



Communication Policy Revised and Updated October 2024

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Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Ballinteer Educate Together National School, the Board of Management and the Parent Teacher Association in the school year 2015-16.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents / guardians and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Ballinteer Educate Together National School. The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of positive 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. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

Parents / guardians are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in 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
- Become actively involved in the school parent association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

Aim of this Policy

It is the aim of this policy to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of the appropriate lines of communication regarding their specific queries, concerns, comments or questions.

Communication and our School Ethos

This policy is in line with our democratic ethos as it promotes clear communication between all members of our school community.

Parents / guardians can expect:

1. Parent/ guardian communications will be responded to in a courteous and timely manner.
2. Requests for appointments will be responded to or scheduled within a reasonable time.
3. Parents / guardians will be notified about a single serious issue or an ongoing problem
4. One formal parent teacher meeting will be held per year, other meetings as necessary and within reason

Parents / guardians cannot expect:

1. Immediate response from school staff, in particular during teaching and learning hours, evenings and weekends.
2. Access to staff members' private phone numbers or email addresses.

Whole School Communication

1) Class Representatives

Parent representatives for each class are elected in September of each year. Class Reps maintain contact lists for the parents/ guardians in their class, facilitating communication between parents / guardians about the important social events in their children's lives and in the school calendar. The role of the Class Rep is to support social engagement in the school community. Contact details for each class representative can be obtained through the PTA. ptaballinteeretns@gmail.com

2) Parent Teacher Association

The Parent Teacher Association represents all of the parents / guardians in the school. The members of the committee are elected each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Parent Teacher Association. A list of Parents' Association Committee members are available on the school website.

The aims of the Parent Teacher Association are:

- to represent the views of parents / guardians
- to inform parents / guardians of developments in education and in the school

- to foster cooperation between parents / guardians , teachers and school management

The principal liaise between staff and PTA. The PTA communicates with parents/guardians through the school newsletter, the website, text messages and the Parent Facebook page.

3) Joining the School Community

Parents / guardians of children who are new to the school are emailed our online booklet that includes an outline of the history of the school, information on various structures within the school and points about the day to day school life. They also receive a copy of the school Code of Behaviour, Ethos Statement and a Calendar of the year

4) School Website

The School Website (www.ballinteeretns.ie) provides regular updates on events and activities taking place in the school.

5) School Calendar

The Calendar outlines the dates of the three terms, mid-term breaks etc. It is issued to incoming parents/guardians in September and is available on the school website. Each Sway newsletter contains upcoming dates for the diary.

6) Newsletters

Newsletters with information on events and school activities are available on the school website and are also emailed to all members of the school community.

7) Email and Text-a-Parent

Text-a-parent is used for reminders and emergency updates. Email is used to circulate general information to the parent community.

An email is automatically sent to parents / guardians upon their child's 10th, 15th and 20th day of absence in a school year.

8) Letters and Notes

Individual teachers send emails pertinent to their class re class trips, events, curriculum updates.

9) Notice board

A notice board for parents/guardians is located at the school entrance.

Parent/ Guardian to Staff Communication

1) Informal Communication

To inform a class teacher of any information relating to their child, a parent / guardian should email the class teacher through info@ballinteeretns.ie or by calling our school

secretary at 01 –2963017. These will be forwarded to the class teacher who will respond as soon as possible.

Collection time is a useful point of contact for incidental matters and clarification or for making an appointment to meet with the teacher.

2) Formal Communication

Parents / guardians who wish to have a consultation with a class teacher are encouraged to make a prior appointment with the relevant teacher. In urgent cases where a pre-arranged appointment is not appropriate, parents / guardians should report, in the first instance, to the secretary. The practice of parents / guardians approaching classrooms directly during teaching time is discouraged. Access to teachers for formal appointments should be on an "appointment only" basis. Where sensitive issues are the subject of discussion, arrangements should be made for conducting such interviews in private. Teachers may arrange, where appropriate, to have the Principal or another teacher present at such meetings.

Helpful hints for promoting positive communication

1. Make an appointment in advance for a meeting with the class teacher outside of teaching and learning hours.
2. Discuss a sensitive issue in private, out of the earshot of other parents / guardians or pupils
3. All discussions should be conducted respectfully, calmly and in the spirit of collaboration with a view to resolving issues effectively and for the maximum benefit of the child
4. The professional role of the teacher should be acknowledged and respected
5. Issues should be directly communicated to teachers rather than entering into conversations outside of the school or on social media that will not result in a resolution, and could potentially exacerbate an issue.
6. Remember, adults are models for how children communicate

When parents/ guardians should contact class teacher

1. Changes in family situation (divorce, bereavement, moving house, new baby etc.)
2. Medical issues that arise or change
3. Illness lasting longer than 3 days
4. Safety issues, change in behaviour at home
5. Family emergencies, sleepless nights, playdates, appointments (send an email)
6. Ongoing and pervasive problems or concerns at school or at home
7. Cancelling a scheduled appointment
8. Consistent homework problems or concerns

Teacher to Parent / Guardian Communication

There are three points of formal communication throughout the school year.

