



# Communication Policy

## **Introduction**

This policy was developed by the staff of Kilmacanogue National School in consultation with the Board of Management and the parent body. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/teacher meetings and home/school communication in Kilmacanogue National School. The family and home are central to the development of the child. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other, so that the child's education can be effective.

Please note that the term 'Parents' is used throughout this policy as a substitute for 'Parents/Guardians'.

## **Parents**

Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children. To support the school's efforts in providing the best possible school experience for their children, parents are invited to work in partnership with staff. To that end, parents are encouraged to:

- Carefully read all communication from the school
- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner
- Recognise the role of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff as professionals.
- 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 community and/or parents association

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

- An invitation was extended to all parents to share thoughts and feedback regarding communication via survey in February 2025 and again in October 2025.
- Annual meeting with parents of incoming Junior Infants – mid-June
- One Parent/teacher meeting in each school year
- Parents receive a written school Report Card at the end of each school year
- Additional Support Plan meetings or phone calls with parents whose children have special educational needs
- Consultation: Parents are invited to consult and contribute to the drafting and review of relevant school policies. This is done in a variety of ways including via the Parents Association, surveys or general invitation to parents. Once ratified, relevant new policies and amended policies will be made known to all parents in written format via the school newsletter and/or email.
- Homework diaries are used from 2nd– 6th class
- Regular newsletters to keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Important notices are shared by Aladdin Noticeboard message / text message.
- Regular updates on the school website and blog.
- The School Calendar is issued to parents in advance of each school year.

## Legal Guardianship

Parents are required to keep the school informed of any changes to custody, access and guardianship matters.

In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.

## Keeping the school informed

Parents are asked to inform the school if urgent family events/situations occur that may cause anxiety to your child or may adversely affect his/her education. Information of this nature can be shared via the school office, for the attention of the class teacher.

Other matters of concern may be raised with the class teacher by making an appointment for a meeting or requesting a phone call.

## Methods of Communication

The school uses a number of methods of communication. These serve different purposes.

- Email is the primary means of written communication used by the school. Printing and paper photocopying is kept to a minimum for reasons of cost and sustainability.
- Phone calls and in-person meetings are used also.
- Any postal communication will be sent to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form / on the child's Aladdin profile, unless otherwise requested by parents.
- Aladdin Connect is used for payments, Permissions, Parent/Teacher meetings, school reports etc.; parents are required to download the Aladdin app for ease of use and support is available from the school office with registering and logging in.
- The school does not use WhatsApp or any other social media platforms for communication between home and school. Forums such as WhatsApp and other social media outlets are not used by the school in any capacity. Parents should discuss matters of concern with the class teacher or Support Teacher directly. **It is considered highly inappropriate for parents to engage in any discussion of specific children or school staff via WhatsApp or any other social media.**
- Staff do not use their personal mobile numbers for communicating with parents (barring exceptional / emergency circumstances). Any text messages or phone calls received to personal mobile numbers of school staff will not be answered. All correspondence should instead be directed to the school office.

## Communication by phone

The school office is attended between 9am and 2.40pm daily. For urgent matters e.g. an unplanned change in collection arrangements on any given day, parents are asked to phone the school office before 2.40pm, to ensure your call is answered without delay.

## **Communication by email**

Parents are invited to email [office@kilmacns.ie](mailto:office@kilmacns.ie), for the attention of the relevant member of staff. The school secretaries, Principal and Deputy Principal have access to this email inbox and are responsible for bringing queries to the attention of the relevant staff member(s). When there is a need for sensitive information to be shared, parents may prefer to phone the school office in advance to make arrangements for the safe transfer and/or deletion of confidential information.

Staff members on leave are not expected to monitor emails or respond until after they return to work. For urgent matters, another member of staff will seek to address any queries. Staff do not monitor or respond to emails outside of school hours or during school holidays, weekends, school closures etc.

The school aims to respond to all email queries within 3 working days. However, response times to emails may vary depending on the demands at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff, child protection, health and safety issues and the overall running of the school.

If parents have not received a reply to an email after 3 working days have passed, they are encouraged to reach out to the school again, as sometimes emails can be missed despite best efforts.

Time sensitive matters should go through the school office by phone rather than email, to ensure important messages are relayed i.e. someone new collecting at dismissal time who would otherwise be unknown to staff.

