

Communications 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 Davidstown PS in the school year 2022-2023. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

Davidstown PS 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*¹

Davidstown PS 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 Educators² of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of Davidstown Primary School
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents 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 Parents Association

¹ <http://www.npc.ie/attachments/cbdcfd37-98b5-4698-86aa-3f30c38fceed.pdf>

² Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland

- 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.
- Adults must only meet with staff members in a calm and solution focused manner.
- Agitated behaviour, such as talking over staff members, crying and being physically animated, waving arms etc will not be tolerated.
- Shouting, raising a voice or other aggressive tones are not acceptable.
- If any adult displays any behaviour as described above, 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. Staff should not be asked to speak or comment about any child except your own.
- Do not give messages to other staff members such as SNAs or other class teachers, to be passed along. This is not feasible. Contact your class teacher directly, by a note in folder, by journal or through the office: info@davidstownps.ie or 053 9234745.
- Absent notes can be written in their journal (3rd-6th class) or for Juniors -6th absent notes can be submitted through: <http://davidstownps.ie/return-to-school-declaration-form/> or through the Aladdin Connect app.

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. This may include serious illness, hospitalisation of family, accidents, bereavement, separation. 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 unauthorized/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up 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.

Annual Consultation throughout the year including:

- Welcome day for new Junior Infants and their parents every August.
- Open Evening in November.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November (a short, written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher).
- Class teachers / SET meet with parents whose children have additional educational needs.

Written communication including:

- Homework diary (3rd – 6th 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 Aladdin system.
- Emails sent from parents to class teachers, via the office (info@davidstownps.ie).
- 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.
- 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 platform for sharing school news and activities.

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 a range of school policies. The parent body is notified that policies are under review by email and that the policies are in draft form. They are invited to provide feedback to the through a survey. 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 / Intercultural Week / World Book Day / Aistear / Guided Reading; sharing knowledge or reading groups etc.

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, via email or phone, to arrange a suitable time.

Classes begin at 9.20 and finish at 2:00pm (infants) and 3.00pm (1st-6th) 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.
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

However, teachers and other members of staff may be available to listen for a moment, 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 a very rare occasion, 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

Davidstown PS has a website <http://www.DAVIDSTOWNPS.ie/> and Facebook. 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 online or on social media by members of the public including parents without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. Davidstown PS will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

Communication between staff

Staff meetings take place once a month.

Davidstown PS 18010C

Staff also have scheduled hours during each month which are allocated to planning, SEN planning and an area of focus.

Staff operate a whatsapp group which is used for sharing general school updates, social news and events.

Communication is considered to be a strength among the staff and the informal communication before, during and after school is an integral part of the collegial and professional school atmosphere.

Communication between School/Board/PAC

Nominees of the Board of Management and the Parents Association Committee are to meet annually.

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

There is a teacher nominee on the Parents Association Committee who may attend (part of) the PAC meetings. This nominee also brings items back to the staff/Principal for discussion.

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

The Principal and the Chairperson of the PAC meet termly.

Email communication between School and PAC is generally limited to:

- Principal to Chairperson
- Treasurer to Principal
- With some necessary contact made between one member of the PAC and the school secretary (including photos for website etc).
- On occasion, by agreement, there may be links with the Deputy Principal if a certain area falls under their remit.

Communication with outside agencies

Davidstown PS has benefited from links with state agencies. These include:

NEPS / NCSE / SESS / SENO / HSE / Tusla / EWO / Education Centre / NEWB / Heritage in Schools / Creative Schools / Music Generation /NCCA / Oide

Davidstown PS also aims to make links with the community through:

Links with local schools - primary and secondary (Principal meetings, pupil events)

Links with the community Gardaí

Links with local events

Rent of school hall

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@davidstownps.ie). The class teacher does will respond through the aladdin system.

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. This is with the exception of holiday periods during which email is not checked.

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 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 their personal lives after school hours. 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 part time and our secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times.

Parents should be respectful of teachers' time. Do not send messages or emails outside of school hours. If needed please use the schedule tool for emails to arrive during this time.

Absences from School

School absences can be written into your child's journal or submitted to <http://davidstownps.ie/return-to-school-declaration-form/> or through the Aladdin Connect app.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that reasons for absences are submitted promptly.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent but the school hopes that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools can be found on the school website: <http://davidstownps.ie/parents/policies/>

Parent/Teacher Meetings

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To let parents know 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
- 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 parents 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 secretary.

