



Scoil Náisiúnta **Tobar Mhairéide**

St. Margarets NS

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Introduction

This policy was developed by the staff of St Margaret's National School and the Board of Management. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to staff and parents on effective and appropriate communication strategies in St. Margarets National School.

Rationale

St Margaret's NS recognises the importance of family, and the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. We are committed to building strong and supportive communication links between home and the school community to ensure that the child's education and learning is as effective as possible and that their experience in school is a positive and fulfilling one.

Mutual Respect

The policy reflects the ethos of the school, and is based on trust, respect, clarity and openness. This ethos can best be encouraged where there is a high level of cooperation between staff, pupils and parents. **All forms of communication between members of the school community must always demonstrate good manners and mutual respect.** Adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

Members of the School Community

St. Margaret's NS works to promote and support good communication structures between the following:

- Staff
- Children
- Parents/Guardians
- The wider school community (for example, Board of Management & Parent Teacher Association) and staff, parents/guardians

All members of the school community are expected to familiarise themselves with the Communication Policy. It is considered that everyone has a responsibility to make him/herself aware of where and how to seek information and updates as the need arises and should seek to keep themselves informed.

1. Forms of Communication between parents and teachers:

- I. **The Aladdin Connect app:** We encourage all parents to utilise this app. Through this app contact details can be updated, consent can be sought, absences can be explained, school reports can be viewed, payments can be made and other useful applications.
- II. **Homework Journals:** Each child is provided with a homework journal at the beginning of the academic year. **Parents are to review their child's journal daily when completing homework with them.** Parents may write brief messages to teachers in the relevant sections of the weekly page in the journal. When a child is absent parents are requested to inform the school in writing through the school diary or in the homework folder. On occasion, teachers will write to parent/s giving information or seeking an appointment for a formal meeting.
- III. **Google Classroom:** Teachers communicate frequently on Google Classroom. This online platform is used to share class achievements, assign digital homework, provide website links to reinforce learning at home and to share reminders regarding school events.
- IV. **School Website:** The school website (www.stmargaretsns.com) is a valuable platform for disseminating relevant information to the parents and wider community. Important content available on the website include:
 - School policies
 - Information on activities at various class levels
 - A noticeboard on the main homepage outlining important dates for the term
 - Enrolment forms
 - Contact information
- V. **Phone call:** Teachers may phone a parent to relay information or to arrange a face-to-face meeting. Teachers are unable to receive calls during instruction time (9.00am-2.40pm), however a brief message may be left with the school's secretary which will then be passed on to the teacher. Teachers will then endeavour to make a follow up phone call with parents after school hours.
- VI. **Email:** Each teacher has their own email address (e.g. *First letter of first name and surname @stmargaretsns.ie*).

- VII. **School Report:** A School Report on each child's progress is sent to each parent in Term 3 of each academic year.
- VIII. **Parent Teacher Meeting:** A formal Teacher-Parent meeting takes place once every school year in the first term. It is extremely important that parents attend these meetings. Teachers outline students progress and possible ways in which home can support the child's learning at school.

2. Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school.

The School encourages communication between parents and staff.

- I. The class teacher, who has the most contact time with a child, other than their parents, is the **FIRST** and most important point of contact for every parent. If a parent has a concern about any issue, they are advised to contact the teacher to arrange a meeting, (using homework journal/email) at a mutually suitable time. When speaking to the teacher, parents should give a brief description of the issue involved so that both parties can be prepared for the requested meeting. The teacher will endeavour to deal with the matter promptly.
- II. **Meetings with the classroom teachers at the door or at the line in the morning or afternoon to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged for various reasons:**
 - 1. Staff members must give full attention to the supervision of their classes.
 - 2. It is difficult to be discreet and protect one's privacy.
 - 3. A child may feel uncomfortable when his/her parent is talking to staff in such a manner.

3. Best Practice For Dropping in Forgotten Items

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc, this can be done through the secretary's office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum. In order to preserve the integrity of the school day, all children should take responsibility for organising themselves and remembering their belongings before coming to school.

4. Emails and Phone Calls to Staff

Teachers' primary responsibility is to the teaching and learning in their classroom and the supervision of the children in their care. Parents are reminded that messages and e-mails sent to teachers during the school day, **will not** receive an immediate reply. Staff will undertake to reply to all messages received, at their earliest convenience.

If a parent/guardian wants to contact the teacher or leave an urgent message for their child, they should phone the main office and the school secretary will relay the message to the relevant person.

All staff members and parents/guardians have a right to their discrete free time. Communications to the school and from the school should take place during normal working hours. Contact at night, at weekends, on days off and during holidays should never take place. When emailing staff, parents are asked to schedule all emails that are being sent outside of the normal working day. We ask you strongly to respect this and we undertake to do likewise.

All contact with staff should be via:

- The main school email address : stmargaretsns@hotmail.com
- Teacher's professional email address: (eg- first letter of first name and surname"@stmargaretsns.ie")
- School Phone: 01 836 1669

5. Communication between Staff:

The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms.

- I. **Staff Email:** Each staff member is assigned a school email address. This is for teacher's professional use and is used for school/professional work only. Teachers may use this email address for liaising with parents and/or the wider school community. The use of the email for students and parents is at the discretion of each class teacher.
- II. **Google Drive** - School documents are shared between teachers on Google Drive.
- III. **Aladdin** - Staff communicate important school related messages via Aladdin.
- IV. **Internal phone system** - Each classroom has a phone that can be used to call the secretary, principal or other teachers during the school day.
- V. **WhatsApp** groups are used to communicate school related news and arrange meetings.
- VI. **Croke Park hours** are used for monthly staff meetings, held on the first Wednesday of every month. Teachers meet as a whole group for most of the allocated time. From time to time, teachers may be asked to break up into their class groupings to formally plan for teaching and learning in a particular area of the curriculum.

6. Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

Effective communication between SNA, class teacher and parents are of paramount importance. SNAs play an important role in ensuring that the students with additional needs can participate to the best of their ability in school life.

A monthly meeting, using Croke Park hours, of the SNAs is held after school on the second Monday of every month.

All communication regarding the progress of all children should be relayed by the class teacher to the parent. It is not the role of the SNA to deliver such information to parents, unless requested to do so by the class teacher.

7. Ancillary Staff

Our caretaker, secretary and cleaners play an important role in ensuring that the school operates in an effective and efficient manner. All requests for support from our ancillary staff should be always conducted in a courteous and respectful manner.

Classrooms and learning support rooms should be left tidy and orderly at the end of each day, to communicate respect to the cleaners working in our school.

8. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work act came into operation on 1st November 1989. This act recognises that school staff may be at risk in terms of violence (form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation).

In respect of this, all staff are 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.

Our whole school Dignity at Work Policy further highlights the importance of employees St. Margarets NS rights to be treated with dignity and respect. This policy is available to view on our school website.

9. Personal and Confidential Information

All 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.

All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information. Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted under the Acceptable Usage Policy of the school.

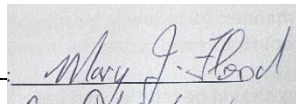
Implementation, Review & Communication:

This policy was considered and ratified by the Board of Management on 22nd August 2023. It will be monitored on an ongoing basis and reviewed once every three years or sooner if necessary. This policy will be reviewed again in the school year 2026/2027 or sooner should the need arise.

It is available to view on the school website.

Signed:

Chairperson of BOM: _____

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Mary J. Flood".

Date: 22.08.2023

Principal: _____

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Daniel J. W.". The signature is partially obscured by a horizontal line.

Date: 22.08.2023