



Ag Caint Leatsa

Communication Policy

Gaelscoil na Mí



Ag Caint Leatsa

Communication Policy, Gaelscoil na Mí

Introductory Statement

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. The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values.

This policy was developed by the Board of Management and staff of Gaelscoil na Mí in consultation with parents and pupils in the 2022-23 school year. It's purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

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

The staff and Board of Management of Gaelscoil na Mí 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 Educators of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of Gaelscoil na Mí
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents in school life

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

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. Adults in the school community (parents, staff, visitors) have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

- 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 nor will staff offer any details or information in relation to other children

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 a 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 in to the school office or updating details on Aladdin. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorised/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorisation by the parent immediately

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with Parents

Consultation throughout the year including:

- Welcome day for new Junior Infants and their parents in May each year
- September class meetings. Teachers meet with the parents of their class toward the end of September 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 / Special Education Teacher (SET) meet with parents whose children have additional educational needs in September/ October, January/ February and May/ June

Written communication including:

- Homework diary (2nd – 6th class), to inform parents about assigned homework, to confirm that homework has been completed and to relay messages between parents and teachers.
- Emails sent from class teachers to parents
- Emails sent from parents to class teachers
- Messages sent through Aladdin connect
- 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
- Class updates through Aladdin
- 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 Special Education Needs (SEN) pupils 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

- Emails from principal to families

In general, 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. Any 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 include:

- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies through surveys and focus groups
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Play days, Reading events, science exhibitions, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Friendship Week
- 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

Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, they can contact the teacher to arrange a suitable time. In the event that a parent has a complaint, Appendix 1 outlines the procedures to be followed.

Classes begin at 8:50am and finish at 1:30pm (infants) and 2.30pm (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 on several grounds:

- Staff cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
- It can be embarrassing for a child when their parent is talking to staff at a classroom door

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 the principal or class teacher is unavailable at short notice we ask that parents leave an outline of what they wish to discuss with the secretary. The continued presence of parents in the school building and on school grounds until such time as the staff member is available is not welcome. The relevant member of staff will contact the parents as soon as is possible.

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.

Meetings with the principal can be arranged through the school office. When concerns relate to classroom matters parents are expected to engage with the class teacher first and foremost.

“Town hall” style meetings will not be facilitated with any group of parents wishing to raise concerns.

Online and Social Media Communication

Gaelscoil na Mí has a website www.gaelscoilnami.ie, a Facebook account and an 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's name or anything that identifies the school should not be used on online or on social media (for example class Facebook page 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. Gaelscoil na Mí will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

We are proud of the high standards in our school. In order to defend our school reputation and that of our staff, any commentary which may be deemed as slanderous in any forum will not be tolerated and the school will pursue all steps up to and including legal action against those responsible.

Communication between staff

Staff meetings take place once a month. All members of teaching staff are expected to attend and non-teaching staff must attend on request of the principal.

Staff also have three other scheduled hours during each month (Croke park hours) which are allocated to planning.

Staff operate a Whatsapp group which is used for sharing daily school updates, social news and events.

Staff emails and Aladdin noticeboard are also in use for staff communication.

Communication between School/Board/PAC

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 meetings. This representative also brings items back to the staff/Principal for discussion.

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).

Communication with outside agencies

Gaelscoil na Mí has enjoyed and benefited from links with state agencies since 2011. These include:

NEPS / NCSE / SENO / HSE / Tusla/ CAMHS/ Primary Care teams

Gaelscoil na Mí 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
- Rent of school hall

Communication through the school office

The school phone number is 01-8353480 and the email address is oifig@gaelscoilnami.ie. The school office is open from 8.45am - 2.30pm each day with the exception of a lunchtime break of 30 minutes.

All visitors must report to the school reception and identify themselves and their business to the school secretary/ staff member.

Parents will be informed of office closures in advance when possible.

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.

Communication by email - response time

Emails to the school office are read and responded to during working hours; 8.50am - 2.30pm.

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 (except for 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 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 a reasonable response time.

Teaching staff (including the principal) are instructed to not have their work email on their personal phone and to not respond to emails after 5.30pm on school days as a courtesy to their colleagues.

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

Organisation of Parent/Teacher meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes, usually in February prior to 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 or their child's class teacher directly.

Gaelscoil na Mí 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 or in the school hall. 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.

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.

