



Communication Policy

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1. Introductory Statement

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 and aim to work for the child's benefit and learning so that the child's education can be effective.

This policy was developed by the Board of Management and staff of Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent-staff communication, including formal and informal parent-staff meetings.

Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore staff and the Board of Management believe that:

- Good communication between home and school is essential because a positive and active partnership ensures that the child gets the best that primary education can offer.
- Teachers can do a better job when they are supported by and working closely with parents.

Research shows that children do better, behave better, and are happier at school when parents and teachers work closely together and when parents can give their children support at home.

*National Parents Council document Working Effectively as a Parents Association*¹

Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore staff and the Board of Management are committed to:

- Developing close, effective links with parents;
- Participating in meetings positively and respectfully, affirming the central and fundamental role of parents as Primary Educators² of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association.
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents in school policy and decision-making

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

¹ <http://www.npc.ie/attachments/cbdcfd37-98b5-4698-86aa-3f30c38fcedd.pdf>

² Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland

- Become actively involved in the school and Parents Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

In all matters, staff will consult only the parents/legal guardians pertaining to the well-being and education of pupils. All parents and legal guardians must be named on the enrolment form.

2. Behaviour of all adults in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This extends to the children and all stakeholders, e.g., the staff, parents, and the wider community: anyone entering our building should feel safe. Adults in the school community are responsible for ensuring their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

- All adults will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Shouting or other aggressive tones on the phone or in person are unacceptable. Any adult displaying anger or aggression toward another school community member 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 parent's right to privacy, so staff should not be asked to speak about any child except their own.

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 at all times 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. You can provide this information by Aladdin or by phoning the school office. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorised/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pickup arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorisation by the parent immediately. In an emergency situation, the parent must send a message of Aladdin.

3. Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with Parents:

- Details of classroom staff are communicated to parents/guardians at the end of June each year, where possible, as are any updates re. temporary, substitute or work experience personnel as they change. Advance notice is given where possible if a regular member of staff is leaving so that parents/guardians can prepare the pupil for imminent change;
- Open night for parents of new Junior Infants (and existing pupils) in April each year.

- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November annually.
- Meetings between parents/guardians, staff and the trans-disciplinary team (including Occupational, Speech & Language therapists, psychologists, social workers, etc.) working with the student to ensure agreement on expected goals and targets; whose children have special needs
- Regular Aladdin messages 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
- Some pupils may have a home-school diary. This is not a means of reviewing academic/social progress but rather a useful tool to share information between home and school.
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Class blogs or other online platforms e.g. Seesaw, Google Classroom and the school website for sharing class news.
- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. The parents receive policies in draft form and provide feedback to the Board. Once ratified by the Board, the document is made available to all parents via the school website or in hard copy if requested. Any feedback arising is brought to the attention of the Board.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Sports Day and school concerts

All 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

4. School Support Plus Plans and Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Formal timetabled parent/guardian-staff meetings on the subject of School Support Plus (SSP) plans (for children with SEN) occur no later than September/October annually and other meeting throughout the year. However, if a parent/guardian wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment. In relation to these meetings, the following considerations apply:

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

5. Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the teacher via Aladdin to arrange a suitable time.

Classes begin at 9.20 am and finish at 2 pm (infants) and 3 pm (1st-6th), and this time should not be interrupted. Unplanned meetings with teachers during school time to discuss a child's concern/progress are not allowed on a number of grounds:

- Staff cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.

Aladdin is not intended as a forum to discuss a child's progress. A face-to-face meeting between parents and teachers is the appropriate forum for this.

Aladdin is not intended to be used to make any form of complaint. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, the complaints procedure is available on the school website, which outlines the procedures to be followed.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear during class time, etc., they can send an Aladdin message to the teacher and leave the item in the black box at the main door for collection.

6. Online and Social Media Communication

The school name or anything that identifies the school should not be used online or on social media (for example, a class Facebook page that parents might set up) by members of the public, including parents, without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. The Board of Management of Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore will request the removal of any online or social media sites that the school does not approve.

