



Communication Policy

Of Firhouse Educate Together National School

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This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff, parent representatives and the Board of Management in January 2015 and updated in March 2017 and again in November 2018.

Rationale:

In keeping with the principles of multi-denominational education, FETNS is democratically run. This means that the democratically elected Board of Management run the school and involvement of all parents is sought and encouraged at many levels. A high level of parental involvement is a feature of our school and requires commitment from all parents.

This is a whole school policy for the school community. It deals with communication within the school and between the school and our partners. To contribute to ensuring inclusivity and co-operation this policy emphasises maintaining and improving the current channels of communication among the users of the school and with the partners in education.

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 of a variety of channels of communication so as to ensure that the relevant people receive the necessary information.

Aim of this policy:

This policy aims to improve effective communication within the school, with the Board of Management, with parents and guardians and with the local community, so as to maintain a good working, social and personal environment. This will promote efficiency and contribute to achieving the objectives of the school.

Overall approach to effective communication:

- All parties will be communicated with through a variety of agreed channels of communication

(see Appendix 1 for details)

- The target audience will be involved actively rather than passively where possible in the communication.
- There will be provision for reinforcement and repetition if required.
- There will be opportunity for feedback to check that information is being received and understood.

Means of communication:

This policy encourages the use of the most effective communications mechanisms, depending on context, while ensuring the rights of staff, students and parents.

- The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms: formal and informal meetings / open days / cultural and fund-raising events / telephone call and texts from school landline phone and school mobile / Aladdin Connect push messages / email / website / social media.
- The school is committed to consultation with staff and students on school matters
- The staff recognise the importance of face-to-face communication in that it can frequently be more effective than written communication.
- The school seeks constantly to improve communication and will consult staff and students to share their views.
- All internal communications should be expressed clearly.
- As far as possible staff and/or students are informed of important school issues no later than the media or other external bodies.

Use of email / web:

- The school website <http://www.firhouseetns.ie/> is updated regularly and has information on important dates and events in the school including the shared school calendar (please contact our Secretary Lisa for details on how to download the Shared Calendar), principal's newsletters, information from the BOM and the various sub-committees and the PGTA, as well as material about extra-curricular activities, fund-raising, and school policies.
- Google Apps email and calendar are used daily as modes of written communication for all staff who are required to sign in to Aladdin/Google Apps each morning when in school. (Internet access permitting)
- General communications from school to parents is by email, Aladdin Connect and the school website and for general announcements of events through the school facebook page.
- Some parents/guardians communicate with each other on closed WhatsApp groups which have nothing to do with the school and are not used as a means of communication from the school, the Board of Management or the PGTA (Parents', Guardians', Teachers' Association).
- As per Code of Positive Behaviour and Grievance Procedures all communication, regarding pupils' progress/behaviour/concerns, a parent/guardian wishes to discuss, must begin with an informal chat with the class teacher.
- Provision of hard copies is made for communicating with those parents/guardians who do not have IT / email access.

- Best practice is promoted and followed in the production of web pages, notably with regard to clarity of structure and currency of information.
- Personal data is protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- The privacy of personal communications is preserved in accordance with the Human Rights Act.
- Some categories and items of information regarding both staff and students need to be kept confidential. All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom the information is transmitted.
- Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted in a professional manner and in line with the internet usage policy of the school.

Policy in relation to some significant communication channels:

(i) Teacher with Teacher:

Recognising its importance, the school encourages best practice in communication between class teachers, between support teachers and class teachers and between senior management and all teachers. Good personal relationships between staff members are also encouraged.

If unable to come to work, staff must ensure the Principal/school management is contacted by phone. Emails may not be seen in time to book a substitute teacher and or have classes properly supervised. A text is acceptable, but if it is not replied to within fifteen minutes, the staff member needs to phone until they talk to Principal.

Staff meetings will be held at least twice per term. The minutes are recorded, circulated and a hard copy is filed in Staff Meetings' Book.

All notes/emails sent by staff to parents/guardians must be first presented to the Principal as this is key to transparent communication throughout the school.

Accident, illness / incident report forms are required to be filled in and flagged to Principal on Google Apps. A signed (by relevant teachers) hard copy needs to be kept by the class teacher in the child's/children's file(s).

Early Leaving forms are required to be filled in and a signed (by parent and teacher) hard copy needs to be kept by the class teacher in the child's/children's file(s).

Google Apps Calendars will be shared between Principal, Secretary and all Staff to ensure whole school awareness of meetings, parental involvement, other visitors to school etc.

Meetings between principal and individual / groups of class teachers are held at least once a term.

New teachers are offered an induction course at the start of the year. They are also supplied with an updated Welcome Pack as are all substitute teachers.

Notices are posted in the staffroom in an accessible area for teachers and are updated regularly. Announcements made in the staffroom at break-times are also e-mailed to all teachers.

