



Powerstown Educate Together National School

Parent Teacher Partnership & Communication

This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to promote positive relations between school and home.

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Introductory statement

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

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/parent teacher association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them
- Download the school app to their phone

Staff are encouraged to:

- Establish good communication with parents/guardians of pupils in their class
- Keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress and behaviour both positive and negative
- Listen to what parents/guardians have to say and encourage them to bring any concerns to you at an early stage to avoid situations escalating
- Be aware of the role of parents/guardians as prime educators and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help her reach her potential
- Value and respect the input of parents as they know their child best.
- Communicate with parents via the app and their work email (during working hours)

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents/Guardians

- School app
- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants – January and mid-June
- Group parent/teacher meeting in September

- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November and May.
- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year via school app
- Meetings with parents/guardians whose children have special needs; including involvement in support plan development, review and targets.
- Meeting with parents/guardians and relevant staff to draft Behaviour Plans as required.
- Consultation throughout the year
- Written communication
- Through the Parent Teacher Association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of all school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents in written format via the school newsletter
- Weekly newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- School website, Facebook and Twitter pages will keep parents up to date with school events.
- Class blogs will keep parents updated about the curriculum activities and topics that the children are covering in class.
- Weekly awards are given to pupils during assembly and are sent home to parents.
- Homework diary 1st – 6th class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary each night to certify that homework has been completed
- Parents are invited to Learn Together celebrations, Open days/evenings, class events to participate in weeks such as Maths Week/Green Week, school concerts etc
- Involvement of parents in the 'Learn Together' programme; Parents who have knowledge of, experience in or interest in certain topics will be invited to participate in a workshop for pupils.
- Participating in Shared Reading/Maths for Fun/Science for fun with one being in each Term.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by the teachers.

Parent/teacher meetings

The aim of Parent/Teacher meetings is:

- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school

- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- To establish an on-going relationship and communication with parents
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together

Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings

1. Communication between parents and teachers is to be encouraged
2. Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. However, parents are welcome to speak to the Principal or teacher(s) at an appointed time
3. Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress is discouraged on a number of grounds
 - a. A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
 - b. It is difficult to be discrete when so many children are standing close by
 - c. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a teacher urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will 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 etc, this can be done through the office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays.

Formal Meetings

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in November and May. 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.

- All communication sent from the school will be sent via email, as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents

- 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.

FORMAL MEETINGS - Support Plan

- Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Support Plans** will take place in September/October. Please refer to Continuum of Support Policy.
- 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.

Complaints Procedure

The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools;

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher he/she should approach the Principal teacher with a view to resolving it
3. If the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorization of the Board:
 - a. supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and

- b. arrange a meeting with the teacher, and where applicable, the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
 - a. The teacher should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
 - b. He/she should be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
 - c. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

Stage 5

1. Following the Board's investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure Information Sheet for Teachers

INTO/Management Complaints Procedure

The INTO and CPSMA reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the board of management, except where those complaints are deemed by the board to be:

- on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills;
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher s/he should approach the principal with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the board of management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the board of management.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties with five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:
 - supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.
3. If the board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
 - the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
 - the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
 - the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
 - the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and
 - the meeting of the board of management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.
3. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.

4. CPSMA or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement 'days' means school days.

Note: The vast majority of complaints are resolved locally and informally. However, in certain circumstances, for example, where a complaint is considered to be serious in nature, or where the teacher is required to submit a written response to his/her board of management, the teacher should contact his/her INTO District Representative or INTO Head Office for advice and assistance.

In advising a teacher, the INTO will be anxious to ensure that there is due process and fair procedures applied, which generally include:

- that the teacher is fully apprised of all matters being considered by the board of management, including being provided with copies of all relevant documentation;
- the right to respond and adequate time to prepare a response;
- entitlement to be represented by the INTO, if necessary.

Where a teacher contacts the INTO in relation to a complaint(s) made against him/her, the officials involved will generally meet with the teacher and require him/her to provide detailed written information and documentation on the matter. The officials will assess the case and decide if additional specific legal advice or a legal consultation is required. Specific legal advice is obtained for members in accordance with the Rules of the INTO and the conditions prescribed by the CEC.

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