



## ***Communication Policy***

### ***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 benefit of the child and their learning so that the child's education can be effective.

This policy was developed by the Board of Management and staff of Stepside Educate Together NS, and in consultation with the Parents Association in the school year 2014-2015. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

### ***Stepaside Educate Together NS staff and Board of Management believe that:***

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

We know from research that children do better, behave better and are happier at school where parents and teachers work closely together and when parents are able to give their children support at home.

National Parents Council document *Working Effectively as a Parents Association*<sup>1</sup>

### ***Stepaside Educate Together NS staff and Board of Management are committed to:***

- Developing close effective links with parents
- Participating in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the central and fundamental role of parents as Primary Educators<sup>2</sup> of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of Stepside Educate Together National School
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.npc.ie/attachments/cbdcfd37-98b5-4698-86aa-3f30c38fceed.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland



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

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians will be consulted by staff. It is essential that all parents and legal guardians are named on the enrolment form.

### ***Behaviour of all adults 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 and the wider community: anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. Adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure 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
- All adults within the school are expected to speak to each other with respect, shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If any adult displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they 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 parents' right to privacy so staff should not be asked to speak about any child except your 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 list of people and their contact information who you have



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authorised to collect your child. Should this change the onus is on you to inform the school secretary of the change. You can provide this information by email or by dropping in to the school office. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorized/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorization by the parent immediately. In an emergency situation, the parent must leave a message on the answering service or speak with the principal/teacher.

### ***Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with Parents***

#### **Consultation throughout the year including:**

- Open day for parents of new Junior Infants (and existing pupils) in mid June each year
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November annually (A short written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher).
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs

#### **Written communication including:**

- Homework diary (1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class), to inform parents about assigned homework, to confirm that homework has been completed and to relay messages between parents and teachers
- Regular newsletters 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
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year
- Text messages for general reminders (e.g school closures, coffee mornings)

***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***

#### **Other structures and processes including:**

- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. The PAC receive policies in draft form and provide feedback to the Board. The document once ratified by the Board 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



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- Involvement of parents in curricular areas when appropriate eg. Learn Together: sharing knowledge, or reading groups.

### ***Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school***

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, Appendix 1 outlines the procedures to be followed.

Classes begin at 8:30 am and finish at 1:10pm (infants) and 2.10pm (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) and this time should not be interrupted. Meetings with the class staff at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged 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

It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

However teachers and other members of staff may be available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school as long as confidentiality issues are not impacted. If matters raised cannot be resolved immediately or if the parent or staff member needs to discuss the matter further an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties.

On some rare occasions a parent may need to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear during class time etc, this can be done through the secretary's office so that learning is not disrupted.

### ***On line and Social Media Communication***

Stepaside Educate Together National School has a website <http://www.stepasideetns.ie/> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/StepasideETNS>. Parents are requested to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters, comment and contribute to posts and share information to help publicise the school and the achievements of our children.



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The school name or anything that identifies the school should not be used on online or on social media (for example class Facebook page which might be set up by parents) by members of the public including parents without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. Stepaside Educate Together National School will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.



## ***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 the parent 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.

### ***Organisation of parents teacher meetings***

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year 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 school secretary.

Stepaside Educate Together National School uses prepared guidelines to give structure to the meetings. These can vary from teacher to teacher but must include feedback on attendance, behaviour, punctuality, standardised test results and overview of progress through the curriculum. Parent/ Teacher meetings may take place 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 to parents needs relating to siblings etc.

In order to facilitate the operation of the school and the needs of children and other parents, it is important that meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and should be adhered to so that all parents are seen on time is so far as is possible.



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### ***Planning meetings for Individual Education Plans***

For children with designated special educational needs, formal scheduled parent/staff meetings relating to the child's **Individual Education Plan** will take place in September/October. 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, Stepaside Educate together National School will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.**

### ***School Reports***

Stepaside Educate Together National School produces formal reports for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school annually in the third term using report card templates as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment ([www.ncca.ie](http://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

### ***Safety, Health and Welfare at Work***

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important 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 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular can be found attached to the school's Health and Safety policy.

### **Ratified by the Board of Management**

**Chairperson:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Stepaside Educate Together NS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### APPENDIX 1:

## ***Complaints Procedure***

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

### **Stage 1-informal stage**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the **class teacher** with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class staff he/she should approach the **Principal** with a view to resolving it
3. If the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the **Chairperson** of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

### **Stage 2-formal stage**

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

### **Stage 3**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
  - i. Supply the staff with a copy of the written complaint and
  - ii. Arrange a meeting with the staff, and where applicable, the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

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### **Stage 4**

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
  - a. The staff should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
  - b. He/she should be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
  - c. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

### **Stage 5**

Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.