

## Parents as Partners Policy

### Introduction

The Board of Management and staff of Knock National School genuinely value the wonderful relationship we share with the parents/guardians of the children in our school. We strive to ensure that the core values of respect, empathy and trust underpinning the relationship are maintained and nurtured.

The Board of Management and staff fully endorse the following statement in the Primary Curriculum:

*Parents are the child's primary educators, and the life of the home is the most potent factor in his or her development during the primary school years. There is a continuing process through which the child's formal learning experience in school interacts with the less formal developmental experience of the home and the family.*

*It is widely recognised that significant educational, social and behavioural benefits accrue to the child as a result of effective partnership between parents and teachers. Close co-operation between the home and the school is essential, therefore, if children are to receive the maximum benefit from the curriculum.*

*Regular consultation with parents helps teachers to come to a deeper appreciation of children's needs and so to plan more effective learning experiences. It also provides the means by which teachers keep parents fully informed about children's progress. Good communication between parents and schools will help build a shared understanding of the principles of the curriculum, the learning goals of the school, and the approaches and methodologies it adopts. It will also facilitate easier transition from home to school and later from primary to second-level education.*

*In a more general context, the involvement of parents in the organisational planning of the curriculum and their active participation in the life of the school enhances co-operation and interaction between home and school. Parents also have a special contribution to make in creating and fostering a positive school spirit in which all members of the school community can feel a sense of belonging and have an interest in the school's development. To encourage this spirit, schools need to reach out to help some parents overcome any inhibiting attitudes they may have. The work of parents' groups can also provide additional support in helping them to become fully involved in their children's progress.*

### Aims

This policy document aims to communicate the following information to all members of the school community:

1. The Board of Management and staff fully accept that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children.
2. Knock National School promotes positive practical collaboration and co-operation with parents that result in improved teaching and learning opportunities for the children.

3. Management and staff are committed to open, honest and frequent communication with parents/guardians.

### **Parental Involvement**

The Board of Management and staff of Knock National School promote parental involvement in school activities where it is practical and supportive of teaching and learning in the school.

### **Parents on School's Board of Management**

Two parents of children enrolled in the school, one being a mother and one being a father, are elected by the general body of parents to the school's Board of Management.

### **Parents' Association**

The principal, on behalf of the Board of Management, will give all reasonable assistance to parents who wish to establish a parents' association and to a parents' association when it is established.

The Board of Management of Knock National School requires the Parents' Association to function in accordance with the guidelines set out in the National Parents Council publication called *Working Effectively as a Parent Association* which is published on the National Parents' Council website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie). The Board requires the Parents' Association to become affiliated with the National Parents' Council and to operate with a constitution that is accessible to all parents.

In its constitution, the Parents' Association should clarify the parameters of its involvement with the school. For example, the Parents' Association will not involve itself in the professional work of a teacher within her/his classroom. The Principal, the Department of Education Inspectorate and the Board of Management have responsibility for teaching and learning. The Parents' Association will not be involved in dealing with parental complaints as any complaint from a parent will be dealt with by the school using the standard complaints procedure published on the school website.

In order to assist the Parents' Association to collaborate positively with school staff, it was decided that the Board of Management and staff would clearly set out the ways in which, they feel, the Parents' Association could support the work of the staff.

- Working in partnership with the principal and teachers in the development and review of school policies, such as the anti-bullying policy, code of behaviour etc
- Support the school with the organisation of special events e.g. Graduation Mass, Enrolment Evening, School Open Evening, Green-School Spring Clean
- Organise courses for parents e.g. Triple P Parenting Programme or Internet Safety
- Organise guest speakers to address parents
- Support teachers with the implementation of specific learning programmes or projects e.g. shared reading programme, Green Schools Project
- Fundraising in consultation with the Principal and Board of Management

Members of the Parents' Association committee will liaise with the principal teacher.

### **Communication with Parents/Guardians**

#### **Parent/teacher Meetings**

Parent-teacher meetings are held in November each year. The meetings are carefully timetabled so that all parents have an opportunity to speak with their child's teacher for approximately ten minutes. If there are significant issues that require more time, a parent/guardian or teacher may request that another meeting is set up to discuss the issue. The items discussed at a parent/teacher meeting include:

1. Achievement in curricular areas
2. Results of standardized tests
3. Homework
4. Social development and ability to mix with peers
5. Behaviour and attitude to learning
6. Attendance and punctuality

Parent/teacher meetings take place outside of school hours and parents/guardians are given at least one week's notice of the meetings. Every reasonable effort will be made by the teaching staff to arrange the meetings at times that are suitable to both parent/guardian and teacher.

Parents/guardians of children attending learning support and/or resource teachers will be given an opportunity to meet this teacher. This meeting may coincide with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Every effort will be made by school personnel to ensure that this meeting occurs on the same day as the meeting with the class teacher.

Formal parent/teacher meetings take place in the classrooms.

### **Other Meetings with Teachers**

Parents/guardians, who have concerns in relation to their child's progress or experience at school, may contact the school secretary or teacher to make an appointment to meet with the teacher. These parent-teacher meetings must take place in the parent/teacher meeting room or classroom at the time agreed by both parent/guardian and teacher. In the interest of ensuring that classes are not interrupted, teaching staff will not meet parents/guardians between 9:20 am and 3:00pm.

