



Communications within the School Policy

Introductory Statement:

This Communications Policy has been formulated by a committee comprising of staff members and parents with the collaboration of the school staff, the BoM and the PTA. The Communications Policy has appendices (i) the Complaints Procedure, (ii) the Procedure on Communication with Separated Parents, (iii) Policy on the Use of Emails within the School Community.

Rationale:

It is generally accepted that good communication between all of those involved in the school i.e. teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs), children, parent/guardians, and ancillary staff is a vital part of our school. The policy reflects the spirit of the school, and is based on trust, respect, clarity and openness. This spirit can best be encouraged where there is a high level of co-operation between staff, pupils and parents.

Aims

METNS aims to promote and support good communication structures in the following areas:

1. Staff Communication
2. Communication with Parents/Guardians
3. Within the wider school community (Board of Management & Parent Teacher Association) and staff, parents/guardians

All members of the school community are expected to familiarise themselves with the Communication Policy. It is considered that everyone has a responsibility to make him/herself aware of where and how to seek information and updates as the need arises and should seek to keep themselves informed.

1. Staff Communications

- In addition to the formal communication that takes place during staff meetings, the Principal undertakes to make herself available to any member of staff who wishes to discuss school matters with her.
- The whiteboard in the staffroom will be used for general updates and information.
- Emails and Aladdin (school management system) are used for circulating minutes of staff meetings and various correspondence. Cubby holes will be used to circulate hard copies where necessary.
- Principal may send staff reminders or notification of emergencies, such as school closure, through text.

2. Communication with Parents/Guardians

Joining the School Community: Parents of children who are new to the school, receive a copy of our booklet for new parents /guardians which include an outline of the history of the school, information on various structures within the school and points about the day to day school life. They also receive a list of school policies and procedures , which are also available on the website, and a Calendar of the year.

School Calendar

The Calendar outlines the dates of the three terms, mid-term breaks etc. It is issued to all parents/guardians in September and is available on the school website (www.metns.ie).

Child Progress:

All parent/teacher contact is considered to be extremely valuable in a child's education. Parents/guardians should ensure that they meet with their child's teacher at least once a year to discuss their child's progress, at a designated time.

- Individual parent/teacher meetings are held in between November and February each year.
- Reports are issued on children's progress in all classes in June.
- Staff may use homework notebooks to communicate with parents/guardians.
- Parents are always encouraged to contact the teacher should they have any concerns.
- In Junior and Senior Infants, teachers and SNA's of children with Special Needs can use a diary to communicate with parents. Teachers are responsible for the daily input into this diary.

Communication with Separated Parents

The Staff of Monkstown Educate Together National School encourage parents experiencing separation to speak confidentially with the Principal and/or teachers. It is our aim to handle such matters with sensitivity and compassion; ultimately our primary concern is for the well-being and overall development of the child. The school will also operate on the assumption, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that both parents are equally committed to the child's welfare and education and therefore equally entitled to be informed directly about significant issues relating to the child.

In order to ensure that the school can support a child whose parents are separated, the following procedures which involve active co-operation between the parents affected and the school are required:

- Parents of a pupil are asked to inform the school if they are separated. In particular the school needs to know with which parent the child normally resides.
- If a child is experiencing difficulties related to the fact that his/her parents are separated, the school should be informed, so that it can endeavour to assist in helping the child to deal with them.
- In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, the school will treat both parents as equal partners in terms of parenting responsibilities and rights.

- The school cannot be asked to withhold a child from either parent in the absence of a custody arrangement to that effect. The same applies to significant information relating to the child.
- When a child spends time in two homes, it is requested that the school be provided with both sets of contact/emergency details.
- If changes are made to normal collection arrangements for children, the school should be informed in writing.
- If a separation /custody order is in place which limits contact by either parent with the school, the school should be informed in writing to this effect. This can be done by either a letter from a solicitor or by providing the school principal with a copy of the relevant part of the order. **The school commits to ensuring that such information will be held in the strictest confidence and will be used on a "need to know" basis only.**
- The school will assume, unless otherwise instructed, that consent for school trips, routine medical examinations or vaccinations can be given by the parent with whom the child principally resides.
- It is school policy to offer separate parent/teacher meetings to both parents, if so desired.
- Standard school communications which are normally transmitted via school bags will be expected to be communicated by the parent with whom the child principally resides to the other parent,
- Communication in regard to academic reports, significant disciplinary issues and health and safety issues will be communicated by the school to both parents separately, unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. Such reasons must be given in writing to the school (see point iv above)
- The Board and staff of Monkstown Educate Together National School will endeavour at all times to deal sensitively and caringly with children experiencing parental separation and with both parents.