Sharing of expertise is promoted in the school as all staff are encouraged to place any teaching /

learning topic and or ideas for school development and improvement on staff meeting agenda for discussion or to give a presentation on at Teach-Meets. The principal may also ask staff to give presentations on particular topics as a need for improvement arises or a staff member has information of particular interest to share. This way all staff benefit from the sharing of knowledge.

All staff are requested to follow the motto: 'if in doubt, ask' to promote clear communications.

(ii) Administration staff:

The administration staff is involved in a wide range of supporting activities for all staff, students parents/guardians and Board of Management. They assist with the smooth running of the school on a day to day basis.

The school office is closed during holidays. Emails sent during holidays will be responded to as soon as possible.

Our school secretary is in the office between 08:30 and 14:00 Monday to Friday.

(iii) Ancillary staff:

The ancillary staff are very important in supporting the teachers and students in having an orderly, safe and clean school environment. Maintaining courteous and professional relationships with the ancillary staff is important for all members of the school community. In particular, teachers are requested to instruct and supervise students leaving the classroom tidy in order to facilitate room cleaning.

(iv) Inclusion in School Assistants (ISA):

ISAs are recruited to assist in the care of students with additional educational needs within the school. They play an important role in ensuring that the student understands his/her school tasks and can thus participate to the best of his/her ability in the school. It is the policy of the school to support effective communication between the ISA, student, teachers and parent/guardian, taking into account the particular additional educational needs of the students involved.

(v) Students:

The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is very important in supporting and promoting learning in the school. This relationship is best when based on mutual respect. To assist in creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for learning, students are required to treat all school staff and students with equal respect.

The Student Council is an important communication mechanism between the students and other school partners.

Learning good social and interpersonal skills with one's peers is an important part of school life. The school Code of Positive Behaviour contract outlines the implementation of the policy in relation to this matter. Students are required to treat all students with consideration and respect and to have

regard for other people's rights and feelings.

(vi) Home - School:

The development of strong Home/School Links is a most important responsibility in the school. Good communications between home and school plays a vital part in every child's education. The staff of FETNS is committed to creating strong home school links. As a result, there are various modes of communication in place to encourage strong home school links.

Maintaining clear communication between teachers and parents is important in achieving the objective of educating our students to the highest standards. An important aspect of this relationship is the class teacher reporting the student's progress and behaviour to the parent/guardian. Informal chats before and after school as well as notes in the student's journal are important channels of communication between the teachers and parent/s/guardians. Communication may also occur between teachers and parents/guardians using other means, for example a phone call, as is considered necessary / most effective at the time.

Teachers report to parent/s/guardians in the end of year reports, at parent/guardian-teacher meetings and at other times deemed appropriate and or necessary.

Meetings occur between teachers and parent/s/guardians at the request of either party at a time convenient to both parties. Teachers inform date and time of any meeting arranged with parents/guardians to Principal on Aladdin with a note on who initiated the meeting and why.

If a parent/guardian has any concerns about their child's welfare, they are advised to speak directly to the child's Class Teacher. Short messages can be communicated at the beginning or end of the school day. If there is an issue that requires discussion parent/s/guardians are advised to make an appointment to see the class teacher. Informal meetings are encouraged at the request of either parent/guardian or teacher.

For any suggestions to improve our Communication Policy parent/s/guardians may use the school Suggestion Box in reception to communicate their ideas in writing to the school.

Steps for positive communication of concerns from parents/guardians:

- **Step 1:** Any concerns/issues in relation to your child need to be discussed with the class teachers. Teachers are all committed to working closely with parent/s/guardians and will do their best to meet parent/s/guardians at a mutually convenient time. It is hoped that all issues will be resolved at that stage.
- **Step 2:** If, following the meeting with the class teacher, a parent feels that the matter has not been resolved, an appointment should be made with the Principal.
- **Step 3:** If a parent feels that the issue has not been resolved following the first two stages it is necessary to communicate with the Board of Management. A letter should be written and addressed to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The letter will be read out at the next Board of Management meeting and the members will consider and discuss the issues raised. The Board members will work towards finding a resolution and will respond directly to the parent.
- If the parental concern relates to whole school issues, Step 1 above may be skipped and the

parent should speak directly to the Principal.

If approached, PGTA members and Board of Management members will promote the procedures outlined above for dealing with suggestions and concerns in relation to the school.

The homework journal can also be used as a form of communication between home and school. (1st – 6th Class).

Class web pages can be used to provide parents with information on work being undertaken in class and on additional resources to support children's learning.

Regular Home/School Links letters are also distributed monthly by each class teacher giving families an overview of teaching and learning topics planned for the class.

Please do not email or telephone the school if your child is sick/absent. A written note, with the child's name, class and date(s) of absence, is required from parents/guardians when a child returns to school. In line with TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) requirements absence notes must be provided and are to be given to the Class Teacher.