7. Communication by email- response time

Response times to emails from the school can vary depending on the demands in the office at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff, and overall running of the school.

Teachers are in class during the day, and due to teaching or yard duty, they will have limited time to respond to messages.

There may be occasions when a parent is trying to contact the school by phone and/or email and is not receiving a response. Office hours are limited, and the secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times.

Currently (October 2024), school office hours (when the phone will be answered) are:

***Monday: 9.30 am – 10.55, 11.15 – 12.45 and 1.45 – 3 pm**

***Tuesday – Friday: 9.30 am – 11.15, 11.30 – 1.30 pm and 2-3 pm**

**These may change depending on activities on a given day. See website for updated time.*

In addition, Aladdin will now be set so that staff only receive messages between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. You can still send messages outside these hours, but staff will not receive them.

8. Online Learning

The SeeSaw App is currently using across all classes for online learning if and when needed.

9. 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 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 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
- To inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy.

10. Organisation of parent/teacher meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held yearly for all classes, usually in the first term towards the end of November. 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 teacher on Aladdin.

Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore uses prepared guidelines to structure the meetings. These can vary from teacher to teacher but must include feedback on attendance, behaviour, punctuality, standardised test results and an overview of progress through the curriculum. Parent/ Teacher meetings may occur in classrooms, offices or support rooms. Details regarding time, etc., of Parent/ Teacher meetings will be worked out by the class teacher in consultation with parents, taking into account parents' needs relating to siblings, etc.

Meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time to facilitate the school's operation and the needs of children and other parents. Times of meetings should be agreed upon by prior appointment and adhered to so that all parents are seen on time.

11. Planning meetings for Student Support Plans

For children with designated special educational needs, formally scheduled parent/staff meetings relating to the child's Student Support Plan will occur in throughout the year. 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.

In the case of separated/ divorced parents, Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.

12. School Reports

Scoil Nioclás Naofa, Dunmore produces annual reports for reporting to parents on student's progress and achievement at school in the third term using report card templates as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie). The report 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

13. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) is an essential 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 0040/1997, which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson: *Albert Berner*

