



Communication Policy

1. Introduction

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents/guardians and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/guardians work together. Parents/guardians can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. Communication between school and home should be open and positive. The school acknowledges that the parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children and we endeavour to create an open and welcoming atmosphere, for them as well as their children. A variety of methods of communication are in place throughout the school.

2. Rationale

This policy was developed

- to ensure communication is open, respectful and positive
- to outline roles and responsibilities
- to assist our school community in providing the optimum learning experiences for its pupils
- to explore how parents might best support the school and its pupils
- to promote and develop home/school partnership in a range of ways
- with reference to DES Circular 24/91 Parents as Partners in Education
- with reference to the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

3. Relationship to the Ethos of the school

Inspired by its Catholic ethos, Holy Well National School, aims to educate in a professional, all-inclusive, caring, safe, happy and respectful environment. We aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/guardians and with the wider community.

Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, by keeping parents/guardians well-informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents/guardians play in supporting the school.

The school's guiding principles are :

- to educate in a professional, all-inclusive, caring, safe, happy and respectful environment
- promote and value lifelong learning
- strive to motivate and encourage all pupils to achieve their full potential, academically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, physically and morally.

(HWNS Mission Statement)

4. Aims & Responsibilities

This explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents/guardians, and what the school expects of the children.

Our school aims to ensure all communications are:

- Clear
- Concise
- Two-way
- Timely
- Respectful

School

The school will undertake to ensure that:

- Parents/guardians and children have clear lines of communications
- The curriculum is clearly communicated to parents/guardians
- Parents/guardians are informed of forthcoming events within appropriate timelines
- All communications will be treated as confidential within the school context

Parents/Guardians

The parents and guardians will undertake to:

- Read and note the key communications issued by the school
- Raise issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity with the school in the appropriate manner – Please see the school's Complaints Procedure
- Act on the communication (for example, attending special meetings)

5. Forms of Communication:

Phone

The main switchboard is in the Middle School office. Calls are transferred, where appropriate to other buildings. There is a message facility on the office phone. Queries are typically answered within 3 working days. The phone is not available for use by children, unless in exceptional circumstances. Parents/guardians will be contacted by phone in the event of a head injury – as per our First Aid policy, illness or late collection from school. Phone should not be used to relay messages to your children or for reporting absences. Absences should be updated using the Aladdin Connect app.

Mobile phones

Staff are asked not to use their personal phones during the working day, however, phones may be on desks in case of emergency or school business. If a call must be taken during the working day, cover should be sought for the class and the teacher should take the call outside the classroom. Children must hand their phones to their teachers every morning, turned off. These are stored safely and returned to the child at the end of the day.

Aladdin: Connect App and Email

Aladdin and Aladdin Connect are now the school's main communication channels and administration processing platforms for parents and guardians. Aladdin provides a single touch point where all the school's published news and information can be quickly and easily accessed through a parent's/guardian's phone or via the website, www.aladdin.ie. Many of our traditional paper-based forms have been digitised and parents must use these online versions going forward as we will no longer have the processes in place to handle paper forms. These changes will help us achieve GDPR compliance, reduce our carbon footprint, reduce costs and streamline our administration work.

We expect all parents/guardians to inform the school of their current e-mail address and mobile phone number to allow us to communicate efficiently. Aladdin and Aladdin Connect are used to send out a variety of information, to request information/permissions, either to a specific group or to all parents/guardians. Monies are paid through Aladdin's e-payments function.

Email: The office can be contacted using office@holywellns.ie.

Class teachers have dedicated work email addresses. These email addresses are mainly used for :

- internal staff communications
- organising field trips and workshops
- accessing the school's Outlook calendar for planning

Class updates will be sent using the Aladdin system. Teachers may communicate with the parents/guardians of the children in their classes with details of the work or theme that has been covered in class. This may happen on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis depending on the age and ability of the class. We invite parents to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home.

It is important that parents/guardians update the Aladdin app with any changes to contact details. Teachers may contact parents/guardians by email on the Aladdin system to arrange an appointment for a meeting specific to their child/children.

To arrange meetings with individual teachers, parents and guardians are asked to do so through the office using 021 4371875 or office@holywellns.ie . The teacher will then communicate a date and time on which they are available to meet.

