

Communication Policy

Skerries ETNS

Introductory statement

This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff, the parent body and the Board of Management of Skerries ETNS.

Introduction

Good communication is essential to maintaining a positive working and learning environment. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect in a happy, caring and supportive environment means that people feel included, consulted and informed. This requires that we use a variety of channels of communication so as to ensure that the relevant people receive the necessary information.

The goal of this policy is to outline how staff and parents/guardians can best communicate with one another in order to support the learning and wellbeing of the children in our school. As a school with an Educate Together Ethos, we agree to communicate with one another in a manner which is equality based, child-centred and democratic.

Support for parents/guardians

If there are parents/guardians who, for any reason, have a difficulty with certain forms of communication, please let the school know so that we can take this into account when getting in touch. There may also be some parents/guardians who are going (or who have gone) through a separation process. The school is supportive of all families in this situation, and it would be helpful for parents/guardians to inform the school of this (either the class teacher or the school secretary) so that arrangements can be made for communications to be sent to both parents/guardians via the Aladdin app, and separate parent-teacher meetings can be scheduled if necessary.

Rationale

This policy has been drawn up to:

- acknowledge that communication plays an instrumental role in the running of a school;
- ensure effective two-way communication between staff, home and school, and the school and the wider community; and
- ensure that communication between all members of the school community is clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- outline the modes of communication used in our school; and
- promote and support respectful and effective communication between staff, home and school, and the school and the wider community.

Staff communication

Staff communication takes place in many ways, including, but not limited to:

- email
- internal memos
- formal/informal conversations between staff
- monthly staff meetings
- committee meetings
- intercom announcements
- the whiteboard/noticeboard in the staff room
- cubbyholes in the staff room.

Home-School communication

Home-school communication takes place in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- email to/from admin@skerrieseducatetogether.ie
- email between teacher and parents using the teacher's school-appointed email address.
Please note that this is entirely at the discretion of individual teachers.
- handwritten notes
- homework journals (1st to 6th class)
- phone calls - the school's contact number is (01) 849 4050
- messages via Aladdin software/Class Dojo/Seesaw or other online platform
- meetings requested by teacher or parent
- meetings to review a school support file
- assemblies
- class parent representatives
- whole school events
- the school website: www.skerrieseducatetogether.ie
- class information meetings
- annual parent/teacher meetings in November each year
- induction meeting for junior infant parents in June each year.

Regardless of the means of communication, when parents are communicating with teachers about their child, it is important to stress that comments should not be made about other staff members who are not in a position to respond to these comments. It is best practice that any issue between a parent/guardian and a staff member should first be addressed via direct communication. This is in the interests of resolving the matter to everyone's benefit and will ensure that the dignity of all is respected.

Social media

Social media has clearly become a feature of our world in recent years. While there can be many benefits to the use of social media, it is also important to be aware of some of the pitfalls so that they can be avoided. One such area is that of class WhatsApp groups, which have been set up by the Parent Teacher Association for parents/guardians of children in a particular class, with the purpose of enhancing communication between them. Being able to clarify issues with other parents/guardians (e.g. what homework is due for the following day) is undoubtedly a very useful resource.

However, it is also very important that these groups should be used appropriately. Comments about individual staff members, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management members should not be made on class WhatsApp groups, as this does not help to address any issue. Instead, in order to resolve any concern, a direct approach to the relevant person should be made through the office at the school.

The school has no responsibility for WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms that have been set up external to the school by students, parents/guardians, staff members or Board of Management members. Parents and guardians are also reminded to be aware of the minimum age requirements that children should be before engaging with particular social media apps or platforms.

Overlap with the school's Dignity at Work policy

Each member of the school community has the right to have their dignity upheld at all times in their communications in our school. To this end, this Communications Policy affirms this right for each member of the school community in their communication with each other. In practical terms, this stresses the need for all communication to be respectful at all times, and to address issues in a practical and solutions-focused way.

It is worthwhile at this point to refer all members of the school community to the Dignity at Work policy which (it is hoped) will be adopted by the Board of Management in June 2022. The Dignity at Work policy covers all interactions between school staff and members of the school community, including other staff members, pupils, parents/guardians, members of the Board of Management and visitors to our school.

Guidelines for positive communication

We at Skerries ETNS share common ground with parents/guardians in that we have the best interests of the children at heart. If you have an issue relating to your child's progress or well-being in school, please find stage one of our complaints procedure below. All members of the school community are reminded to be courteous and respectful in all communication.

Complaints procedure, Stage 1:

i) Any issues relating to your child should be first addressed with the class teacher. Teachers are fully committed to working closely with parents/guardians. It is expected that most issues can be resolved at this stage.

ii) If a parent/guardian feels that, having communicated with their child's class teacher, the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, they should then raise it with the school principal.

iii) If, having spoken with the principal, the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should then address the matter in writing with the chairperson of the school's Board of Management.

All stages are fully outlined in the school's complaints procedure which is available at www.skerrieseducatetogether.ie. A hard copy is available from the office.

Implementation

Roles and responsibilities

All staff, parents and members of the wider school community, i.e. the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Board of Management (BOM), share responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

Timeframe

Timeframe for implementation: January 2023

Timeframe for review: January 2026

Ratification and communication

This policy was distributed for review to all staff in May 2022. It was then distributed for review to parents/guardians, and finally to the Board of Management (BOM) in June 2022. This policy was ratified by the BOM in January 2023.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on:

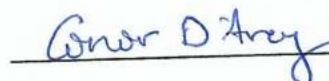
Signed:

 (Chairperson)

Date:

31-1-23

Signed:

 (Principal)

Date:

31/1/2023