Davidstown PS uses prepared guidelines to give structure to the meetings. These can vary from teacher to teacher but will give an overview of progress through the curriculum. Parent/ Teacher meetings may take place in classrooms, offices, support rooms, or phone.. Each meeting is allocated a time slot which parents can book through aladdin connect. If a longer meeting is required these should be scheduled for another day.

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 the allocated time. Times of meetings are agreed beforehand and should be adhered to so that all parents are seen on time as far as is possible.

Planning meetings for Individual Education Plans

For children with designated special educational needs, formal scheduled parent/staff meetings relating to the child's IPLP will take place ideally in September/October. 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. **In the case of separated/ divorced parents, Davidstown PS will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.**

School Reports

Davidstown PS 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). The reports are issued by envelope in the week prior to school closing for the summer break to allow parents time to ask for clarification with the school teacher on anything contained in their child's report. 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

Reports for children in their final year of primary school (sixth class) will be in the form of an **Education Passport**. These support the transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary and follow a standard template.

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

On-line Communication Policy

Teachers may organise live on-line communication during school closure. Teachers do not have to organise live on-line communication and do not have to explain a decision not to do so to parents. On-line meetings will involve groups of pupils / whole classes. One to one meetings may be arranged for some pupils, however this will only occur with prior consent of the parent.

Parental permission will be sought by the school in advance of on-line meetings. Sharing the link for the meeting with your child is understood as giving permission. For senior pupils parental permission will be sought by the school in advance of setting up children's Google Classroom accounts, links for on-line meetings will be shared directly on this platform.

Our school's Code of Behaviour and our Anti-Bullying Policy will be in force together with our school's Internet Acceptable Use Policy. School and Class Rules apply in any on-line classroom.

If deemed necessary by the teacher, a parent / guardian must be in the room with the pupil for the duration of the meeting. The pupil may wear earphones.

The child must have their camera turned on at all times.

Invitations to meetings will be sent to parental email addresses or shared on Google Classroom / See-Saw / Class Dojo. Only the teacher may share this link. The meeting may not be recorded or photographed in any way.

Live on-line communication is to facilitate contact with the pupils only. Parents can e-mail teachers with any queries they have.

The teacher / administrator will be in charge of each meeting. He/she will remove pupils immediately in case of misbehaviour and if necessary shut down the meeting.

Guidelines & Rules for using Google Classroom

General information about Google Classroom

- Google Classroom is a hub where teachers can interact with their students by creating and distributing daily activities
- Google Classroom can be accessed on a laptop/home computer and/or the Google Classroom App available on android and iOS devices through a smartphone or tablet app store.
- Students will only be able to view their own work and not the work of other students
- Students can message privately their classroom teachers
- Teachers can view student work

Positive use of their Google Account

- Students will sign in each morning into their Google account and navigate to Google Classroom to interact with daily activities
- There is no obligation to complete all materials; they are a guide to maintain a positive home learning experience and routine for your child
- Students can complete as many activities as they can
- Students can communicate with their teacher through Google Classroom during school hours only.
- Students can add pictures of work and videos to their classroom assignments
- Students can engage in video conferences with their teacher through Google Classroom
- Students will engage in offline and online learning experiences through Google Classroom
- Students do not need to be online for the whole duration of the school day
- Teachers will post assignments each morning

A few other things to note

- Children are not permitted to access Google Classroom using other Google accounts. They must use the usernames and passwords that have been provided for them by the school.
- **Google Classroom is a communication tool for teachers and pupils only. If parents wish to communicate with teachers, they must continue to do so through emailing the office.**
- Children can private message their teacher if they have a query that cannot be answered at home. We ask that messages are sent during school hours only.

A note from your teacher

1. ***Work will be scheduled to appear each morning at 9:00am under “Classwork”.***
2. ***We ask pupils to fill in the “Daily Check-In” at the top of the page before they commence their work every morning. These will be recorded.***
3. ***The children then look at the “Daily Checklist” which lists the work to be done that day.***
4. ***The “Daily Checklist” is similar to a timetable. Suggested times and timeframes will be included to carry out each subject. If you wish, feel free to change the order of work around to suit yourself. Also, please note that the timeframes to complete the work are an estimated guideline. The children work at different paces so you may need to allow for this.***
5. ***Finally, please do what you can and always give priority to English and Maths. There is no expectation to complete everything.***

Misuse of Google Account

In the case of misuse of their Google account, the teacher has the right to suspend the user's account temporarily as she/he deems appropriate. The use of the Google account is for school purposes only.