The School Principal is happy to meet parents/guardians regarding enrolments, finances, secondary schools etc. However, when it comes to a concern or complaint, a parent/guardian must first contact the class teacher regarding the matter they wish to discuss.

- 1) If you have a concern/complaint Parents/guardians must first contact the school office and request a meeting with the class teacher.
- 2) If the issue has not been resolved Parents/guardians should then contact the school office and request to speak to the Principal. However, if the matter has not been discussed with the class teacher, the parent/guardian will be redirected to do so.

Parents/guardians are asked not to approach members of staff at the beginning or end of the school day or outside of school time to discuss their child, as this does not allow for confidential discussion. Parents/guardians are asked not to request an immediate meeting with a teacher in the mornings as supervision for classes cannot always be provided without notice.

Email communication will be monitored, and we ask that the teacher's time is respected. Teachers may not respond to emails during the working day.

Letter

Letters can be handed into, or posted to, the school office. As with emails, all letters will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff addressed. Please note all letters should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. Please inform the office staff if the letter contains information about your child that you would like the class teacher to receive urgently.

Absence Reporting

Parents and Guardians are asked to update the Aladdin app regarding absences. This can be done after the teacher takes the roll call typically after 10.30am. Please do not contact the office or individual class teachers to relay information regarding absences.

School website

Our school website contains a range of specific information to give parents/guardians, and the wider public, a full picture of provision at our school. All relevant policies are uploaded to the website. We update this for each school year.

Home-school communication

A calendar of school events and closures will be produced at the start of each term and communicated via the Aladdin App and on the website. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters via email when necessary.

We welcome and value all feedback from parents/guardians about our school's policies and practices.

We arrange a variety of meetings for parents/guardians. These meetings may be first thing in the morning or later in the evening regarding a variety of areas of our curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning – Safer Internet Usage, Child Protection, Healthy Eating & Nutrition, Resilience & Well-being to mention a few.

We hold a meeting for new parents/guardians each June.

Homework Journal

The homework journal is used from second to sixth classes. Parents/guardians are requested to sign the journal each night to certify that homework has been completed.

Formal Parent Teacher (PT) Meetings

We hold annual Parent Teacher Meetings. Each meeting lasts 10 minutes. Parents/guardians are asked to sign up for these meetings via Aladdin Connect and to arrive on time. These meetings are arranged for the afternoon and evening to facilitate parents/guardians. Where possible, it is more effective for parents to attend the consultation together so that a common approach to supporting the child in their learning can be agreed. If exceptional circumstance means this is not possible, we will try to arrange separate meetings.

The purpose of Parent/Teacher meetings is to:

- Let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- Establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents/guardians
- To help children realise that home and school are working together
- To share children's strengths and abilities with the parents/guardians
- To review with the parent/guardian the child's experience of schooling
- To identify ways in which parents, guardians and teachers can further support the child.

Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

If a parent/guardian wishes to consult with a teacher, no matter how urgent, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time. Issues should never be raised in the presence of children or in public areas or classrooms.

- the school encourages communication between parents, guardians and staff
- meetings with the teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:
 1. The teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking with a parent/guardian
 2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
 3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent/guardian is talking to staff at a classroom door.

Occasions occur when a parent/guardian needs to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will endeavour 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/guardians 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.

Parents/guardians are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays and from removing pupils early from school except in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.

All parents must report directly to the school office when visiting the school during class time. Please use the main door to enter and exit any school building.

When collecting a pupil the school secretary will contact the classroom and the pupil will come to the school office. Children must be signed out.

The Board of Management of Holy Well N.S. never allows the recording of teachers' voices at either formal or informal parent-teacher meetings, IEP Meetings etc.

Standardised Tests & Written Reports

Following the completion of standardised testing in May, parents/guardians may be contacted by the teacher if any concerns arise.

In the summer term, parents/guardians receive a report with details of the child's attainment and progress across the curriculum and their attitude to learning. These are released to parents/guardians using Aladdin Connect.

Support Plans

There may be additional meetings arranged with parents/guardians of children who may have additional needs.

Parents' Association

Holy Well NS is fortunate to have an active Parents' Association. The PA actively fundraise for the school, and works with the principal, staff and the board of management to build effective partnership between home and school. The Parents' Association does not have the power to make decisions unless the school has specifically asked for a decision to be made. However, the Principal and Board of Management welcome the views of parents so that they can make sure that those views feed into the decisions made by the school. The Parents' Association meets monthly. Dates of meetings are advertised well in advance.