A strict code of conduct must be adhered to by all parties in these meetings. School personnel will be professional, polite, courteous and prepared to empathically listen to parents/guardians during these meetings. If, however, parents/guardians are too emotional, hostile or aggressive to engage respectfully and collaboratively, school personnel are advised to:

1. Politely explain to the parent/guardian that the meeting must end immediately
2. Inform the parent/guardian that they may contact the school secretary to reschedule the meeting for a time when they are capable of engaging respectfully and collaboratively.
3. Inform the principal of the incident and request her/him to attend the rescheduled meeting

Parents/guardians who are not satisfied with the manner in which a meeting is conducted are entitled to refer the matter to the school principal.

### **Meeting with the School Principal**

The principal teacher is the designated liaison person (DLP) for child protection. Therefore, parents who wish to report child protection issues are advised to contact the school secretary and request an appointment to meet the principal.

Parents/guardians who have concerns in relation to their child's progress or experience at school must raise the matter with their child's teacher in the first instance. If they are not satisfied with the response received from the class teacher, they may request to meet with the school principal. Meetings with the principal must be arranged by contacting the school secretary. These meetings will take place in the parent/teacher meeting room.

A strict code of conduct must be adhered to by all parties in these meetings. The school principal will be professional, polite, courteous and prepared to empathically listen to parents/guardians during these meetings. If, however, parents/guardians are too emotional, hostile or aggressive to engage respectfully and collaboratively she/he will:

1. Politely explain to the parent/guardian that the meeting must end immediately
2. Inform the parent/guardian that they may contact the school secretary to reschedule the meeting for a time when they are capable of engaging respectfully and collaboratively.

Parents/guardians who are not satisfied with the manner in which a meeting is conducted are entitled to refer the matter to the Board of Management using the formal complaints procedure which is available on the school website.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings**

All children who attend resource teachers will be invited to IEP meetings in November and February of each school year. At the first meeting in November, the resource teacher will discuss a draft copy of the child's IEP and the parent/guardian will be invited to provide feedback. A parent/guardian may wish to have learning goals amended or added to the IEP. The teacher will discuss strategies/activities the parents/guardians can use to help the child achieve the goals or targets set out in the IEP.

The child's IEP will be revised again in the following February. Parents/guardians will be invited to the school again at this time to discuss progress and the revised targets/goals set out in the IEP.

### **SMS for Parents/Guardians**

School notices are regularly sent out to parents/guardians in text messages. In an effort to save costs, texts are only sent to one parent/guardian unless otherwise requested. Parents/guardians who wish to have the text messages sent to both parents/guardians should send an email to the school secretary [admin@knockns.ie](mailto:admin@knockns.ie)

Parents/guardians who change their mobile phone number must inform the school secretary as soon as possible in order to ensure that they can continue to receive texts from the school. The text-a-parent service will be used for texts relating directly to school issues only. Other organisations requesting to have texts sent out to parents/guardians using the school's text facility will not be entertained.

### **Website**

The purpose of the school website is to provide a continuous stream of information to parents/guardians who are advised to check it regularly.

There are fantastic changing displays of children's work throughout the school. Staff are encouraged to upload photographs of these displays to the school website so that parents/guardians are given an opportunity to view and appreciate the wonderful work their children are doing at school.

Essential school policies are available on the website. The website calendar contains details of all events including the dates for sports activities e.g. football, gymnastics, basketball, camogie, swimming, dance and athletics.

All notices sent out by text are also posted to the blog on the front page of the website.

### **Information Meetings**

The school principal will organise an information meeting for parents/guardians at least once per year to provide information in relation to pertinent issues such as school policy.

## **Registration Meeting for New Entrants**

In September, each year, parents of new entrants will be invited to an information meeting. At this meeting the principal will provide parents/guardians with essential information in relation to school policies.

## **Invitations to the School**

On some occasions parents/guardians will be invited into the school to view their children's work e.g.

- Open evening
- Science Day to view science experiments
- School Plays
- Project work
- Grandparents Day

## **Letters to Parents/Guardians**

In an effort to reduce school costs, we are employing less expensive electronic methods to disseminate information to parents. However, on some occasions the principal and/or teachers may write letters to parents to provide them with relevant information e.g. Information re school tour.

## **Newsletters**

Parents will receive an e-zine newsletter once a month, this will also be available on the Parent Information Board, and can be printed on request for parents who are unable to access email.

## **Email**

Email is free and extremely useful for communicating written messages. All parents are requested to provide us with the address of an email account they access frequently. Monthly e-newsletters will be sent to these emails which we hope all parents/guardians will read.

Parents are welcome to contact school by email: [admin@knockns.ie](mailto:admin@knockns.ie)

## **Telephone**

Before contacting the school by telephone for information, parents/guardians are asked to check the school website first where details of all school events are published and updated.

Parents are welcome to contact the school if they need to leave a message for their child or children. It is hoped, however, that this facility would not be used excessively by parents/guardians as it significantly increases the workload of the school secretary.

It is important that one or both parents/guardians are available to take phone-calls on the contact numbers provided. If there is an emergency or if a child is feeling sick these numbers will be used to make immediate contact with parents/guardians.

It is imperative that the school has up to date mobile phone numbers for parents/guardians. The school should be notified immediately if parents' mobile phone numbers change.

## **School Contact Details**

Knock National School, Knock, Claremorris, Co Mayo

Tel: 094 9388435

Email: [admin@knockns.ie](mailto:admin@knockns.ie); Website: [www.knockns.ie](http://www.knockns.ie)

**Ratification of Policy**

This policy was ratified by the school's Board of Management on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016.

**Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with other organisational policies.