Teachers make every effort to engage with parent communication requests, as we value the importance of positive relationships between home and school. However, parents are kindly asked to be mindful of teachers' priorities and to avoid excessive communication via email. The primary duties of teachers relate to teaching, preparation for teaching and learning, assessment and corrections, collaboration with staff, attending staff meetings and organisation of resources.

As a general rule, staff do not engage in 'back and forth' email correspondence relating to matters of concern. Email is typically used by staff to share important messages or reply to a brief query. All matters of concern are best addressed by arranging a phone call or meeting.

Parents are requested to use email as a way of sharing brief updates, pupil project work, requesting clarification or to arrange a phone call or meeting to discuss matters of concern with staff. Lengthy emails with excessive detail are discouraged.

It is considered inappropriate to name or discuss any other children or members of staff via email.

The school has a zero tolerance policy towards abusive, threatening or aggressive communication via email. Persistent or vexatious emails are not responded to. All emails of this nature are referred to school management.

## **Annual Parent/teacher meetings**

The school arranges timetabled Parent/Teacher meetings in November or February of each school year, depending on the class level. The aims of annual Parent/Teacher meetings are:

- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To inform teachers how children are coping outside school
- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication between teachers and parents
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together

## **Requests for additional meetings**

Staff may request for parents to attend an additional meeting from time to time, aside from the annual P/T meeting, to discuss children's progress or matters of concern. A phone call may be more suitable.

Parents may also make a request to meet with their child's class teacher as matters arise throughout the year. This may be done by emailing or phoning the school office. Staff will try to arrange a meeting at the earliest opportunity, taking into account their normal responsibilities before and after school (preparation for teaching and learning, staff meetings etc.). It is generally not possible to facilitate requests for same-day meetings, except in the most exceptional of circumstances.

Parents are required to inform the school in advance of what they wish to discuss with the teacher, when requesting a meeting or phone call. This is to ensure the best use of everyone's time, to schedule the meeting accordingly and to allow for the appropriate staff to be in attendance.

## **Role of Special Needs Assistants (SNA's)**

SNA's provide a crucial role in supporting children with additional care needs in school. They work in partnership with class teachers and school management to address the needs and wellbeing of our students. Generally speaking, all communication between home and school should be between parents and teachers. SNA's are sometimes asked to attend meetings with parents in addition to teachers, to provide additional information and context.

## **Role of Special Education Teachers (SET Teachers / Support Teachers)**

Support Teachers work in close collaboration with class teachers to support children's learning and wellbeing. While class teachers are the primary point of contact for the majority of items, Support Teachers may also communicate directly with parents to share reviews and relevant information. Class teachers and Support teachers often attend meetings together, to provide a balanced view of children's learning and wellbeing.

A Student Support Plan is written for children who receive additional support. These are shared with parents twice during each school year and parental input is welcome. Meetings or phone calls can be arranged to discuss and clarify any queries.

## **In-school Management Team**

The In-school Management (ISM) Team plays an important role in supporting effective communication between home and school. The Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals provide support for staff, students and families.

Parents may occasionally wish to request a meeting with a member of the ISM team. However, for all matters of concern relating to their child, parents must make contact with the class teacher or Support Teacher in the first instance.

A member of the ISM team may also be asked by teachers to attend a meeting with a parent, to provide additional guidance. The school uses a 'ladder' approach, whereby an Assistant Principal attends in the first instance. Subsequent meetings with the Deputy Principal or Principal can be arranged if matters are not resolved.

Where a meeting is not possible or suitable, a phone call may be arranged at a mutually convenient time.

## **Informal Parent/Teacher Interactions**

Morning drop-off or afternoon collection can be a positive time to build positive relationships between staff and parents, and to pass on brief, informal messages. However, impromptu meetings or conversations between teachers and parents to discuss matters of concern are not possible for a number of important reasons:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- A teacher cannot give his/her full attention to a parent when supervising his/her class.
- A parent may also not be able to give his/her full attention to a teacher during these times.
- It is considered inappropriate for staff to discuss matters relating to children when other parents, the child themselves and/or other children are in close proximity.
- Teachers are not generally in a position to facilitate unplanned meetings or conversations, as they are carrying out duties relating to their role before, during and after school. Parents are kindly asked to make an appointment to discuss any matters of concern.
- Staff and parents should not discuss matters of concern or updates relating to specific children during any of the following scenarios:
  - school tours or trips
  - when parents are volunteering during school activities
  - via social media platforms
  - outside of school premises and school hours e.g. in the supermarket, or at the private residence of students or staff

## **Discussion of other children**

Parents may bring forward matters of concern involving their own child only. This may require parents to discuss other children e.g. if an incident has occurred. However, staff cannot and do not discuss other children with parents, for reasons of privacy.

