



Communication Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy has been formulated by Stratford National School to facilitate good communications between staff and between staff and home. It also highlights the importance of confidentiality in all matters. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and Complaints Policy.

The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other and aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning so that the child's education can be effective.

Stratford NS Staff and Board of Management believe that:

- Good communication between home and school is important because with positive and active partnership the child gets the best that primary education can offer.
- Teachers can do a better job where they are supported by and working closely with parents.

We know from research that children do better, behave better and are happier at school where parents and teachers work closely together and when parents are able to give their children support at home.

National Parents Council document Working Effectively as a Parents Association ¹

Stratford NS Staff and Board of Management are committed to:

- Developing close effective links with parents
- Participating in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the central and fundamental role of parents as Primary Educators² of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values, and distinctive character of Stratford National School
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents in school policy and decision making

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 and Parents Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

¹ <http://www.npc.ie/attachments/cbdcfd37-98b5-4698-86aa-3f30c38fcecd.pdf>

² Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland



In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians will be consulted by staff. It is essential that all parents and legal guardians are named on the enrolment form.

Behaviour of All Adults in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all 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 the school is of vital importance, adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

- All adults will treat our children, staff, and other parents with the utmost respect.
- All adults within the school are expected to speak to each other with respect, shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If any adult displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building and/or school site. In severe cases, and if required, the Gardaí will be called.
- The school will respect all children and parents' right to privacy so staff should not be asked to speak about any child except your own.

Things that the school needs to know to keep your children safe and healthy:

- It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that may cause anxiety to your child and could affect his/her education. Your first point of contact should always be your child's class teacher.
- The school should always know who is collecting your child. The school secretary should have list of people and their contact information who you have authorised to collect your child. Should this change the onus is on you to inform the school secretary of the change. You can provide this information by email or by dropping into the school office. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorized/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorization by the parent immediately. In an emergency, the parent must leave a message on the answering service or speak with the principal/teacher.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with Parents

Annual Consultation throughout the year including:

- Welcome day for new Junior Infants and their parents in mid-May each year
- September/October curriculum meetings. Teachers meet with the parents of their class within the first half term to introduce themselves and briefly outline the curriculum, class rules and expectations for the year.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in February (a short, written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher).
- Class teachers / SET meet with parents whose children have additional educational needs.

Written communication including:



- Weekly Homework Sheet/Email to inform parents about assigned homework, to confirm that homework has been completed and to relay messages between parents and teachers.
- Emails and noticeboard notifications sent from class teachers to parents, through Aladdin system
- Emails sent from parents to class teachers, via the office (info@stratfordns.ie)
- Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays, decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones and other school concerns
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year (shared via Aladdin).
- Text messages for general reminders (e.g school closures, coffee mornings)
- Some children with additional needs may have a home school diary. This is not a means of reviewing academic/social progress but rather serves as a useful tool to share information between home and school.
- Class blogs or other online platform e.g. Seesaw for sharing class news.

Generally, communication sent from the school will be 'paperless'. Emails sent from the school will be sent to the email address(es) provided at enrolment, unless otherwise requested by parents. All paper 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.

Other structures and processes including:

- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. The PA receive policies in draft form and provide feedback to the Board. The document once ratified by the Board is made available to all parents via the school website or in hard copy if requested. Any feedback arising is brought to the attention of the Board.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Sports Day and school concerts
- Involvement of parents in curricular areas and focus weeks when appropriate eg. STEM Week / Intercultural Week / World Book Day / Aistear / Guided Reading; sharing knowledge or reading groups etc.
- The Aladdin Connect app. We encourage all parents to utilise this app. Through this app contact details can be updated, consent can be sought, absences can be explained, school reports can be viewed, payments can be made and other useful applications.

Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary, usually via email, to arrange a suitable time. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, our school Complaints Policy outlines the procedures to be followed.

Assembly for all students is at 9:20am, class begins at 9.30am and finishes at 2pm (infants) and 3pm (1st-6th) and this time should not be interrupted. Meetings with the class staff at the class door or in the yard to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged as staff cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.

However, teachers and other members of staff may be available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school. If matters raised cannot be resolved immediately or if the parent or staff member needs to discuss the matter further an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties.

On some rare occasions a parent may need to speak to a staff member 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.



If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear during class time etc, this can be done through the secretary's office so that learning is not disrupted.

Online and Social Media Communication

Stratford National School has a website <https://www.stratfordns.ie>, Twitter page [@StratfordNS](#) and Instagram page. Parents are encouraged to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters, comment and contribute to posts and share information to help publicise the school and the achievements of our children.