1) Class Meetings

In September class meetings are held with the parents / guardians of the children in each class. The programme and methodology for the year is explained. Teachers will explain school policies on positive behaviour, child protection, attendance and punctuality, healthy eating and anti-bullying. The teachers will also discuss homework, trips and workshops, overview of the curriculum etc. An opportunity for questions is given. Meetings are normally held in the morning for about 20 / 30 minutes.

2) Individual Parent / Teacher Meetings

These are held each year in November for Senior Infants to 6th Class and in January for Junior Infants. This is an opportunity for teachers to inform parents / guardians of their child's progress in all aspects of the curriculum. These meetings last between 10 – 15 minutes. No formal documents are given to parents / guardians at these meetings.

If the teacher judges it necessary to hold another meeting(s) throughout the year to discuss academic, behavioural or social issues, the teacher will email the parent / guardian and a suitable arrangement can be made.

3) End of Year reports

These reports are a written record of the child's progress in school that year. They include standardised test scores for the child for that year. These will be emailed to the parents / guardians at least one week before the final day of term in June.

Informal Communication

School collection time is a useful point of contact for incidental matters and clarification. Teachers use the info@ballinteeretns.ie email address to email the parents / guardians of their specific classes about informal information arising in their classrooms.

SEN Communication

There are additional arrangements in place for children with special educational and learning support needs. These include Student Support Plan meetings. In certain cases there is a communication diary between staff and parents / guardians .

It is important to note that an ANA is not authorised to discuss issues, progress or behaviour in relation to any child and any issue must be brought to the class teacher.

Urgent Communication

Where an issue has arisen during the school day which the teacher feels must be drawn to the attention of parents / guardians immediately, the following methods of communication are appropriate:

- telephone parent/ guardian during school hours if incident is warranted urgent
- talk to the parent / guardian at school closing
- email the parent / guardian

- If the child is collected by someone other than the parent / guardian, matters such as illness or general upset should be mentioned to them and they should be asked to inform the parent / guardian. Where the issue relates to behaviour or anything regarded as sensitive, the person collecting the child should be asked to let the parent / guardian know that the teacher needs to talk to them urgently.

Please note that it is vital to update your parental contact information with the school secretary directly and to ensure the school has the correct phone number and emergency contact information.

Board of Management to Parent

Under Section 15 of the Education Act 1998, "it should be the duty of the Board to manage the school on behalf of the patron and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that Board has responsibility." The Board of Management meets at least five times per year and an agreed report from that meeting will be circulated via the school website, taking into account that a large part of the Board's work is confidential. These agreed reports serve as the primary mode of communication from the Board of Management to the parents / guardians of the school.

Parent / Guardian to Board of Management

Generally, the first line of communication is directly to the class teacher, following that, to the principal. In the case of a serious issue that is not resolved by these methods, it is then referred to the Board as per the Parental Complaints Procedure 2023.

It is important to note that the role of the two parent nominees on the board is to bring a parental perspective to the Board's discussion and work. These nominees are part of a legally binding Board of Management and have to adhere to the strict confidentiality that is integral to the Board. It is not the role of these parents / guardians to deal with complaints, explain board decisions or bring individual concerns or enquiries to the Board. For the complaints procedure, please refer to the Parental Complaints Procedure 2023.

Parent Teacher Association to Parents / Guardians

The PTA generally meets monthly, and they will send out an Aladdin notification of their scheduled meetings. They also communicate this through the class reps. The minutes of the PTA meetings will be uploaded to the PTA section on the website. Any correspondence from the PTA will be emailed from the PTA email address or through Aladdin. The constitution and guidelines for and role of our PTA are also found on the website.

Parent / Guardian to Parent Teacher Association

If parents / guardians have a query for the PTA, they may email the PTA email address, Ptaballinteeretns@gmail.com which is regularly checked by the PTA committee secretary.

It is important to note Class Reps may or may not be members of the committee. The Class Reps' role includes circulating information in relation to the PTA. Concerns, questions or complaints of any kind should **not** be addressed to the Class Rep under any circumstances.

Parent / Guardian to Parent / Guardian Communication

Ballinteer Educate Together National School prides itself on being in partnership with parents / guardians in the education of their children. In order to facilitate conversation between parents / guardians in relation to school matters, there is a Facebook group and WhatsApp Community specifically for parents/ guardians .

While communication is strongly encouraged, please remember to be aware of the impact a casual, negative comment can have. We are all on the same team and are all striving for the best education of the children.

Helpful Hints for Online Interaction

1. The tone in which we write a post isn't always how it reads.
2. The tone in which we read a post isn't always how it was written.
3. Posts that are considered, clear, concise and on-topic help avoid confusion.
4. As in face to face communication, try not to dominate discussion, completely opt out of discussion if you have insight or information, repeat points or belittle anyone.
5. Conjecture and presumption are unhelpful, please check facts with the school if in doubt about any issue

Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

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 / guardians 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, 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 community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí must be called
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents / guardians 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
- Staff are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved.

Classes begin at 8.15am and finish at 12.55/1.55pm and teaching / learning time should not be interrupted.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson: Maeve McCarthy

Date: 21st November 2024



Ruth Brennan
Principal



Maeve McCarthy
Chairperson