See-saw App

We expect all parents/guardians to subscribe to this app when invited to do so by your child's teacher. The See-saw app allows class teachers and pupils to share videos, photos and messages with parents regarding their child's homework or classwork during the day. See-saw was used during Covid related school closures and we continue to use some of its features.

Board of Management

A notice detailing the names of Board members is on the school website. Members of the Board of Management are volunteers who work as a collective group and can be contacted via the office, office@holywellns.ie marked for the attention of the chairperson, or written communications left at the school office and will be forwarded to the Chairperson. Board of Management members must not be contacted individually regarding school matters. The Chairperson's report is sent to the PA after all meetings. This may also be forwarded to all parents/guardians to keep them informed.

Communication with the Community

Local community members are invited to school functions such as Celebration of Sacraments, Special Assemblies, School Masses, Christmas Carol services and school productions.

Guest speakers from local groups, community organisations and charities come into the school to speak to the children.

Complaints Procedure

The school's Complaints Procedure sets out clear guidelines for parents/guardians to follow. This is available on the school's website or by request from the office.

6. Behaviour of all Stakeholders 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 i.e. the staff, parents, guardians and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, adults in the school community also have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children. All stakeholders must be responsible for their behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí may be called.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's/guardian's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy, so it is asked that parents/guardians respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the duration of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed upon beforehand, and these should be respected.

7. 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 Boards of Management 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, bullying 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. Link to circular: [4808cc9dd4294c76828921bbea02a75b.doc \(live.com\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications-and-statements/publication-4808cc9dd4294c76828921bbea02a75b.doc)

8. Communications unrelated to official school business e.g. Whatsapp, Messenger

Parent/guardian 'WhatsApp' groups have become increasingly popular in recent years. Similarly, many parents/guardians are on social media sites and communicate with each other regarding their children. Groups of this nature are not for official school business and are usually used by parents to arrange parties and playdates etc. It must be noted that all parents have a responsibility to act in a

respectful manner. We remind parents/guardians that if they have a complaint/issue they should follow the Complaints Policy. We also remind parents/guardians that information and photos about children should not be shared on any social media.

We recommend not using WhatsApp or other Social Media groups to

- support or canvass for a political cause,
- post comments about teachers and members of staff, whether positive or negative,
- post comments about any parents or pupils in the school

A number of things should be kept in mind when posting on Whatsapp :

- Remember that your post will be seen by all group members and that children in the school may inadvertently view these also. It is worth bearing in mind that these days people are often on five or six WhatsApp groups between class groups, children activities, family groups etc. This means that people may be receiving large amounts of notifications every day.
- Remember that some of the members of the individual class groups may also be teachers/snas 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 may not be worth sending 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.
- 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 always adhering to the above guidelines.

9. Communication within our school

So that we all know what is going on, there is a timetable of monthly activities in the staffrooms and an online staff calendar.

All our procedures are detailed in the Plean Scoile (School Plan). Written communications with members of staff are hand delivered or forwarded by email. Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or persons external to the school, without due authority.

10. Communication with other external Educational Organisations

The school regularly communicates with staff and children of other primary schools. Such communication may be through personal contact with specific staff or through more formal contact such as cluster groups and by means of sports fixtures and other inter-school events.

The Principal and Deputy Principal are members of the IPPN (Irish Primary Principal's Network) and many teachers are members of the INTO Union.

Communication with the local secondary schools is predominantly for 6th class children. The Education Passports formulated by the NCCA are passed on to relevant Secondary schools before the children move.

11. Communication with Outside Agencies

Close contacts are maintained with support agencies including National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPs), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), TUSLA, the Library Service, the EWO, the Schools Dental service and the Public Health Doctors/Nurses. The school always supports contact with specialists such as Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists

12. Confidentiality

We only store information that is necessary about the pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to are available in our data protection policy on our website. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents/Guardians have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

13. Success Criteria

- Communication is clear and effective for all
- Positive experiences for all school stakeholders
- Teacher/Parent/Guardian satisfaction

14. Review & Evaluation

This policy will be regularly monitored and will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 28th September 2023

Signed: *Diarmuid Cogan* Chairperson

Aidan Crowley Principal

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.