



# Communications Policy

Revised 2015

### Introductory Statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Naul National School, Naul Co. Dublin in consultation with the Board of Management. Naul National School welcomes communication through out the duration of the pupils education and good home school links are valued. The family and home are central to the development of the child and the nurturing of values. Members of the B.O.M, teaching staff, classroom support staff, administrative and maintenance staff strive to create and open and welcoming atmosphere where good communications are fostered and developed.

Aims of the policy

### **Aims of Communication Policy**

- To build a school 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 of the school community
- To promote a culture of partnership in the education of our children

### **Types of Parent-teacher/ home school Communication at Naul National School**

- Informal parent-teacher contact
- Formal parent-teacher contact
- Specially convened parent –teacher meetings
- Junior Infant Information Meetings
- Written Progress Reports
- Newsletters
- Notice Board
- School website
- Information meetings
- Board of Management
- Parents' Association
- Text –A - Parent

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

### **School Communication Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents**

- School booklet informs parents about school matters
- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – June each year.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in October
- General Meetings for Parents – at least one per school year-
- Parents receive written school report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs
- Meeting re: religious services on Penance, Communion and Confirmation
- Involvement of parents in the Religion Alive O programme section for parents as well as Do this in Memory and You are my Witness Programmes
- Parents are invited to Family Masses, Concerts, Grandparents Day etc.
- Refreshments are provided as appropriate at school events, Holy Communion Day, Confirmation. Pageant etc.
- The school website ([www.naulnationalschool.net](http://www.naulnationalschool.net)) has information on the school.
- Text-a-Parent is used regularly in order to contact parents with school related information.
- All families are asked to complete a current family contacts form in September. This ensures that the school has records that are up to date.
- Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns- either in hardcopy, email or through the school website
- Homework diary 1st – 6th class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents are requested to sign the diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
- Written communication in the homework journal or by note to Junior and Senior Infants
- Parents are invited to school events, activities and celebrations
- It is not necessary to telephone the school if a child is sick but an absent note is required when a child returns o school.

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 Teacher Meetings – Formal**

Formal parent teacher meetings are held annually in accordance with DES guidelines. Parents are given notice of these consultations. Parents are encouraged to make the necessary arrangements to be at the appointed appointment times. Parents are encouraged to attend these meetings as they provide an invaluable opportunity for parents to learn about their child and to get advice about their child's learning needs.

### **The aims of Parent/Teacher meetings are:**

- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To support the learning of each child
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals

- To help children realise that home and school are working together

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

1. Communication between parents and teachers is to be encouraged
2. Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. However, parents are welcome to speak to the Principal or teacher(s) at an appointed time
3. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged especially as it eats into formal teaching time between 9.20am -3pm.

### Urgent Meetings

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a teacher urgently. In urgent cases where a pre arranged appointment is not arranged in advance parents should be encouraged in the first instance to report to the school secretary. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The school will try 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.

The staff expect that all meetings are carried out in a frank and honest manner in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2005. In certain cases a teacher may request the Principal or other teacher to sit in at the meeting.

Notes in Homework Diary are signed to indicate they have been read. If a matter that appeared to be a Minor Issue becomes something more, where a response from the school may be needed, the teacher should ask that a meeting be arranged for later,

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.

**Meetings with Special Education Teachers:** Parents of pupils who are in receipt of extra learning support are required to meet with the Special Education Teacher in order to discuss the learning needs of their child.

Parents are expected to participate as partners in the formulation of Individual Educational Profiles if their child is in receipt of support for low incident disabilities

Parents whose children are in receipt of special education for high incidence learning needs (e.g reading support) are invited to attend meetings with the special education teacher and to assist in the formulation of Individual Pupil Learning Profiles

**Annual Progress Reports** detailing pupil progress during the academic year are issued in June. Teachers spend quite some time in collating these reports. Parents are advised to keep these reports in a safe place for reference as they may be required if

the child changes school. They are also useful in building a profile of a pupil's learning strengths and weaknesses.

**Information meetings** are organised as the need arises to advise parents of educational and curricular matters of relevance to their child's education and welfare. A typical example of such a meeting is the junior infant induction meeting

**Information leaflets/ forms** from the HSE, DES or other bodies directly connected with education and welfare of pupils in the school will be distributed to pupils from time to time.

Occasionally the CPSMA will authorize the distribution of information to parents and pupils.

All other correspondence must firstly be approved by the Board of Management before it is distributed to pupils.

