



School Communication Charter

Swords Community College

2025

Date for Review:

December 2026

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal (Secretary to Board)

Date: _____



School Communication Charter

Purpose

This charter sets out the expectations for how parents and guardians communicate with school staff. Its goal is to ensure that all interactions are respectful, constructive, and focused on supporting the well-being and learning of every student. Please refer to Appendix A for relevant legal documentation regarding employee rights regarding dignity and respect in the workplace.

1. Respect and Courtesy

- All communication—spoken, written, or digital—should be calm, polite, and free from personal attacks or aggressive language.
- Both parents and staff should listen to one another's views with an open mind and mutual respect.

2. Partnership and Collaboration

- Students are supported by staff in line with duties outlined by the Department of Education and Youth (DEY). Staff and parents work together to support a students in their education in line with the school ethos and polices.
- Concerns are raised in a spirit of problem-solving, not blame.

3. Professional Boundaries

- School staff are professionals; their time, duties and responsibilities must be respected accordingly.
- Staff will not engage in matters pertaining to students or any school related matters outside of school and these will take place during professional working hours only.
- Communication to/from staff and parents such as emails, meetings and phone calls will take place inside professional working hours.

4. Constructive Communication

- Concerns should first be directed to the staff member most directly involved, such as the class teacher or year head.
- If an issue remains unresolved, follow the school's escalation and referral ladder.
- Written messages should be clear, factual, and focused on the issue, avoiding emotional or accusatory language.
- Teachers are not expected to respond outside of school hours.

5. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Personal information about staff, students, or other families should never be shared publicly or on social media.
- Conversations or emails with staff are private and should not be recorded or distributed without consent.
- Respect teachers' professional judgment in matters of teaching and assessment.

6. Positive Intent

- Assume goodwill on all sides: everyone is working in the student's best interest.
- Celebrate successes and express appreciation for staff efforts.

Unacceptable Communication

The following are **never acceptable** in interactions with school staff:

- Aggressive, abusive, or intimidating behaviour (in person, on the phone, or online).
- Swearing, shouting, or threats.
- Discriminatory comments or harassment.
- Communicating misinformation digitally, verbally or written or using social media, including the any messaging app, to criticise school individuals or the school itself.

The school reserves the right to take appropriate action if communication breaches this charter and to contact An Garda Síochana if deemed necessary.

Our Commitment

Parents commit to:

- Communicating respectfully and thoughtfully e.g. via email, phone, appointment.
- Following the appropriate channels for queries or complaints.
- Supporting school policies and values.

School staff commit to:

- Listening carefully and responding professionally.
 - Communicating promptly, clearly, and respectfully.
 - Working collaboratively to resolve issues.
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Together, we build a community of respect, trust, and shared purpose—where every child can thrive.

Appendix A:

Protections for School Staff in the Workplace Setting:

All staff working in schools in Ireland are protected by several overlapping laws and school-level policies that ensure their safety, dignity, and legal protection. While the Equal Status Act 2000 mainly protects students and the public, teachers' protection comes from employment, health and safety, and criminal legislation.

1. Legal Protections

a. Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005

- Schools must provide a safe and healthy workplace for all staff.
- This includes protection from violence, aggression, or harassment by parents or others.
- Boards of Management and Principals have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent or address such behaviour.
- Schools can restrict or prohibit abusive parents/visitors from entering the premises.

b. Criminal Justice (Public Order) Acts

- Abusive, threatening, or violent conduct can constitute a criminal offence.
- Gardaí may act under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 or Harassment Act 1997.
- Serious incidents should be reported to Gardaí immediately.

c. Defamation and Harassment Law

- Teachers are protected if false or damaging statements are made about them.
- Schools may take legal advice or involve the patron/ETB for support in such cases.

2. School-Level Protections

a. Parent/Visitor Code of Conduct

- Schools should maintain a clear code outlining respectful communication and behaviour expectations.
- Formal complaint procedures as per the patron body should be followed instead of direct confrontation.

b. Dignity at Work Policy

- Required under Health and Safety Authority and Department of Education guidelines.
- Guarantees a workplace free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation by any party, including parents.

c. Support and Reporting

If a teacher experiences abuse:

1. Report it to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
2. Have it recorded in the school's incident log.
3. The Board of Management may issue written warnings or restrict access.
4. Gardaí may become involved in serious cases.
5. Counselling or EAS supports are available through the Department of Education scheme.

3. Summary Table

Source of Protection	What It Covers	Example
Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005	Employer must prevent or address violence and harassment	Visitor shouting abuse in car park
Criminal Justice & Harassment Acts	Threats, stalking, or online harassment	Parent/Guardian sends threatening messages.
Dignity at Work Policy	School's internal response and support	Principal intervenes and logs incident.
Visitor / Parent Code of Conduct	Allows school to restrict access for abusive parents/visitors etc	Person is banned from school grounds.
Defamation Law	Protection from false or harmful statements	Person posts false claims on social media

4. Summary

School staff have the right to work in a safe and respectful environment. Abuse from parents/visitors/guardians, etc., should never be tolerated and must be treated as a serious matter.