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## **CET 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 Claregalway Educate Together NS, and in consultation with the Parents Association in the school year 2023-2024. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

### ***Claregalway 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>

### ***Claregalway 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

- 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, staff and other parents 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 a list of people and their contact information who you have 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 unauthorised/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be given written authorisation 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.***

**Annual Consultation throughout the year including:**

- Welcome day for new Junior Infants and their parents in June each year
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in the first term
- Class teachers / SETs meet with parents whose children have additional educational needs.

**Written communication including:**

- Homework diary (3rd – 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.
- Emails sent from class teachers to parents, through the Aladdin system.
- Emails sent from parents to class teachers, via the office
- 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 (shared via Aladdin).
- Text messages for general reminders (e.g school closures, coffee mornings)
- Some SEN pupils may have a home school diary. This is not a means of reviewing academic/social progress but rather serves as a useful tool to share information between home and school.
- Class blogs or other online platforms e.g. Seesaw, for sharing class news.

***Generally, communication sent from the school will be 'paperless'. Emails sent from the school will be sent to the email address(es) provided at enrolment, unless otherwise requested by parents. All paper 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 receives 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
- Involvement of parents in curricular areas and focus weeks when appropriate eg. STEM Week / Beyond the Classroom / World Book Day / Aistear / sharing knowledge or reading groups etc.
- 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.

***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, usually via email, to arrange a suitable time. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, the Complaints procedure [available here](#) outlines the procedures to be followed.

Email is not intended as a forum to discuss a child's progress. A face-to-face meeting between parent and teacher is the appropriate forum for this.

Email is not intended to be used to make any form of complaint. The school's Complaints Policy is available on the school's website.

Classes begin at 9.20am and finish at 2pm (infants) and 3pm (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) and this time should not be interrupted. Meetings with the class staff at the class door or in the yard 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.

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.

### ***Online and Social Media Communication***

Claregalway Educate Together National School has a website [www.claregalwayet.ie](http://www.claregalwayet.ie) and a Facebook Claregalway Educate Together National School. Parents are encouraged 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.

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. Claregalway Educate Together National School will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

### ***Communication between School/Board/PAC***

Representatives of the Board of Management and the Parents Association Committee meet annually.

There is a teacher nominee on the Board of Management who attends meetings as scheduled.

The parent nominees on the Board of Management attend PT meetings as members of the PT.

The Principal and the Chairperson/s of the PT meet regularly and communicate regularly via e-mail.

### ***Communication through the school office***

Through the Aladdin system emails can be sent by teachers directly to parents. All incoming emails are communicated through the office [info@claregalwayet.ie](mailto:info@claregalwayet.ie) The class teacher does not respond from their personal email to these.

### ***Communication by email- response time***

Response times to emails from the school secretary can vary depending on the demands in the office at any given time. It is considered reasonable that 3-5 school days are allowed for a response (with the exception of holiday periods during which email is only checked intermittently).

Response times to emails to the Principal can also vary greatly depending on the demands at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff and overall running of the school. A response time of 5-7 school days is considered to be reasonable.

Teachers are in class during the day and will not have time to access emails. They may be engaged in planning, meetings or personal matters after school hours and so again 3-5 school days is considered to be a reasonable response time.

There may be occasions where a parent is trying to contact the school by phone and/or email and are not receiving a response. Office hours are limited and the secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Communication with Separated Parents**

In cases where a child's parents are going through or have been through separation, Claregalway ETNS strives to deal with all parties in a sensitive and compassionate manner, with the primary focus being the welfare and development of the child concerned. The school asks parents experiencing separation to speak confidentially with the Principal and/or teacher. The school will follow the procedures below, with the aim of supporting children whose parents are going through separation.

These require active co-operation between the parents affected and the school:

The Board and staff of Claregalway ETNS will endeavour at all times to deal sensitively and caringly with children experiencing parental separation and with both parents.

- Parents of a pupil are asked to inform the school if they are separated. The school needs to know what the child's living arrangements are – i.e. with which parent they normally reside, or what shared arrangements are in place.
- Contact details (including emergency contact details) should be provided by both parents. The school must be kept informed of collection arrangements, and changes to these must be communicated in writing.
- Parents should inform the school of any difficulties their child may be experiencing as a consequence of separation (e.g. emotional upset).
- In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the assumption will be that both parents continue to be involved in and committed to their child's education, and so are equally entitled to be made aware of all important details and events relating to this.
- **The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent in the absence of a custody arrangement to that effect.** The same applies to significant information relating to the child.
- If a separation /custody order is in place which limits contact by either parent with the school, the school should be informed in writing to this effect. This can be done by providing the school principal with a copy of the relevant part of the order. The school commits to ensuring that such information will be held in the strictest confidence and will be used on a "need to know" basis only.
- The school will assume, unless otherwise instructed, that consent for school trips, routine medical examinations or vaccinations can be given by the parent with whom the child principally resides.
- It is school policy to offer separate parent/teacher meetings to both parents, if so desired.
- Standard school communications which are normally transmitted via email and/or Aladdin and will be expected to be communicated by the parent with whom the child principally resides to the other parent.

**Communication Flow Chart**

