

Communication Policy Ballyvary Central National School 2026

Introductory Statement

This policy is being developed by the staff of Ballyvary Central National School in consultation with parents and the board of management. We are consulting with staff and parents to develop this policy. It is being placed on the school website, and all parents will be sent a message to highlight the fact that we are looking for feedback. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

Rationale

Good communication between all of those involved in school i.e. teachers, SNAs, children, parents and ancillary school staff is very important for the effective running of our school. In Ballyvary Central NS we seek to enable each child to develop their potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness, co-operation and respect between staff, pupils, parents and the board of management.

Aims

Our aim is to promote and support good communication structures between all of those in our school community staff, children, parents and Board of Management.

Parents are Encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of all staff members in the school.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association.
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.
- Contact their child's teacher for a meeting/phone call with any queries/concerns in relation to their child's learning at the earliest opportunity - this will help to alleviate fears and/or put in place supports.

Staff are encouraged to:

- Participate in any meetings with parents in a positive and respectful manner
Collaborate with the parents in an open two-way communication so that both parties are working together to develop the full potential of the children.
- Be aware of the activities organised by parents/parent's association and link in with them where possible to support their activities and events.

Staff Communication:

Regular staff meetings are held to work on the school's development and the school plan. In addition to formal communication that takes place during staff meetings, the principal is available to meet with any member of staff who wishes to discuss school matters with her.

The school gmail and Aladdin (school management system) are used for circulating various correspondence.

The principal may send reminders or notifications of emergencies, such as school closures through the staff WhatsApp.

Formal communications will happen between 8am and 4.30pm. Outside of these times we are promoting 'the right to switch off. Emergency/update messages may be necessary outside of these times, but will be kept to a minimum. Scheduled emails etc. should be used.

The management team meet regularly to discuss matters pertaining to the smooth running of the school and to plan for upcoming events and future change within the school.

The principal and a member of the SET team will meet with SNA's at the start of the year to distribute and discuss timetables. The principal will also meet with the SNA's once per term to deal with any issues and ensure the smooth running of the school. If any issues arise between these meetings, SNA's can go to the relevant class teacher, SEN teacher or the principal. SNA's will also attend a staff meeting once per month to ensure enhanced knowledge and communication of school issues.

Staff grievance procedures can be found at https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/2.5.3.1_TNC2014_6_grievance_procedure.pdf

Communication with Parents / Guardians by the School

Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants and new class pupils take place in term two. Parents of children who are new to the school receive a copy of/link to the School Information. Parent/Teacher Meetings usually take place in October for all classes.

Meetings with parents whose children have special needs take place as arranged between the class teacher and /or support teacher and the parents. A communication copy or notebook can be used for regular communication between the parents and teachers of children with special needs.

End of year pupil reports are issued to parents in June. The reports give the parents sufficient time, before the end of the school year, to contact their child's teacher with any queries or concerns. The reports summarise the children's progress throughout the year. The report card provides 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
- Ways in which parents can support their child's learning

All primary schools must use one of the report card templates (available at www.ncca.ie) for reporting to parents on student's progress and achievement at school.

- The school website is www.ballyvaryns.ie
- Regular news to keep parents up to date with school events and activities are circulated via the Aladdin App. Our Aladdin App is used for emergency updates e.g. school closure due to unforeseen events.
- The School Calendar is issued to parents in September and is also available on the school website via Google Calendar.
- Our school website is regularly updated to give parents an insight into school activities etc.
- We hold an Open Day for incoming Junior Infants which is a very informative event for parents. It is an effective way of introducing new parents and children to the school and sharing information on Aladdin and the SEN model, how to contact the school etc.
- In the case of a language barrier e.g. for parents whose first language is not English, that the school is informed at enrolment/open day so that supports can be put in place e.g. parents who may speak the same language can be put in contact with such parents etc to make it easier for them to access information and become more involved in their children's education. We will utilise translation apps to communicate effectively and provide information in their first language.

Communication with Separated Parents

The Staff of Ballyvary National School encourage parents experiencing separation to speak confidentially with the principal and/or teachers. It is our aim to handle such matters with sensitivity and compassion, ultimately our primary concern is for the wellbeing and overall development of the child. The school will also operate on the assumption, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that both parents are equally committed to the child's welfare and education and therefore equally entitled to be informed directly about significant issues relating to the child.