Planning meetings for Individual Education Plans/ Individual Plans

Formal parent/staff meetings relating to a child's **Individual Education Plan/ Individual Plan** will 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. **In the case of separated/ divorced parents, Gaelscoil na Mí will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.**

School Reports

Gaelscoil na Mí 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 through the Aladdin app in the week prior to school closing for the summer break to allow parents time to ask for clarification with the teacher on anything contained in their child's report. Report cards are written as Gaeilge and will cover;

- 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

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.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management and implemented immediately.

Cathaoirleach: *Conmac Mc Cashin*

Príomhoide: *Clár Ní Mhaoláin*

Dáta: 26/04/23

Revised Parental Complaints Procedure



Note:

- A copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school. This procedure comes into effect on the 1st of January 2024.
- Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the school patron.

Purpose/Objective

The parental complaints procedure was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the management bodies of primary schools, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023. It is designed to provide an open and clearly defined process to facilitate parents/legal guardians in raising concerns about their own child/children in an agreed, fair and transparent manner.

It is recognised that parents/legal guardians are the primary educators in a child's life and as such from time-to-time concerns may arise which they may need to engage with the school. It is expected that engagement will be timely, courteous and resolution focused to ensure that the important relationship between the parent and school can be preserved and respected. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively.

Procedural Points

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns will be dealt with either informally or formally at the earlier stages of the procedure. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution at the earlier stages, the procedure does allow for the escalation of the matter to the Board of Management. This procedure sets out, in four stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed. It is expected the parties will follow each stage in sequence.

- Where the term written correspondence is used, this refers specifically to a letter or email correspondence from a parent/legal guardian(s).
- Only complaints about a teacher which are written and signed by a parent/legal guardian, and which relate to their own child, will be investigated.
- Where a complaint raised by a parent/legal guardian is deemed by the employer/board of management to relate to the following, this procedure will not apply;
 - matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
 - frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
 - complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.
- In all circumstances, any form of written correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be supplied to the Chairperson of the board of management **only**. Any deviation from this could be deemed prejudicial and as acting outside the scope of this agreement.
- **Days in this procedure refer specifically to school days.** A school day is a day on which the school is in operation. Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure.
- Group/collective complaints are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process.
- The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any stage.
- Issues should be raised in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child that issues are raised to achieve early resolution at the earliest possible stage with the teacher, ideally while the pupil is in that teacher's class.

Formal Stage 1 Discussion

1.1 Parent/guardian meets teacher



A parent/legal guardian who wishes to make a complaint in respect of their own child, should, seek an appointment with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.

1.2 Parent/guardian meets Principal¹



Where the parent/legal guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher, they should seek an appointment with the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Principal as appropriate.

1.3 Parent/guardian meets Chairperson



Where the complaint remains unresolved, the parent/legal guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Chairperson as appropriate.

Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved during this stage.



Formal Stage 2 Written (10 days)

2.1 Written complaint sent to Chairperson



If the complaint has not been resolved at stage 1, the parent/legal guardian who wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This commences stage 2.

2.2 Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher

The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay.

2.3 Chairperson convenes meeting(s)



The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2.1. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/parent/legal guardian and other school personnel as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.



Formal Stage 3 Board of Management (20 days)

3.1 Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board

If the complaint remains unresolved following stage 2 and the parent/legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of receipt of this written statement. At this meeting, the Board can decide to proceed to either stage 3.2 or 3.3.

3.2 Complaint concluded

Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that:

- The complaint is frivolous/vexatious;
- The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
- The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular, or;
- where recourse to law has been initiated.

Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be so informed within five days of the Board meeting.



3.3 Proceed to a hearing

Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows:

- the teacher should be informed that the complaint is proceeding to a full hearing and the Chairperson must ensure the teacher has been supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board.
- the Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent/legal guardian is entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.
- the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their case to the Board. The teacher is entitled to be represented by a friend or a union representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking.
- the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer in response to the complaint. This written statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with any third party.
- the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in 3(b), (c) and (d) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1. in so far as possible.

Formal Stage 4 Decision (5 days)

4.1 Written decision from Chairperson



The Board will consider the complaint and the response provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the parent/legal guardian(s) within five days of the meeting held at stage 3.3.

4.2 Complaint concluded

The decision of the Board shall be final.



¹Where a complaint is received about a principal the above process commences at Stage 1.2.