**Absences** must be notified in writing to the school in accordance with N. E. W. B. requirements. A separate attendance policy is available in the school.

### Parents Association

Naul N.S has a Parents Association which represents the parents.

The committee of the Parents' Association aims to promote the interests of all pupils at Naul N.S in partnership with the B. O. M., the principal of Naul N.S, the teaching staff, support staff and ancillary staff.

The committee of the Parents' Association meets on a regular basis throughout the school year. The function of these meetings is to plan for school activities, to discuss and organise fund-raising activities and to advise the principal on general matters of concern to the parent body in the school.

Individual parents are encouraged to assist at the various events organised for parents and pupils throughout the school year.

**Board of Management:** Naul N.S Board of Management comprises of nominees of the trustee, community, teachers and parents. The B.O.M. meets on a regular basis.

Guidelines in relation to *Parental Status and Access to School Communications* are laid out in the CPSMA Newsletter, Issue 8: November 2010. Naul National School will adopt these guidelines and carry out all communications with parents/guardians in line with the following:

(A)	<b>Parents married to each other &amp; living together</b>	Mother and Father have <i>equal</i> guardianship and custody rights over the child unless a court order, specifying otherwise exists e.g. a care or supervision order. Where necessary the school should seek a letter from the parent's solicitor confirming the content of <b><u>the relevant section</u></b> of any	Both parents are entitled to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be consulted in regard to educational welfare</li> <li>• of child</li> <li>• notice of formal parent teacher meetings</li> <li>• copies of school reports</li> <li>• notice of meetings with NEPS, SENO etc,</li> <li>• notice of in-school/after school</li> </ul>
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		such court order to clarify its impact [if any] on the school.	<p>programmes,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• notice of school closures</li> <li>• notice of preparation meetings for the various sacraments /other meetings.</li> </ul> <p>One letter/communication to both parents will suffice</p>
(B)	<b>Parents married to each other, separated &amp; living apart</b>	In addition to (A) above, parents may have an ‘informal arrangement’ as to the custody of and access to their child/ren. Where necessary, schools should request details of any such arrangement. ‘Living apart’ includes situations where couples who have separated continue to live under the same roof as well as situations where one or other has left the family home.	<p>Both parents entitled to information as set out in (A) above.</p> <p>A <b>separate</b> letter/communication should be sent to each parent.</p>
(C)	<b>Parents married to each other, living apart with a ‘Separation Agreement’ in place</b>	In addition to (A) above, the ‘Separation Agreement’ will detail any formal arrangement between the parents in relation to custody and access. Custody of the child normally rests with the parent with whom the child primarily resides. Parents may also have joint custody. Both parents remain guardians of the child. Where necessary the school should seek a letter from the parent’s solicitor confirming the content of <b><u>the relevant section</u></b> of any such agreement to clarify custody and access arrangements in relation to how these may impact on the school.	<p>Both parents entitled to information as set out in (A) above.</p> <p>A <b>separate</b> letter/communication should be sent to each parent.</p>
(D)	<b>Parents married to each other, living apart &amp; either one or both is in a new</b>	In addition to (A) above, the fact that either parent is in a new relationship or has remarried has no impact on the guardianship or custody rights of the natural parents. New partners have no statutory	<p>Both parents are entitled to information as set out in (A) above.</p> <p>A <b>separate</b> letter/communication should be sent to each parent.</p> <p>No letter/communication should be</p>

	<b>relationship</b>	rights in relation to the child but may have a role with regard to collection from school etc. Communications from the school to new partners should be limited to that which is agreed between the parents or that which has been provided for by a court order.	issued to new partners, unless there is express agreement between the parties or unless such is provided for in a court order.
(E)	<b>Parents unmarried &amp; living together or living apart</b>	<p>The school should co-operate with the arrangements in place between the parties regarding the child unless a dispute arises.</p> <p>The natural mother <u>only</u> has automatic right of guardianship. A natural father can apply to the court seeking an order granting him guardianship, custody and access rights. In circumstances where the natural father is asserting his rights, the school should seek a letter from the parent's solicitor confirming the content of <b><u>the relevant section</u></b> of any such court order to clarify any such rights. Alternatively, provided the father is named on the child's birth certificate, the natural mother can agree by statutory declaration to grant the father such rights whereby he is appointed guardian. The school should seek a copy of the statutory declaration. Should the natural mother and father subsequently marry each other, both then have equal guardianship and custody rights as set out in (A) above.</p>	<p>The <b>natural father</b> does <b>not</b> have an automatic entitlement to the information set out in (A) above.</p> <p>A letter/communication goes to the natural mother and to the father if he is in possession of either a court order or a statutory declaration</p>
(F)	<b>Parents unmarried &amp; in new relationships</b>	<p>The natural parents' rights are as set out at E above.</p> <p>New partners have no statutory rights in relation to the child but may have a role with regard to collection from school etc. Communications</p>	<p>The natural parents are entitled to the information as set out in (E) above.</p> <p>A letter/communication goes to the natural mother and to the father if he is in possession of either a court order or a statutory</p>