In order to ensure that the school can support a child whose parents are separated, which involve active co-operation between the parents affected and the school, the following procedures are required:

- Parents of a pupil are asked to inform the school if they are separated. In particular the school needs to know with which parent the child normally resides.
- If a child is experiencing difficulties related to the fact that his/her parents are separated, the school should be informed, so that it can endeavour to assist in helping the child to deal with them.

- In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, the school will treat both parents as equal partners in terms of parenting responsibilities and rights.
- The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent in the absence of a custody arrangement to that effect. The same applies to significant information relating to the child.
- When a child spends time in two homes, it is requested that the school be provided with both sets of contact/emergency details.
- If changes are made to normal collection arrangements for children, the school should be informed in writing.
- If a separation /custody order is in place which limits contact by either parent with the school, the school should be informed in writing to this effect. This can be done by either a letter from a solicitor or by providing the school principal with a copy of the relevant part of the order. The school commits to ensuring that such information will be held in the strictest confidence and will be used on a "need to know" basis only.
- The school will assume, unless otherwise instructed, that consent for school trips, routine medical examinations or vaccinations can be given by the parent with whom the child principally resides.
- The school prefers to have one parent/teacher meeting- that is both parents present at the same time but will facilitate separate parent/teacher meetings for both parents, if so required.
- Standard school communications which are normally transmitted via school bags/Homework folders will be expected to be communicated by the parent with whom the child principally resides to the other parent.
- Communication in regard to academic reports, significant disciplinary issues and health and safety issues will be communicated by the school to both parents separately, unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. Such reasons must be given in writing to the school.

The Board and staff of Ballyvary National School will endeavour at all times to deal sensitively and caringly with children experiencing parental separation and with both parents.

Communication with Class Teacher

Teachers may send a notice on the Aladdin App or by gmail on google classroom to communicate with parents/guardians. Parents are also able to initiate a communication with their child's teacher by email.

Parents are asked to note where a message pertains to that day, they should also ring the school office and ask the school secretary to pass on the message. Teachers are not always able to check messages during the school day.

Parents should be aware also that teachers will try to reply to messages as soon as possible, but it could take up to 24 working hours before they are able to reply.

Teachers will attempt to send messages to parents between the hours of 8am and 4.30pm only (if there is an urgent message it may be sent outside of these hours) and will only reply to messages from parents during these hours also.

Teachers will notify parents/guardians regarding events, activities, trips pertinent to their class on the Aladdin App.

The private phone numbers and email addresses of the principal, teachers, SNA's and the school secretary must not be used as methods of communication. (The only exception to this is an emergency medical situation where time is of the essence. In a case like this a teacher may have to contact a parent using their personal phone.)

Communication by Email

- Emails may be used by teachers to communicate with individual parents or class groups of parents if they so choose.
- Emails are used to communicate between the principal and staff and between staff members.
- Emails may be used to communicate between parents/guardians and teachers. These emails may not specifically mention any one child, or any individual parent/teacher issue. They should be used for general classroom management and organisational issues.
- No complaint shall be received by email or via Aladdin.
- No parent may 'cc' any other parent, when communicating with a teacher. The communication should remain strictly one-to-one.
- Class-group emails may not be used for personal communications.
- No child shall have access to this teacher/parent/guardian forum.
- Emails should be written in the tone of respect, that we expect of all communication.
- Class/group emails held by parents may not be used for advertising, complaints or for school matters concerning any child, parent or staff member. They shall only be used for general organisational and social purposes.
- Parents must expect a reasonable period for response, as normal working hours are to be respected.

Speaking to the class teacher

- Phone or in person meetings can be made by appointment.
- Meetings with the class teacher at the class door or in the yard while the children are assembling to discuss a child's progress/concern is discouraged on a number of grounds:
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many parents and children are standing close by.
- It is not appropriate for a parent to discuss sensitive information at the classroom door or in the yard.
- Teaching and learning is affected as it takes from teaching time.

