

## **Parents as Partners Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and communication in Francis St CBS. It also outlines the contribution that parents make to the running of the school through their involvement in the Board of Management and the Parents Association.

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, so that the child's education can be effective. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

### **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 child.
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character.
- Become actively involved in the Parents Association and/or the Board of Management.
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them and their child.

### **Staff are encouraged to:**

- Establish good communication with parents/guardians of pupils in their class.
- Keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress and behaviour, both positive and negative.
- Listen to what parents/guardians have to say and encourage them to bring any concerns to them at an early stage to avoid situations escalating.
- Be aware of the role of parents/guardians as prime educators and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help them reach their potential.
- Value and respect the input of parents as they know their child best.

### **Structures in Place to Facilitate Open Communication and Consultation with Parents:**

- The existence of a strong, well established Parents' Association, who are welcomed into the school and encouraged to get involved in school activities e.g. Christmas celebrations, Sports Day, First Communion etc.
- Parent room is set up to facilitate parents for coffee mornings, meetings etc.
- Meetings of parents of incoming 2<sup>nd</sup> class – mid May, June (with their child for meet the teacher) and early September.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November.

- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year.
- Meetings with parents of children with special needs in October/November to compile individual education plans (IEP's), Personal Pupil Plans (PPP's) as appropriate.
- Consultation throughout the year.
- Written communication when necessary.
- Regular notifications and the school website to be updated with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Homework diary be used to convey messages which are signed by parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary each night to certify that homework has been completed.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Christmas Plays, Sports Day, School Walk etc.
- Through the Parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents in written format via the school website.
- If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, they can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time.
- It is vital that the school be immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to the 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 staff.

### **Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Parent/Teacher Meetings will be held once a year for all classes (Circular 14/04).

Where possible they will be held in the first term, towards the end of November for all classes.

The Purpose of the Parent/Teacher Meeting is:

To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents.

To inform parents how their child is progressing in school.

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

To share positives about the child.

To share with the parents 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 parents perspective.

To learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing.

To identify any areas of tension and disagreement.

To identify ways in which the parent can help their child.

To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education.

To inform the parents of the standardised test results according to school policy (if applicable).

To meet demands for accountability.

### **Reporting to Parents:**

Parents have the primary responsibility for their child's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents to support their child in this way by sharing meaningful information about the progress that their child is 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, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of the pupils work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich the teachers knowledge of the child's progress through providing further information about the child's learning at home.

### **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 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.
- Way in which parents can support their child's learning.

Francis St CBS uses standard report cards for reporting to parents on pupils' progress and achievement in school.

### **Formal Meetings:**

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in November. 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.

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the parents/guardians email address/mobile phone or home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents.

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

### **Formal IEP Meetings:**

Formal meetings with parents of children with special needs to compile IEP's will take place in October. However if a parents wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by appointment.

### **Informal Parent Meetings**

Francis St CBS encourages communication between parents and staff.

Meetings with the class teacher at the classroom door or in the class line in the morning to discuss concern is discouraged on a number of grounds:

1. Staff cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing by.
3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his parents is talking to the teacher at a classroom door.

Occasions occur where 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 children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

### **Parents' Association**

Francis St CBS has a proud tradition of parental involvement in the Parents' Association. Our Parents' Association is a member of the National Parents Council (NPC).

The following is a list of activities that the PA involves themselves in regularly:

Fundraising through raffles, sponsored walks etc.

Coffee mornings and providing refreshments at times of special events e.g. Christmas Plays and First Communions.

Organising events for the children.

Decorating the school for various special events.

Discussion of school policies.

### **Board of Management**

As required by the DES (*see Governance Manual for Primary Schools*), two parents as elected by the school body of parents are among the eight members of the school Board of Management. These parents, along with the other members, attend approximately five Board meetings per year. The Board of Management is responsible for the overall running of the school and the two parents have a crucial role in this.

*It is important to note that neither the teachers nor the parents on the Board are not delegates of their electorates. They are not obliged to report back to the parent body or take instructions on how to vote at meetings. Confidentiality in all Board matters is of utmost importance.*

### **Complaints Procedure**

It is the policy of the school that any complaints would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools. (This can also be accessed on the Department of Education and Skills (DES) website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie))

#### **Stage 1 – Informal Stage:**

A parent/guardian who wishes to a make a complaint should firstly approach the **class teacher** with a view to resolving the complaint.

Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint, with the class staff, he/she should approach the **Principal** with a view to resolving it.

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**

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.

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**

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:

Supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and

Arrange a meeting with the staff member, 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**

If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting.

If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:

1. The staff member should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint.
2. 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.
3. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

Following the Board's investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff member and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

### **Behaviour of All Members of the School Community**

Positive and respectful communication is of utmost importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all members of the school community i.e. the staff, parents and wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, 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 everyone is responsible for their own behaviours in the school.

All are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If anyone displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí must be called.

All children will be treated with the utmost respect while on the premises.

Staff are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved. The times of these meetings should be respected.

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

The Safety, Health and Welfare as Work Act became operative on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1989. It is recognised that school staff may at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation.

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.

### **Verbal Assault by a Parent/Guardian:**

In the case of a Parent/Guardian verbally assaulting a teacher or other member of the school community, the following procedure will be implemented:

The parent/guardian will be immediately instructed in writing, not to make any further contact with the teacher/school pending full consideration of the matter by the Board.

The Board will correspond with the parent/guardian stating:

- The Board considers the assault to be unacceptable.
- The action the Board intends to take.
- Preconditions that should be met before access to the school is restored.

### **Physical Assault by a Parent/Guardian:**

1. The incident will be immediately reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal/Chairperson of the Board of Management.
2. The details of the incident will be reported in an incident book.
3. Where necessary, immediate medical assistance will be sought.
4. The matter will be reported to the Gardaí where appropriate. This report will normally be made by the teacher who was assaulted.
5. The Board of Management will be notified of the incident and where necessary an emergency meeting of the Board should take place. The Board will notify its legal advisors and insurance company of the assault.
6. The parent/guardian will be immediately instructed in writing, not to make any further contact with the teacher/school pending full consideration of the matter by the Board.

Subsequently, the Board will correspond with the parent/guardian stating:

- The Board considers the assault to be unacceptable.
- The action the Board intends to take.
- Preconditions that should be met before access to the school is restored.

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on**

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**Gerard Cagney**

**Chairperson**

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**Fiona Collins**

**Principal**