		from the school to new partners should be limited to that which is agreed between the natural parents or that which has been provided for by a court order.	declaration. No letter/communication should be issued to new partners unless there is express agreement between the parties or unless such is provided for in a court order.
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The following procedures will be implemented giving due regard to the information provided in the table above: Complaints

A complaint about the teacher who has been approached

The response to a complaint of this nature will depend on whether it is a minor issue or a major one. If it is of the latter type then it would be better for the teacher in question to refer the person to the school's complaint procedure.

If it appears to be a minor issue the teacher can discuss it with the complainant, provided the discussion continues in the appropriate tone. The teacher should make a short note in the Class Administration Folder, including whether or not agreement was reached. It may also be advisable to mention the matter to the Principal.

A complaint about other pupil/pupils

Again, the response to a complaint of this nature will depend on whether it is a minor issue or a major one. If it is of the latter type then it would be better for the teacher in question to refer to person to the school's complaint procedure.

If it appears to be a minor issue the teacher can discuss it with the complainant, provided the discussion continues in the appropriate tone.

The teacher should tell the complainant that the school reserves the right to mention any such complaint to the parent or guardian of the pupil about whom the complaint is made.

The teacher should make a short note in the Class Administration Folder, including whether or not agreement was reached. It may also be advisable to mention the matter to the Principal.

A complaint about another teacher or staff member



Any such complaint should only be heard by the Principal or by a teacher who is senior to the teacher who is the subject of the complaint.

If a teacher is approached with a complaint about another teacher other than in these circumstances they should politely refuse to take the complaint, and refer the complainant to the school's complaint procedure.

Where the Principal or a senior person is approached with such a complaint, the response will depend on whether it is a minor issue or a major one.

If it appears to be a serious/major issue then the complainant should be referred to the school's complaint procedure, and asked to document their complaint.

If it appears to be a minor issue then it can be discussed with the complainant, provided the discussion continues in the appropriate tone. The person hearing the complaint should make a short note in the Class Administration Folder, including whether or not agreement was reached.

### Complaints Procedure

The Board of Management of our school has adopted the INTO/CPSMA Complaints Procedure which provides a mechanism for dealing fairly with parental complaints against a teacher. Parents will be made aware of this procedure via the web site and this procedure is also contained in the Information booklet for new Parents.

#### Introduction

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:

- (i) on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
- (ii) frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school;
- (iii) 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**

1.1 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.

1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal Teacher with a view to resolving it.

1.3 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**

2.1 If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

2.2 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 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

### **Stage 3**

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**

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 3.2 (b).

4.2 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.

4.3 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;
- (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 3.1 (b).

### **Stage 5**

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 5 days of the meeting of the Board.

5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.

In this policy 'days' means school days.

Note: The vast majority of complaints are resolved locally and informally. However, in certain circumstances, for example, where a complaint is considered to be serious

in nature, or where the teacher is required to submit a written response to his/her board of management, the teacher should contact his/her INTO District Representative or INTO Head Office for advice and assistance.

In advising a teacher, the INTO will be anxious to ensure that there is due process and fair procedures applied which generally include:

- that the teacher is fully appraised of all matters being considered by the board of management, including being provided with copies of all relevant documentation;
- the right to respond and adequate time to prepare a response;
- entitlement to be represented by the INTO, if necessary.

Where a teacher contacts the INTO in relation to a complaint(s) made against him/her, the officials involved will generally meet with the teacher and require him/her to provide detailed written information and documentation on the matter. The officials will assess the case and decide if additional specific legal advice or a legal consultation is required. Specific legal advice is obtained for members in accordance with the Rules of the INTO and the conditions prescribed by the CEC.

This policy was ratified on \_\_\_\_\_

This policy will be reviewed on \_\_\_\_\_