

## **Réalt Na Mara National School**

Dunmore East, County Waterford



# **Communication Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was developed by the staff of Réalt na Mara National School and the Board of Management, in conjunction with school parents in the school year 2023/24.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on effective and appropriate communication strategies in Réalt na Mara National School. 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. Good communication between home and school is important, positive and active partnership enhances a child's primary education. 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 staff members in the school
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of ensuring that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character.
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

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

- Face to face Parent/teacher meetings in November for all classes.
- Parents receive a school report for their child at the end of each school year.
- Face to face information meetings in September with the class teachers to outline the curriculum and school/class routines for the year ahead.
- Open Day in May/June for new Junior Infants and their parents.
- Meetings with parents whose children have additional needs and ongoing consultation throughout the year
- Written communication via written messages in homework diary, email and through the Aladdin Connect App
- Through the parents' Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies.
- Regular newsletters to keep parents up to date with school events, holidays and school concerns
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. School masses and school concerts etc.

## **Parent / Teacher Communication**

### **Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year as per Circular 14/04. These will take place towards the end of November. They will be initiated by the school staff and time slots etc., will be made available through the Aladdin Connect app. Meetings will take place in the classrooms. In the case of separated parents, requests can be made, by both parents, for an individual meeting with their child's teacher(s).

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 child is progressing in school.
- To help teachers/parents get to know the child better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To share 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 learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing

- To identify areas of tension and disagreement
- 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

Meetings will be scheduled for ten minutes per child. If a follow-up meeting is required, the school will endeavour to facilitate same.

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

The school encourages communication between parents and staff. The class teacher, who has the most contact time with your child(ren) in school, is the FIRST and most important point of contact for every parent. If a parent has a concern about any issue, they are advised to contact either school secretary to arrange a meeting, (face to face or phone) at a mutually suitable time. When speaking to the school secretary, parents should give a brief description of the issue involved so that both parties can be prepared for the requested meeting. The teacher will endeavour to deal with the matter promptly.

Meetings with the class teachers at the class door or at the line in the morning or afternoon to discuss a child's concern/progress are strongly discouraged on a number of grounds:

1. Staff members cannot adequately supervise their classes while at the same time speaking to a parent
2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are sitting or standing close by
3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff in such a public way

If the Principal is contacted directly about an issue of concern to a parent, she will refer the matter back to the class teacher to be dealt with. Where the issues raised with the teacher have not been satisfactorily resolved, the Principal will help to find a resolution.

The exception to this is where child protection issues of any sort arise and the principal's involvement is required as Designated Liaison Person.

### **Formal Meetings - Support Plans/Personal Pupil Plans/Review Meetings**

School Support Plans or School Support Plus Plans will be drawn up in October. The Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher, in consultation with the Principal, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and parents will draw up the Support Plan. Recommendations from outside professionals, such as psychologists, occupational therapists etc., will be reflected in these plans, the Special Education Teacher will enact these recommendations in line with available resources, expertise and priority learning needs.

Once the pupil's Support Plan/School Support Plus, is finalised it will be sent to parents, signed by them, returned to the school and finally uploaded to the student's support file.

Where a need arises, support planning meetings will be arranged with parents at other times during the year. These meetings may be attended by the Principal, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Class Teacher, Special Education Teacher and the parents. Otherwise Support Plan Review Meetings will take place between the Special Education Teacher and parents in February.

If a parent wishes to arrange a meeting with the Special Education Teacher at any stage during the year to discuss their child's progress, they may do so by prior appointment.

### **Parental Communication with Staff**

Teachers' primary responsibility is to the teaching and learning in their classroom and the supervision of the children in their care. Communications regarding your child's absences, appointments, homework etc. may be relayed by phone call or email to the relevant school office or a note in your child's homework journal. Should parents need to speak to the class teacher, face to face meetings may be organised by again contacting the school office. In the event that the phone is unanswered in one campus, please call the other and a message will be relayed within the school.

Staff members' private mobile phone numbers, email addresses or social media accounts, including WhatsApp, should never be used by parents to contact staff or staff to contact parents in relation to school business.

### **Updating of Information**

The school should be informed immediately if a situation arises that could potentially cause anxiety for a child and 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. In this regard, it is vital that the child's and parent/ guardian's contact details are fully up to date. This can be done through the Aladdin Connect app or by contacting the school office.

It is imperative that there is an up-to-date emergency contact detail on every child's file.

### **End of Year Report Cards**

The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents and take account of research commissioned by the NCCA. Réalt na Mara National school has adapted one of these templates for use.

The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:

1. The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
2. The child's learning dispositions
3. The child's social and personal development
4. Ways in which parents can support their child's learning

### **Best Practice for Dropping in Forgotten Items**

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. In order to preserve the integrity of the school day, all children should take responsibility for organising themselves and remembering their belongings before coming to school.

## **Communication between Staff**

The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms.

