

# Holywell Educate Together National School

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*Holywell Educate Together National School*

# Communication Policy



# 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 Holywell Educate Together NS, and in consultation with the Parent Teacher Association in the school year 2018/2019. It's purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

## ***Holywell 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 Parent Teacher Association* <sup>1</sup>

## ***Holywell 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 Holywell Educate Together National School
- Supporting and facilitating the Parent Teacher Guardian Association.
- 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 Parent Teacher Guardian Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.npc.ie/attachments/cbdcfd37-98b5-4698-86aa-3f30c38fceed.pdf> <sup>2</sup> Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland

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 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, An Garda Síochána will be contacted.
- The school will respect all children and parents' right to privacy so staff should not be asked to speak about any child except their 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 office stores 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 office of the change. You can provide this information by email, phone or by calling 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 pickup 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 (play date) takes place 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). *(Only in exceptional cases will meetings be arranged at other times in the year).*
- Meetings with parents whose children have additional needs (IEP/School Support Plan (SSPP) meetings take place)
- **Written communication including:**
- Homework diary (1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class), and homework menu (all classes), to inform parents about assigned homework, to confirm that homework has been completed and to relay messages between parents and teachers

- Newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays etc appear on Aladdin and/or classdojo.
- Class and school updates, events, news etc are uploaded to Aladdin and/or classdojo
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year is given to parents/guardians
- 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. PTGA members or policy committee members receive policies in draft form and provide feedback to the Board of Management. The document once ratified by the Board is made available to all parents 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 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, or may contact the class teacher via their work email address or through classdojo. Teachers will inform parents of their professional email address at the 'Parent's Information Meeting' which takes place at the beginning of the school year. Emails sent to teachers will only be addressed on school days up until 4pm. Under the 'Right to Disconnect', there is no expectation on teachers/ANAs to read or reply to emails or messages at weekends or on school holidays and is better to respect this by not contacting staff members outside of this time.

In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, the Parents Complaints Policy is followed which 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 staff at the school 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 their line.

However, teachers and other members of staff may be available to listen to a quick issue 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 very 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 school office so that learning is not disrupted.

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

Holywell Educate Together National School has a website <http://www.holywelletns.ie/> as well as the pupil information management system Aladdin and clasdojo. Parents are requested to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters 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, 'what's app 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. Holywell 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 inform parents 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 parent 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 office or emailing the class teacher.

Holywell 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 parent's 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.

## ***Planning meetings for Individual Education Plans/School Support Plan/Continuum of Support***

For children with designated special educational needs, the formal parent/staff meetings will be used to discuss the child's **Individual Education Plan/ School Support Plan Plus**. 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.

## **School Reports**

Holywell 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.

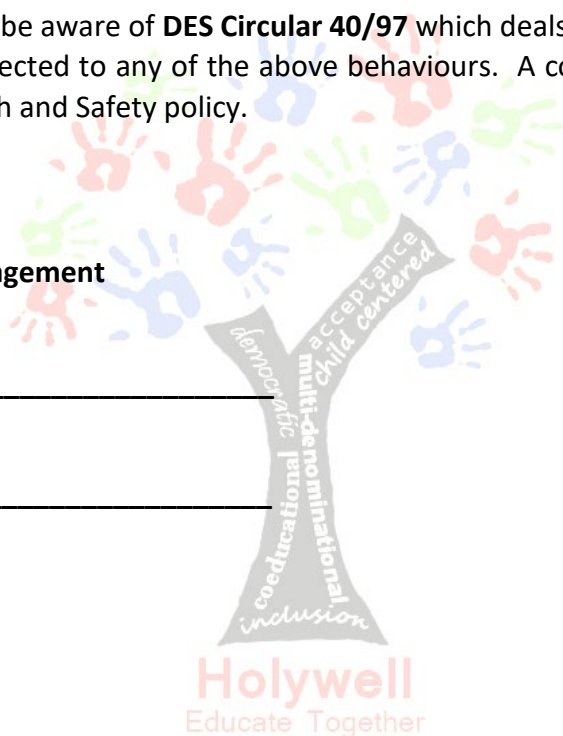
It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

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

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



## **APPENDIX 1- GUIDELINES FOR USE OF CLASS 'WHATSAPP' GROUPS IN HOLYWELL ETNS**

A number of communication platforms are available for parents & guardians to use in our school:

- 'Class dojo'
- Email
- Aladdin (where the school sends out important whole school emails/texts/notices)

A class 'WhatsApp' group can be a useful tool for parents & guardians to communicate regarding issues which are relevant to their child's class. The following are some guidelines or tips in relation to the use of the 'WhatsApp' groups which may be helpful to parents.

### **The 'WhatsApp' groups could be used in the following situations:**

- for whole class invites to birthday parties,
- to arrange lifts to parties,
- to arrange class parents' social occasions
- in situations where parents are running late or unable to make school pick up times, they can use 'WhatsApp' to ask other parents to help out,
- to enquire about the homework for that evening.

### **We recommend not using the class 'WhatsApp' groups for the following:**

- political posts such as canvassing for support for a particular candidate or political cause, or for disseminating information on political events such as rallies and marches,
- posting comments about Holywell ETNS teachers, Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs) and members of school staff, whether positive or negative,
- posting comments about any parents or students in the school,
- sharing memes, YouTube clips, 'Tik-Tok' videos, or internet jokes,
- posting information about events not linked to the school.

### **Some things to bear in mind when posting on 'WhatsApp' groups:**

- Remember that your post will be seen by up to 56 people and that your child and other children in the school may inadvertently view these also.
- Remember that some of the members of the individual class groups may also be teachers or staff members in the school.
- Always use respectful language in your post- if you would not be comfortable posting it on the school wall with your name under it, then don't send it.
- Ask yourself if it is necessary to post a response to a question if it is in the negative. For instance, if you can't help out a parent in a situation it may be easier not to respond. It is worth bearing in mind that these days people are often on many 'WhatsApp' groups between class groups, children activities, family groups etc. This means that people may be receiving large amounts of notifications every day.
- Consider alternative methods of communication such as email for sharing information on external events etc.
- Use the Private Messaging function if you just want to communicate with a small group or individuals in the group.