The school name or anything that identifies the school should not be used on online or on social media (for example class Facebook or Whatsapp forum which might be set up by parents) by members of the public including parents without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. Stratford National School will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

Class Facebook/Whatsapp groups, though helpful for reminding parents or particular class groupings about school events, should not replace official communication from the school website, school newsletters and Aladdin Connect notifications. It is also important to remember that all parent to parent communication should be respectful, refrain from mentioning specific children, teachers, grievances, political views etc. The administrators for each group have responsibility for ensuring this code of conduct is upheld.

If parents have any concerns regarding their child within Stratford NS, they should contact their child's class teacher in the first instance, with a view to resolving any problems or misunderstandings at the earliest opportunity in a manner that is fair to everyone involved.

Communication between staff

The following tools of communication are in place in Stratford NS:

- Oral communication between staff
- Staff meetings
- Staff emails - with 'scheduled send' function used as necessary to protect personal hours
- Staff Whatsapp Group for social events/notifications
- Collaborative use of Microsoft Teams
- Oral notices to teachers by the Principal
- Announcements/discussion in Staff Room at break times
- Staff Room notice board
- School-related events
- Assembly
- Regular classroom visits by the Principal
- Monthly Board of Management meetings and shared report

Communication between BOM & Parents Association Committee

Representatives of the Board of Management and the Parents Association Committee meet annually.



There is a teacher representative on the Board of Management who attends meetings monthly.

There is a teacher representative on the Parents Association Committee who attends (part of) the Parents Association Committee (PAC) meetings monthly. This representative also brings items back to the staff/Principal for discussion.

The parent nominees on the Board of Management attend PA meetings as members of the PAC.

The Principal and the Chairperson of the PAC meet termly.

Email communication between School and PAC is generally limited to:

- Principal to Chairperson
- Treasurer to Treasurer
- With some necessary contact made between one member of the PAC and the school secretary (including photos for website etc).
- On occasion, by agreement, there may be links with the Deputy Principal if a certain area falls under his/her remit (e.g mobility management).

Communication with outside agencies

Stratford National School has enjoyed and benefited from links with state agencies including:

NEPS / NCSE / SESS / SENO / HSE / Tusla / EWO

Stratford National School also aims to make links with the community through:

- Links with local schools (Principal meetings, pupil events)
- Links with the community Gardaí
- Links with local events in Rathgar/Herzog Park
- Rent of school hall

Communication through the school office

Through the Aladdin system emails can be sent by teachers directly to parents. All incoming emails are communicated through the office (info@stratfordns.ie) The class teacher does not respond from their personal email to these.

Communication by email- response time

Response times to emails from the school secretary can vary depending on the demands in the office at any given time. It is considered reasonable that 3-5 school days are allowed for a response (with the exception of holiday periods during which email is only checked intermittently).



Response times to emails to the Principal can also vary greatly depending on the demands at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff and overall running of the school. A response time of 5-7 school days is considered to be reasonable.

Teachers are in class during the day and will not have time to access emails. They may be engaged in planning, meetings or personal matters after school hours and so again 3-5 school days is considered to be a reasonable response time.

There may be occasions where a parent is trying to contact the school by phone and/or email and are not receiving a response. Office hours are limited and the secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- To get general feedback from the parents regarding the school
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- To inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy.

Organisation of parents teacher meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes, usually in the second term before the February Mid-term break. If a parent wishes to arrange an additional meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by contacting the school secretary.

Stratford National School uses prepared guidelines to give structure to the meetings. These can vary from teacher to teacher but must include feedback on attendance, behaviour, punctuality, standardised test results (where applicable) and overview of progress through the curriculum. Parent/ Teacher meetings may take place in classrooms, offices, support rooms and/or through on-line platforms when necessary. Each meeting is allocated a 10-minute time slot which parents can book through the Aladdin Connect app. If a longer meeting is required these should be scheduled for another day.

In order to facilitate the operation of the school and the needs of children and other parents, it is important that meetings should be kept to the allocated time. Times of meetings are agreed beforehand and should be adhered to so that all parents are seen on time in so far as is possible.

For children with designated additional educational needs, formal scheduled parent/staff meetings relating to the child's Individual Education Plan or School Support Plan will take place in 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. In the case of separated/ divorced parents, Stratford National School will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.

School Reports

Stratford National School produces formal reports for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school annually in the third term using report card templates as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie). The reports are issued by email/ through the Aladdin app in the fortnight prior to school closing for the summer break to allow parents time to ask for clarification with the class teacher on anything contained in their child's report. The report will cover

- The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- The child's social and personal development
- Ways in which parents can support their child's learning

Reports for children in their final year of primary school (sixth class) will be in the form of an Education Passport. These support the transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary and follow a standard template.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for BoMs and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults, or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

In this respect, all staff 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 can be found attached to the school's Health and Safety policy.

Ratified by the Board of Management in March 2023

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____