- Staff Email: Each staff member is assigned a school email address. This is for teacher's professional use and is used for school/professional work only. Teachers may use this email address for liaising with parents and/or the wider school community.
- Microsoft 365 - School documents are shared between teachers on Sharepoint.
- Microsoft Teams - Staff communicate important school related messages via Teams.
- One school What's App group is used to communicate school related news between the staff.
- Croke Park hours are used for staff meetings. Teachers meet as a whole group for most of the allocated time. From time to time, teachers may be asked to break up into their class groupings to formally plan for teaching and learning in a particular area of the curriculum.
- Teachers at each stage may meet informally on a regular basis to collaboratively plan for their respective classes.

## **Ancillary Staff**

Our caretakers and secretaries play an important role in ensuring that the school operates in an effective and efficient manner. All requests for support from our ancillary staff should be conducted in a courteous and respectful manner at all times.

Classrooms and learning support rooms should be left tidy and orderly at the end of each day, this communicates respect to the cleaners working in our school.

## **Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

Effective communication between SNAs, class teachers and parents is of paramount importance. SNAs play an important role in ensuring that the students with additional needs can participate to the best of their ability in school life.

All communication regarding the progress of all children should be relayed by the class teacher to the parent. It is not the role of the SNA to deliver such



information to parents, unless requested to do so by the class teacher.

### **Communication among Students**

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 school community in a kind and respectful manner.

Learning good social and interpersonal skills with one's peers is an important part of school life. Everybody in our school community is required to treat all students with consideration and respect and to have regard for the rights and feelings of others.

Our students are afforded the opportunity to communicate their ideas to each other and the staff through class discussions, debates, the Student Council, the Green School Committee, Library Leaders etc.

## **Communication with Others**

### **A. Communication with External Agencies**

#### **National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)**

The Principal and/or Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) liaises with the National Educational Psychological Services with regard to making referrals where necessary. One-to-one meetings with Parents/Guardians to discuss assessments are organised by the Principal/SENCO. The necessary paperwork in relation to an assessment is undertaken by the Principal/SENCO in consultation with the class teacher of the child in question. All communication with external agencies is done through the school.

#### **Túsla**

The DLP, the Principal, liaises with the services of Túsla with regard to child welfare. This includes the National Education and Welfare Officer regarding child attendance at school and social services regarding child protection.

#### **Health Care Professionals**

Meetings with healthcare professionals (eg. Nurse, Teacher for the Deaf O.T., Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists, etc.) are attended by the principal/SENCO, the class teacher, the SNA and in some cases, the child's parent. A record of the meeting will be uploaded to the relevant student's file.

## **B. Newly Appointed Teachers/Substitute Teachers**

All new teachers and substitute teachers are also supplied with a pack containing updated Child Safeguarding Statement along with timetables, class lists etc.

It is the responsibility of the Secretary in the Senior Campus to ensure that Garda Vetting and/or a Statutory Declaration and the Form of Undertaking is collected and filed.

Newly appointed teachers are mentored by the in-school Droichead Team, most notably in relation to on-going planning and probation. Supports are provided. On-going evaluation and support is provided by the Droichead Team using the Droichead Framework.

## **C. Students on Placement**

All student teachers on placement will be supplied with a pack containing updated Child Safeguarding Statement along with timetables, class lists etc. The teacher, to whom they have been assigned, will be responsible for mentoring them and communicating all relevant information. Supports are provided if required. On-going support is provided by the class teacher in the form of observation of classes, support with planning and constructive feedback given periodically.



## **Behaviour of all Stakeholders/Adults in the School**

Ensuring a courteous and respectful environment is central to the creating and maintaining of a positive culture among the stakeholders. Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community. Our school strives to be a place where both adults and children feel safe, secure and respected. 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 all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school.

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder 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 Garda Síochána could be called
- All stakeholders will treat our pupils with the utmost respect while on the premises or grounds
- When children are under the care of school personnel outside school grounds, on a tour or playing a match for example, the teacher will issue all instructions. Parents are asked to address/support the children in a respectful and polite manner reflecting the school culture and ethos.
- All written messages sent to staff should be written in a respectful and courteous manner. When writing messages, parents/guardians should keep in mind that written messages containing information relevant to the future care needs/education of a student, may be uploaded and saved to a student's file.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child or another staff member. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's and adults' rights to privacy
- When stakeholders meet, it is important for all parties to be punctual. Duration of meetings should be agreed beforehand and this should be respected.

## **Social Media**

The school uses *Aladdin, Facebook and X* to relay news and to celebrate or notify people of events taking place in the school. We would ask that social media platforms, as well as personal social media accounts (including WhatsApp,) are NEVER used for commenting in a negative way on school matters or members of the school community.

## **Parental Complaints Procedure**

The Parental Complaints Procedure (available on the school website) outlines a mechanism for dealing with an issue of concern or a complaint as speedily as possible and at the simplest level.

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

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989.

The act recognises 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.

## **Personal and Confidential Information**

All personal data collected is protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.


The privacy of personal communications is preserved in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom the information is transmitted. Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted under the acceptable Usage Policy of the school.

**Implementation, Review & Communication**

This policy was considered and ratified by the Board of Management on 29/5/2024. It will be monitored on an ongoing basis and reviewed once every three years or sooner if necessary. This policy will be reviewed again in the school year 2027/28 or sooner should the need arise.

It is available to view on the school website.

Signed:  Date: 29/5/2024  
Chairman, Board of Management

Signed:  Date: 28/5/24  
Principal

