

Bilboa National School

Home / School Communication and Complaints Procedure Policy

Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff, parents and Board of Management of Bilboa N.S in the 2015 / 2016 school year. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in Bilboa N.S. At Bilboa N.S. we strive to achieve mutual support between staff and parents so that the education of our pupils can be efficient and effective. We operate an open door policy and parents are encouraged to develop close links with the school, to collaborate with the Principal and teaching staff and to share the responsibility for the education of their children.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with parents:

- Formal parent/teacher meetings are held annually where class teachers meet parents on a one-to-one basis. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child's progress they may do so by prior appointment.
- All teachers are available to meet parents by prior appointment.
- Parents of children with special needs meet teaching staff by appointment throughout the year to monitor progress.
- The school website informs parents about school matters and newsletters and written communication keep parents informed of school activities and upcoming events.
- The School Calendar keeps parents up to date with school events, holidays and school closures.
- The Homework Diary used from First to Sixth Class is used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers.
- School Reports are issued annually to parents.
- A text service is used to provide reminders and emergency updates to parents.
- Parents are invited to school services, school concerts, sports days, open days etc.

Parent/Teacher meetings:

The aims of Parent/Teacher meetings are:

- to let parents know how their children are doing in school
- to inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
- to establish an ongoing 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:

Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. Informal communication takes place early in morning between teachers and parents as children are assembling in school. Informal communication also takes place between teachers and parents as children go home in the evenings. This informal chat is very important.

However, meetings with class teachers at classroom doors to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:

1. A teacher cannot adequately supervise her class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
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 is talking to the teacher at a classroom door. Occasions occur where a parent needs 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 their teaching/learning time. Parents are encouraged to use the secretary to pass on informal messages to the class teachers.

Family events/situations which impact on your child:

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.

Approaching other people's children:

As the Board of Management is responsible for the Health & Safety of all staff and students, parents are requested not to approach or reprimand another person's child on the school premises.

Dropping off equipment during school day:

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear etc. this can be done through the school office as it is important to keep class interruptions down to a minimum.

Procedure for dealing with Complaints:

The Board of Management of Bilboa N.S. has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teachers' union and management bodies, which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998. Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

Complaints Procedures for Primary Schools:

Introduction

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:

- (i) on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
- (ii) frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- (iii) 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

1.1 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.

1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.

1.3 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. Should a meeting with the Chairperson be required it will take place in the school premises.

Stage 2

2.1 If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

2.2 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 within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

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: (a) supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and (b) 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

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 3.1(b).

4.2 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.

4.3 If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:

(a) the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;

(b) the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;

(c) the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint;

(d) 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;

(e) 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 (f) 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 3.1(b).

Stage 5

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.

5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years. In this agreement 'days' means schools days.

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 e.g. the staff, parents 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. It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school.

- 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 must 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 child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.
- Teachers are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school. However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment must be made at a time which is convenient for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved. Classes begin at 9:20 am and finish at 3:00pm and this time should not be interrupted.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M on 15/03/16 2016. It will be reviewed as and when the need arises but no later than during the 2018/ 2019 school year.

Implementation:

The policy will be implemented with immediate effect.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairman: _____ Date: _____

Principal: _____ Date: _____