Date: 27-11-24

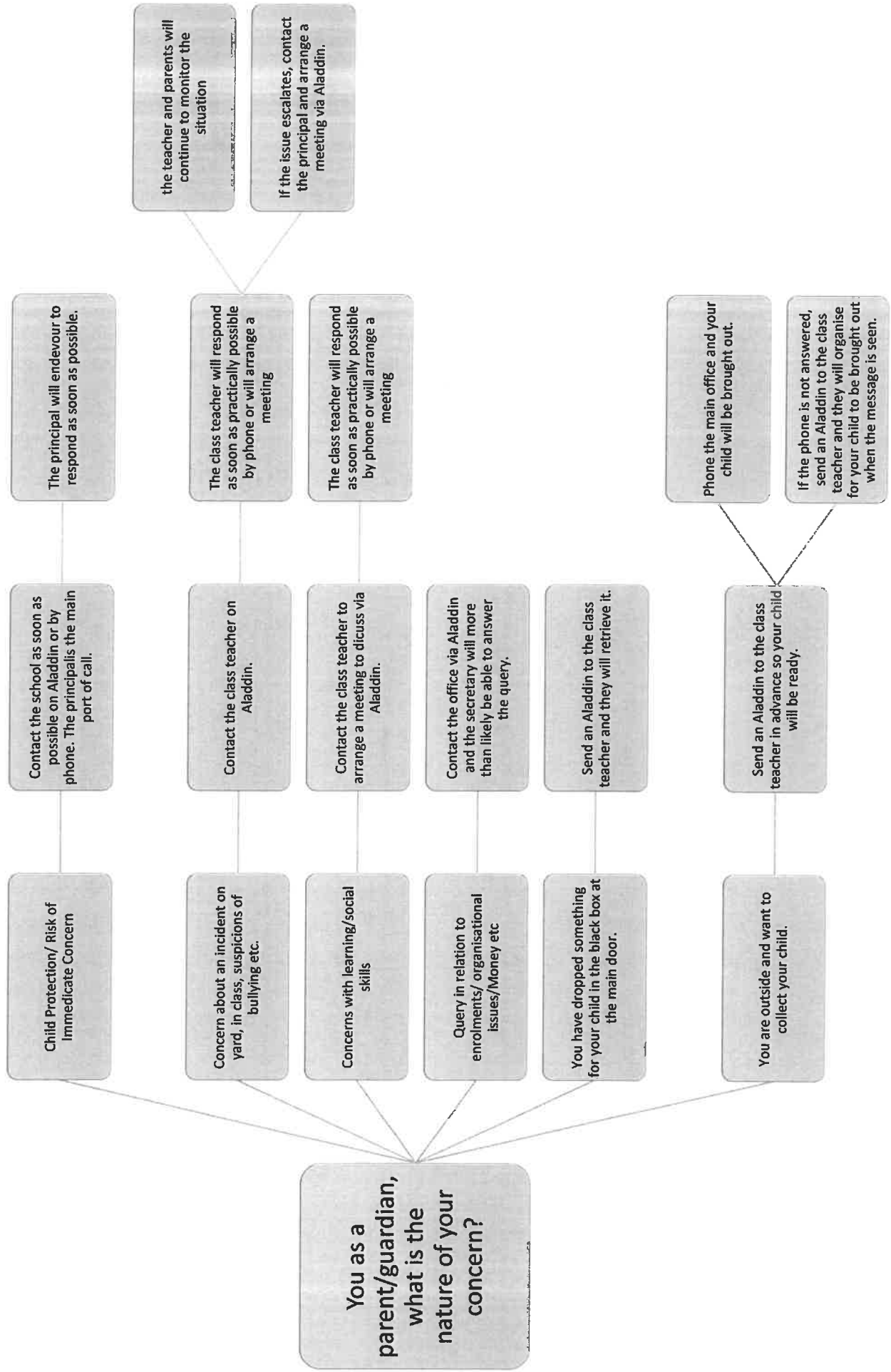
Appendix 1 - Communication with Separated Parents/Guardians/Multi-household families

In cases where a child's parents are going through or have been through separation, Scoil Nioclás Naofa strives to deal with all parties sensitively and compassionately, with the primary focus being the welfare and development of the child concerned. The school asks parents experiencing separation to speak confidentially with the Principal and/or teacher.

The school will follow the procedures below to support children whose parents are going through separation or are in multi-household families. These require active cooperation between the parents affected and the school:

- The Board and staff of Scoil Nioclás Naofa will endeavour at all times to deal sensitively and caringly with children experiencing parental separation and with both parents.
- Parents of a pupil are asked to inform the school if they are separated. The school needs to know the child's living arrangements—i.e., with which parent they usually reside or what shared arrangements are in place.
- Contact details (including emergency contact details) should be provided by both parents. The school must be informed of collection arrangements, and changes to these must be communicated in writing.
- Parents should inform the school of any difficulties their child may be experiencing due to separation (e.g. emotional upset).
- **In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the assumption will be that both parents continue to be involved in and committed to their child's education and are equally entitled to be made aware of all important details and events.**
- **The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent without a custody arrangement.** The same applies to significant information relating to the child.
- If a separation/custody order limits either parent's contact with the school, the school should be informed in writing. This can be done 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 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.
- It is school policy to offer separate parent/teacher meetings to both parents if so desired.
- Standard school communications are usually transmitted via Aladdin and will be expected to be communicated by the parent with whom the child principally resides to the other parent.

Appendix 2 – Communication Flow Chart



Appendix 3- Communication with parents about school uniforms (Sample text)

Sample template:

Dear parent/guardian,

It has come to our attention that your child is not wearing the correct _____ (hoodie/ t-shirt/pants/shorts) today.

Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring your child wears the correct uniform going forward.

All the best,

(Class Teacher)