Communication with Teacher

- Class information meetings are usually held in September to provide an opportunity for parents/guardians to meet the class teacher and receive an overview of the plan for the year, structures etc.
- Brief and informal communications between teachers and parents/guardians may take place should the need arise at drop-off/pick up time. These appointments cannot impinge on the 8.30-2.10 contact time with the children.
- Teachers are available to speak to parents/guardians by appointment. These appointments are necessary in order that the teacher may have the opportunity to make alternative arrangements for his/her class, and also may have time to gather information about the child. Appointments can be made through the school secretary, in person at drop off/pick up time or, as appropriate, by using the homework journal.
- Appointments also ensure privacy and confidentiality, as informal contact conducted at the classroom door, can be within hearing of other parents and children, and can leave a classroom full of unattended children.
- Teachers may communicate with parents/guardians by phone if the need arises.

- Teachers can communicate with parents/guardians by email, if they so choose. (see appendix iii)
- Class visits will be facilitated 2/3 times a year

General Communication

- Newsletters with information on events and school activities are circulated regularly and are also available on the school website. Members of the school community are welcome to submit articles for the newsletter by email to the office, office@metns.ie
- The Principal, teachers and office staff will communicate general school information through email, and/or, notes in bags, where necessary. This communication will generally go out on a Thursday.
- Textaparent is used for reminders and emergency updates.
- Individual teachers may send letters pertinent to their class re class trips or events. Parents/guardians should check school bags regularly for such communications.
- Notice boards for parents/guardians are at the entrance door.
- Parents may phone/email the school for general enquires on 01 2303696/ office @metns.ie.
- An appointment can be made with the principal through the office, for queries pertaining to the general school. If parents want to discuss a complaint, they must follow the complaints procedure (appendix iii)

Absences

- All absences should be explained by a written note or entry in the homework journal on the first day back at school. It is suggested that if the absence is over a day or two, the school should be contacted by telephone or email.

Use of emails, in METNS

- Emails may be used by teachers to communicate with individual parents or class groups of parents if they so choose.
- Emails are used to communicate between the principal and staff and between staff members.
- Emails will be used to communicate a large percentage of school/PTA organisational issues and events. This reflects our green school ethos of cutting down on the unnecessary use of paper.
- Emails may be used to communicate between parents/guardians and teachers if the teacher has decided that it is appropriate. These emails may not specifically mention any one child, or any individual parent/teacher issue. They should be used when general classroom management and organisational issues are to be decided.
- No complaint shall be received by email.
- No parent may 'cc' any other person, when communicating with a teacher. The communication should remain strictly one-to-one.
- Class-group emails may not be used for personal communications.
- No child shall have access to this teacher/parent/guardian forum.
- Emails should be written in the tone of respect, that we expect of all communication within the METNS community.

- Class/group emails set up by the PTA may not be used for advertising, complaints or for school matters concerning any child, parent or staff member. They shall only be used for general organisational and social purposes..
- No co-ordinated campaign is acceptable.
- Parents must expect a reasonable period for response, as normal working hours are to be respected.

3. Wider School Community

Board of Management (BoM):

- The staff representative on the Board of Management and the principal liaise between staff and the BoM.
- The BoM prepares a summary report of pertinent information which is published in the school newsletter to staff and parents/guardians.
- Where appropriate, parents/guardians can communicate with the BoM by letter, to the chair, and this correspondence will generally be considered at the next scheduled BoM meeting. It should be noted that the Complaints Procedure should be followed if a complaint is being made, where the BoM is only involved when resolution with the teacher and the principal have been exhausted.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA):

- The staff representatives on the PTA and the principal liaise between staff and PTA.
- The PTA communicates with parents/guardians through the school newsletter, the website, text messages and the notice board.
- The PTA has representatives in each class who are responsible for communicating with their class about PTA events and seeking volunteers.
- A class contact list may be set up by the PTA representatives for each class; this list may not be used for advertising, complaints or for school matters concerning any child, parent/guardian or staff member. They shall only be used for general organizational and social purposes.

Policies & Procedures

Policies & Procedures are published on the school website following their approval. It is reported in the BoM Summary Report when a policy is reviewed.