

Scoil Chormaic

COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL

SCOIL NÁISIÚNTA POBAIL



Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

Baile Stiofán, Baile Brigín, Co. BÁC

Communications Policy

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Introductory Statement

Scoil Chormaic CNS was established in 2010. It is under the patronage of Dublin Dún Laoghaoire Education and Training Board. This policy outlines the procedures regarding communication in Scoil Chormaic CNS and seeks to maintain and improve the current channels of communication among all stakeholders in the school and with all of our partners in education, namely communication between staff, staff and parents and the school and the wider community.

Rationale

The staff and management of Scoil Chormaic CNS acknowledge the importance of good communication between all of those involved in school life i.e. teachers, special needs assistants, children, parents/guardians and ancillary staff is a vital part of our school.

Context

Scoil Chormaic CNS moved to its permanent site in January 2018. The school is on a shared campus with Bremore Educate Together Secondary School. The current staffing of the school is as follows:

- 1 Principal
- 1 Deputy Principal
- 20 Mainstream Class Teachers
- 15 SET Teachers
- 2 Special Class Teachers
- 10 Special Needs Assistants
- 1 Full time Secretary
- 1 Part time Secretary
- 1 Caretaker
- 6 Cleaners

The school currently has 525 pupils enrolled, and we have 401 families in our school.

Aim

Through the development and implementation of this Communications Policy, Scoil Chormaic CNS aims to,

- Develop close links between parents/guardians and the school
- Provide structured opportunities for parents/guardians to collaborate with the school in developing their child to their full potential
- Encourage and support parents/guardians in becoming actively involved in the school
- Keep parents/guardians up to date and informed with what is happening in the school
- Promote partnership with parents/guardians
- Support sound and structured communication between staff, staff and parents/guardians, the school and the wider community and with external agencies

All members of the school community are expected to familiarise themselves with the Communications Policy. It is considered that everyone has a responsibility to make

themselves aware of where and how to seek information and updates as the need arises and should seek to keep themselves informed.

Structured Communication

Staff Communication

Recognising its importance, the school encourages best practice in communication among all staff. In promoting a caring and nurturing culture in Scoil Chormaic CNS, good personal relationships between staff members are encouraged, promoted and fostered.

- Staff at Scoil Chormaic CNS communicate through email. Staff are expected to check their emails daily to ensure communications are received.
- All staff will be provided with a DDLETB email address which also gives them access to the staff calendar and OneDrive. If a teacher wishes to use email to communicate with their pupils, they should ask to be set up with a secondary email account.
- Emails sent after 6pm should be scheduled for the following morning unless the information is required urgently. Staff are not expected to respond to emails that are sent after this time. All staff have a duty to respect another person's right to disconnect (e.g. by not routinely emailing or calling outside of normal working hours)
- Emails will be used for circulating agenda and minutes of staff meetings.
- The whiteboard in the staffroom is used for general updates and information, particularly regarding key dates or events. This can be updated by any staff member.
- Formal staff meetings will take place once per term, in addition to other meetings. Formal communication with staff will take place at all meetings. In addition to this the Principal undertakes to make herself available to any member of staff who wishes to discuss school matters with her. This should be done by requesting an appointment either through email or in person.
- Staff meetings will be conducted along the following lines,
 - Agenda will be emailed to all staff one week in advance
 - Minutes of meetings will be recorded and shared
 - Opportunities will be provided for staff to share CPD information and knowledge
 - All staff should be respectful of the opinions and voice of others in meetings and efforts will be made to hear a range of voices and opinions
 - At times, staff meetings may take place in mini groups where appropriate
 - Staff meetings may take place online
- Staff will be informed of emergencies, such as school closure, through text and email.
- Staff are encouraged to share best practice and information from CPD. A folder has been established on the school Drive for the sharing of CPD resources/notes and there is an opportunity for staff to share information from CPD at the beginning of all staff meetings. If a staff member wishes to share at a staff meeting, they should contact ISLT in advance of the meeting.
- Sharing of best practice can also take place during a Teach Meet. These generally take place after school and are hosted by a staff member who wishes to share methodologies, resources or best practice with other staff members.
- Newly appointed teachers take part in an induction course at the beginning of the academic year. They are also supplied with updated policies, procedures and a copy of the staff handbook. Teachers completing Droichead are mentored by the Professional Support Team (PST) and there is regular communication between the PST and NQT's.