- The teacher cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- However, informal communications between teachers and parents may take place should the need arise at drop off or pick up time to listen to a quick issue as long as confidentiality issues are not impacted. If matters raised cannot be resolved immediately or if the parent or staff member needs to discuss the matter further an appointment should be made.
- Teachers are available to speak to parents/guardians by appointment. These appointments may be made by sending a message to the class teacher on their school gmail address or by ringing the school to make an appointment.
- Teachers may communicate with parents/guardians by the school phone if the need arises.

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 their 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.

Urgent Communication with the School

In an emergency situation a parent may need to speak to a member of staff urgently. Sometimes these meetings may 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 teaching and learning time.

Absences

All absences should be explained by completing the absence form on Aladdin.

Homework

Homework is clearly communicated using Google Classroom/ Homework journal/folder depending on the class.

Parent/Teacher Meetings Formal

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings take place in October for all classes. The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is to:

- Establish and maintain good relationships between the school and parents.
- Let parents know how their child is progressing at school.
- Share with the parents the problems and difficulties the child may in school.
- Learn more about the child from the parent's perspective.
- Identify ways in which parents can help their child.
- To help staff/parents get to know the children better as individuals.
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.

- 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 class teacher.

Before parent teacher meetings we encourage parents to ask their children in advance of this meeting if there are any things the child would like them to raise on their behalf. This will give your child a sense of voice and involvement in their learning experience and a sense personal responsibility towards their class and their relationship with their teachers. For more information, please see the NPC booklet “*Supporting Your Child’s Learning at Home.*”

<https://www.npc.ie/images/uploads/downloads/LearningatHome.PDF>

Communication – The Voice of The Child in our School

We affirm the voice of the children in our school. We are committed to continuing to develop ways in which their voice is heard and reflected on by the other stakeholders e.g. through the collaborative development of class rules in classrooms, Circle Time activities and the completion of the “My Thoughts About School” checklist in September

The "Student Council" gives children a great opportunity to take greater control of their learning and enhance and inform the teaching and learning in the school. It also encourages and models effective communication between students and the school community.

Parent Contact Details

Parents' contact details including emergency contact details, must be provided to the school. If there are any changes to this during the school year, parents can contact the school secretary in the school office who will update where necessary.

It is vital that the school is aware of any changes to methods of communication with families. The responsibility for informing the school of a change of address, phone numbers, or emails rests principally with parents.

Board of Management

The staff representative on the board of management and the principal liaises between staff and the board of management. Where appropriate, parents/guardians can communicate with the board of management by letter, and this correspondence will generally be considered at the next scheduled board meeting.

It should be noted that the Complaints Procedure (<https://www.cpsma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/parental-complaints-procedures.pdf>) should be followed if a complaint is being made, where the board of management is only involved when resolution with the teacher and the principal has been exhausted.

Policies and Procedures

When drafting policies and procedures the school will collaborate with staff, parents and students where appropriate.

Policies and procedures once ratified are published on the school website following their development/review. It is reported in the board of management agreed report when a policy is developed/reviewed.

Parents Association (PA)

In September 2026, we plan to set up a new Parents association. The PA will endeavour to meet in person with the principal once a term. In addition, the PA can share their feedback on policy documents and BOM meetings updates via email.

A specific communication process will be developed by the PA with the principal. See www.npc.ie for more details.

Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This is something we work on with the children in the school, but this also extends to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance and is a major part of our education model, 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. Examples include:

- 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, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí may be called.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises. When communicating with teachers, parents should only engage in a conversation about their own child/children. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy, so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.

Child Safeguarding

Our Child Safeguarding Statement is updated and ratified annually. This is communicated to parents via the school website. Communication made by any stakeholder that involves a

child wellbeing issue will follow the policy guidelines found in the Child Safeguarding Statement.

GDPR

All documentation pertaining to communication between stakeholders is protected by password or in the case of a hard copy, is kept in a filing cabinet which is locked etc, so that the data of all stakeholders is protected in line with GDPR guidelines. When liaising with preschool/post primary schools, consent is obtained from parents in order to ease the transition for all stakeholders by sharing important information to inform future teaching and learning experiences.

Ratification and Communication

This policy is due to be ratified by the Board of Management by the end of September 2026.