Parents may not speak on behalf of other parents in any capacity when communicating with the school about specific incidents, policies or anything that has occurred. Group/collective complaints are not provided for. Each parent who wishes to raise a concern will be addressed separately.

When incidents occur, staff use the school's Code of Behaviour as a framework for choosing an appropriate response. Parents are entitled to information about their own child only. Staff do not share details of any consequences, sanctions or interventions put in place for any other children, or details of correspondence with the parents of other children.

**Please note that any parent may contact the school's Designated Liaison Person (DLP) at any time regarding Child Protection concerns relating to any child in the school** (or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) in the DLP's absence). Any follow up actions or communication will be carried out in accordance with Child Protection procedures. Most typically, updates are not given to parents regarding children other than their own.

## **Parental Complaints Procedure**

The revised Parental Complaints Procedure has been ratified by the school's Board of Management and is available to view on the school website. This procedure offers a clear and easy-to-follow series of steps to assist parents in resolving any complaints relating to their own child(ren).

A key principle of the Parental Complaints Procedure is the importance of parents directing their concerns towards the class teacher or support teacher, in the first instance. It is considered counterproductive for parents to attempt to contact the School Principal or Board of Management with a complaint without having first followed the steps as outlined in the procedure. These procedures are agreed at a national level and are designed to offer clarity for all stakeholders. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively with a view to resolving the complaint at the earliest possible stage.

## **Respectful Interactions**

Positive and respectful communication is crucial at all times. We are proud of our welcoming and inclusive school community and expect all communication to be respectful, modelling the behaviour we promote and expect from the children in our school. This encompasses all communication between stakeholders: staff, parents, students and the wider school community. All adults within the community are required to treat students, staff and other members of the school community with the utmost respect. Shouting, abusive or aggressive language or any other form of intimidation will not be tolerated.

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

It is recognised under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 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. The Board of Management implements policies and procedures to reduce this risk.

## **Parents Association**

The Parents Association (PA) operates with agreement from the Board of Management. A spirit of cooperation and supportive engagement is in place from all parties. The PA conducts its affairs in accordance with the PA Constitution. This includes communication within the PA and the wider parent body.

- Parent nominees on the Board of Management are automatically members of the PA and are invited to attend all PA meetings. However, they do not directly represent the interests of the Board at PA meetings or carry out any official Board role.
- The School Principal is the nominated liaison between the Board of Management and Parents Association. The Principal or another Staff Representative is typically invited to attend PA meetings.
- The Principal and the Chairperson of the PA communicate regularly as the need arises. The Principal meets with the Chairperson of the PA before and after PA meetings at which the Principal is not in attendance.
- On occasion, other PA officers may have cause to communicate directly with school management or office staff. Generally speaking, all communication is limited to Principal / PA Chairperson.
- PA class representatives should communicate with the Chairperson of the PA in relation to PA matters. Class reps do not have a role in communicating directly with class teachers or school management. Any matters affecting individual children should be addressed directly with the class teacher or principal by his/her parent.

## **Board of Management**

Correspondence for the Board is not to be addressed to individual Board members. Instead, all correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be addressed to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This can be done by sending a letter addressed to the Chairperson of the Board at the school address or an email to [chairpersonboardkilmac@gmail.com](mailto:chairpersonboardkilmac@gmail.com). Correspondence is checked in advance of each Board meeting and brought to the attention of the Board, where relevant.

Board members, including the Chairperson, should not be approached or contacted in any other way regarding Board matters. This includes via private phone numbers, private email addresses or in person. Any queries received by individual Board members regarding Board matters should be referred immediately to the Chairperson.

A parental complaint may eventually come to the attention of the Board. However, all complaints are strictly dealt with in accordance with the school's Parental Complaints Procedure. This policy has been developed in order to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and efficient manner. All complaints must be directed, in the first instance, to the child's teacher.

**Ratification and Review:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in June 2026 and will be reviewed as deemed necessary.

Signed by Judy O'Toole (Chairperson) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed by Mark Sheekey (Acting Principal) \_\_\_\_\_

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