- SNA's are recruited to the school to assist in the care of pupils with special educational needs. They play an important role in enabling pupils to participate to the best of their ability in school life. It is the policy of the school to support effective communication between the SNA, teacher, parent/guardian and pupil. Communication between the teacher and the SNA is of paramount importance as it has a direct impact on the pupils(s) they are caring for. In order to ensure the smooth running of classes, the class teacher and SNA ensure that effective plans, timetables and classroom practices and roles are set out at the beginning of the academic year.

Communication between Staff and Parents/Guardians

It is important that pupils understand that communication between home and school is regular and that parents/guardians and the school are both working together to provide the best possible education for them. The following measures are in place at Scoil Chormaic CNS to support the facilitation of communication between staff and parents/guardians of pupils attending Scoil Chormaic CNS,

- **School Calendar**
The calendar outlines dates for the coming academic year. It is distributed to parents/guardians in June for the following academic year and is also available on the school website.
- **Term dates letter**
At the beginning of each term, parents/guardians receive a letter outlining key dates and events for the term. This is also available on the school website.
- **Pupil progress**
Pupil progress is reported to parents/guardians formally twice per academic year, once at Parent Teacher Meetings and once through an end of year school report which is issued in June.
 - Parent Teacher Meetings take place at the end of November each year. They take place across two afternoon/evenings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to attend these meetings as they provide valuable opportunities to meet with the school's teaching staff and identify areas of strength as well as discussing and identifying additional supports that may be needed to ensure that their child can achieve their full potential.
 - School Reports are issued to parents/guardians in June of each academic year. They are issued two weeks before the end of term to allow time for parents/guardians to discuss any aspects of the report with the class teacher if they wish to do so.
- **School Related Events**
Parents/Guardians will also be invited to attend school concerts, sports days, open night, parents' information evenings, graduation night and other relevant talks/information sessions facilitated by the school and/or outside speakers.
- **Text Messages/Emails**
Text messages or emails may be sent to inform parents/guardians of upcoming events in the school or to alert their attention to a new post/parent survey on the school website. In an effort to go paperless, the school will either email letters

through Aladdin Connect or will upload the letter to the school website and send a text to families with a link to the letter on the school website.

- **School Website**

The school website is used to communicate regularly with parents/guardians. Important and recently upcoming information will be posted on the 'News' section and/or on the 'Notice board'. Teachers will also make regular postings showing some of the work or activities that the pupils have been involved in at school. A text message will be sent with a link to the website for parents to access relevant letters.

- **School Policies**

School Policies are published on the school website and are available in hard copy upon request from the school office.

- **Aladdin Connect:**

Aladdin Connect is used as a tool for communication between home and school. Parents/Guardians may receive a message from the school via the Aladdin Connect App. Often parents/guardians will receive a message via Aladdin Connect in lieu of a text message. School reports are made available through Aladdin Connect in June each year.

A number of procedures are in place to facilitate direct communication between a parent/guardian and a staff member,

- **Seesaw**

Seesaw is also used for Homework and communication between school and home. Teachers have the facility to communicate work with families and pupils can communicate with their teachers regarding the work. There is also a messaging feature that allows parents and teachers to communicate with one another

- The Messaging service is to be used for quick, lower level messages that do not require a face to face meeting.
- Class teachers will not always be in a position to check messages on Seesaw during teaching time. If you need to contact a teacher urgently e.g. if you are collecting your child early from school, please phone the school office.
- Messaging is not to be used for concerns a parent/guardian may have regarding a child's progress or any other concern. These concerns are raised during an appointed face to face meeting between the teacher and parent/guardian or through a phone call/appointment.

- **Class Dojo:**

Class Dojo is a secure parent – teacher platform administered by the class teacher to link with the parent/guardian with regards to their child's learning at school. The rationale behind the use of this is to afford a quick messaging service between school and home, allowing for ease of communication.