We request that birthday invitations are not distributed at school as this can lead to upset and unnecessary disappointment for some children. Please distribute all invitations in your own time / using Aladdin Connect.

(vii) Board of Management:

It is crucial that Board of Management members, subcommittee members and all parent/s/guardians generally communicate school related information in the correct manner. It is essential that all of the school community understand fully the communication procedures needed for an effective school. It is hoped that all individuals will work to promote these procedures and to encourage others to do the same.

The Board of Management appoint a Communications Officer to ensure that there is a good flow of information between the various Subcommittees, from the Board to Subcommittees and from Subcommittees to the Board.

The Board of Management will hold meetings twice termly and more often as required.

(viii) The Principal:

- Has a responsibility within the school environment to ensure all the relevant parties are informed about all events and that all communications of a personal and/or confidential nature are treated accordingly.
- Meets regularly with staff to discuss school development, planning, issues etc.
- Communicates with class teachers in relation to academic progress of students
- Liaises with Programme Co-ordinators – SET / Learn Together / Green School / SPHE / Mentoring & Droichead PST Team / Active School / After-School Programme / Forest School / Human Rights / Yellow Flag / Student Council / Philosophy / Teaching Placement & Work Experience Students /
- Meets with Special Education Teaching (SET) team weekly

- Communicates with SET teachers in relation to students with additional needs
- Communicates with teachers of Evergreen Classes in relation to requirements and progress of their students
- Liaises with outside welfare agencies – Special Education Needs Officer (SENO), Educational Psychologist of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Social Workers, Child and Family Agency (TUSLA), Health Centres (HSE),
- Makes referrals to private counsellors / play therapists / educational psychologists when necessary
- Communicates with Parents/Guardians / Board of Management / Department of Education and Skills and our patron body Educate Together.

(ix) The School Secretary is responsible for conducting and co-ordinating communications between the following and keeping Principal informed of same:

- Parent/s/guardians and staff and vice versa
- Parent/s/guardians and their child / children
- DES and school as per Principal's requests
- Outside agencies and the school as per Principal's requests
- Suppliers and the school
- Local community and the school

(x) Special Education Teachers (SET):

The Special Education Teachers play an important role in mediating between parent/s/guardians and staff particularly in relation to students with special needs. In relation to students with an ISA the SET staff have an important role in initiating and supporting the relationship between the student and the ISA. The SET staff also play an important role in liaising with outside agencies such as Social Workers, NEPS etc.

Review and Evaluation:

The following are indicators to gauge the success and the effectiveness of this policy:

The changes made to improve communication is based on feedback from the teaching, ISA Administration and Ancillary staff as well as Parent/s/Guardians. Records of staff meetings and communication issues arising and addressed are noted. Overall general satisfaction and or queries from parent/s/guardians regarding communication in the school are addressed with the parent/s/guardians and taken into account when updating policy. The opportunity to give feedback on communications is extended to parent/s/guardians whenever the policy is reviewed by the Board of Management.

Monitoring procedures:

A Communication Policy Committee will be formed and will monitor the satisfaction with communication / improvements in communication required. The Principal will monitor staff meetings which will be chaired by staff on a rota basis. The Student Council will monitor the use of the Noticeboard in the Assembly area.

Review procedures:

The Communication Policy Committee will evaluate the effectiveness of the policy at yearly intervals from the implementation of the policy. They will make recommendations on necessary changes.

This policy is available to all parents on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every two school years or as required.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20/05/15, reviewed in April 2016 and is now under review again in November 2018.

Date of next review: November 2020.

This policy is available to all parents on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

Signed:

_____ Date: _____
Francis Fullen: Chairperson of Board of Management

Collette Dunne: Principal: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 1

Agreed forms of communication used in the school:

Verbal

- Informal staff chats
- "Let's Do" Lunches
- Staff meetings
- Collaboration on classroom work
- Announcements at break-times and assemblies
- Presentations at staff meetings
- Phonecalls from staff to inform school management if unable to come to work Text is acceptable if it is responded to within 15 minutes.
- Induction for new staff will provide information on mechanisms and good practice in internal communications

Written

- Emails / letters / notes to parents and guardians, Board of Management etc.
- Google Apps email and messaging for staff in class and outside of class: staff are required to have Google Apps online during class time (instead of intercom system)
- Notice Boards in staff room and in different areas in the school
- Calendar on Google Apps and of main events on noticeboard in the staff room

- Annual Student Reports
- Student Journal notes
- Principal's Newsletter on website

Meetings:

- Students Council
- Staff meetings
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Professional Development staff days
- School Development Policy Committees / Task Groups (Ad-Hoc).

Electronic:

- Email between all staff on the school Google Apps Email
- Regular updates from Principal via email / text messaging