign the visitors' book.

## **Complaints**

Complaints are infrequent, but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The parental complaints procedure has been agreed between the INTO and CPSMA and was written to deal with complaints about teachers. *See Appendix 1.*

## **Safety, Health & Welfare at Work**

Boards of Management are responsible for ensuring the health, safety, wellbeing and educational progress of students. They also have a duty under *Section 8 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005* to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of employees. The Department of Education and Skills has acknowledged that on very rare occasions there may be incidents of assaults on school employees. The Board of Management (B.O.M.) of St. Brigid's B.N.S. is cognisant of its duty to provide a safe place of work for its employees. The BOM is concerned to protect school employees from the risk of violence of any kind, be that in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. The BOM is anxious to ensure that every effort would be made to create and maintain a culture in St. Brigid's B.N.S. where acts of violence are not tolerated and where incidents, when they do occur, are effectively and speedily dealt with. The BOM has adopted the guidelines outlined below to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to:

- a) Provide a safe place of work for employees
- b) Prevent or minimize the risk of assault on employees and
- c) To support staff members who have been assaulted or threatened with assault and to ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard against a recurrence.

In this respect, all staff and parents should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular is available to view on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

All staff members, parents, pupils and BOM members share responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Home/School Partnership Policy.

## **Success criteria**

The school evaluates the success of this Policy through:

- Positive and supportive engagement and participation of parents, staff, BoM members and pupils in the education process
- The extent to which there exists a mutually-beneficial, supportive and positive atmosphere and relationship among all members of the school community
- Feedback, as appropriate, from all members of the school community
- Indications that the smooth and efficient running and organisation of the school is enhanced through the implementation of this policy
- The indications that the facilitation and implementation of the Home/School Partnership Policy are enhancing the learning opportunities of the pupils of the school.

### **Ratification and communication**

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Parents' Association at a meeting of the PA on 09/11/2017

The policy was subsequently reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 15/11/2017. Its implementation was deemed effective from that date.

A copy of this policy was made available to all members of staff. Parents were made aware of the existence and availability of the policy on a school's newsletter, and this policy is also included on the St. Brigid's B.N.S. website at [www.stbrigidsbns.ie](http://www.stbrigidsbns.ie)

### **Timetable for Review:**

A Review of this Policy will be conducted as deemed appropriate, based on the success criteria outlined above.

Signed: Msgr. Alex Stenson  
Chairperson of the BOM

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017

## Appendix 1

### **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 (Irish National Teachers Organisation) and the CPSMA (Catholic Primary School Management Association) 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 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:



- 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.