The following guidelines are in place to ensure the consistent use of Class Dojo among our staff and parents/guardians:

1. Class Dojo is operated when teachers are in the school building only. It is not operated on weekends.
2. All teachers operate the messaging service

- The Messaging service is to be used for quick, lower-level messages that do not require a face-to-face meeting. Examples of these are asking parents to send in cardboard boxes for art or a parent/guardian informing the teacher of their child's absence that day.
 - Class teachers will not be in a position to check messages on Class Dojo during teaching time. If you need to contact a teacher urgently e.g. if you are collecting your child early from school, please phone the school office. Teachers are not expected to respond to messages from parents during teaching time.
 - Messaging is not to be used for concerns a parent/guardian may have regarding a child's progress or any other concern. These concerns are raised during an appointed face to face meeting between the teacher and parent/guardian or through a phone call/appointment.
3. All communication through Class Dojo should remain professional, courteous and appropriate. If at any time a teacher or parent feels that the communication has not been made in a professional manner, this should be brought to the attention of the principal. The principal will then make a decision on the next steps to be taken.
- **Individual Meetings:**
 Appointments to meet with a class teacher can be made either through Class Dojo/Seesaw or at the school office. Parents/Guardians should be mindful that teachers will not be able to meet with them while the teacher has pupils in their care e.g. at 9:00am or dismissal at 1:40pm/2:40pm. Teachers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of the pupils in their care and so cannot facilitate a meeting with a parent/guardian while also trying to adequately supervise their pupils. If a parent/guardian wishes to meet with a teacher, adequate notice will need to be given, it is unlikely that it will be possible to facilitate same day appointments unless in the case of an emergency.

All appointments to meet with the Principal should be arranged through the school office.

Communication with the Wider School Community

- Board of Management:
 - The Principal and staff rep will liaise between staff and the BoM.
 - Complaints Procedures should be followed if a complaint is being made by a parent, where the BoM is only involved when resolution with the teacher and principal have been exhausted.
 - Any member of the school community can at any time write to the secretary or chairperson of the BOM.
- Parents Association:
 - The PA will communicate with parents/guardians by letter, note, text, email, Zoom or Teams
 - The Principal/ISLT will liaise between the PA and staff

- Policies and Procedures:
 - Policies and procedures are published on the school website as required

Communication with External Agencies

- NEPS: The Principal and SET Co-coordinator liaises with the National Educational Psychological Service with regard to the making of referrals where necessary. Meetings with Parents/Guardians for these meetings are organised by the Principal/SET Coordinator and necessary paperwork regarding this is undertaken by the Principal/SET Coordinator with the class teacher of the pupil and gone through in detail with the parents of the pupil. All communication with external agencies is done through the school.
- External Services: Where necessary a class teacher or SET teacher may contact the SLT/OT or Psychologist working with a child to seek support in working with a pupil and to best support their needs. If making contact with an external agency, the teacher should contact the agency either by phone or by email and keep notes of the call/email.
- Tusla: The DLP liaises with the services of Tusla with regard to child welfare. This includes the Education and Welfare Officer regarding school attendance. When a referral is made to these services, parents/guardians and/or relevant staff are informed by the DLP.

Communication among Students

- Student Council: The Student Council comprises of students from each class from 2nd – 6th Classes. The purpose of this council is to give a democratic voice to our students. The Student Council is an important communication tool between pupils.
- Communication between students and others: To assist in creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for learning, all students are expected to treat one another, school staff, parents and the school community in a respectful manner. At the beginning of each academic year, the pupils, with their class teacher, discuss and establish how to create and maintain good communication and relationships in the class and throughout the school. The school is at the beginning stages of implementing Restorative Practice, which seeks to provide pupils with the language to facilitate respectful dialogue when discussing conflicts that may arise between students.

Contacting Parents/Guardians during the school day

On occasion it may be necessary for the school to contact a parent/guardian during the school day. In the event of a pupil being unwell or a pupil emergency, the parents/guardians of the pupil will be contacted by phone. In the event that the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact person on file, as per enrolment form, will be contacted. Please ensure that the school has up to date phone numbers for parents/guardians and emergency contact persons.

Success criteria

This policy will be deemed to have been successful if:

- Communication between staff and staff and families is clear and consistent
- Communication between school and home takes place successfully on a regular basis.
- Communication between school and home is positive and contributes to pupil progress, success and wellbeing at school.

Implementation

Roles and responsibilities

- All Staff and families: Familiarising themselves with the policy and following its procedures
- ISLT: Maintaining the policy and implementation of the Communications Policy.
- Principal: Leading the implementation of the Communications Policy and overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Timeframe

This policy has been revised in the 2020-2021 school year. It will be implemented in its entirety once agreed by the Board of Management in Term 1 of the 2021-2022 school year.

Monitoring

Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Principal and ISLT.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier, where deemed necessary.

Ratification and communication

This policy has been communicated directly to staff in the course of staff meeting, and will be made available electronically. A hard copy will be available alongside other school policies. The policy will also be placed on the school website.

Signed by

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Principal of Scoil Chormaic CNS

