

Scoil Mhuire

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Communications Policy

1 Introduction

In Scoil Mhuire, we strive to achieve openness, cooperation and mutual respect and support between all the stakeholders in our school – pupils, school management, teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, Parents/Guardians, Parents Association, Board of Management and the wider school community. The achievement of this goal provides a strong foundation for our pupils to achieve the best outcomes possible in their social, emotional, relational and academic development. Effective communication is essential to maintaining a positive learning and working environment in which all stakeholders feel included, consulted and informed.

Scoil Mhuire aims to promote and support sound communication structures in the following areas:

1. Communication with Parents/Guardians
2. Staff Communication
3. Communication with the wider school community.

This policy also outlines Scoil Mhuire's expectations regarding appropriate behaviour when stakeholders are communicating with one another.

Scoil Mhuire uses a variety of channels of communication in an effort to ensure that relevant people receive the necessary information. It is hoped that all members of the school community will familiarise themselves with the Communications Policy. Everyone has a responsibility to make themselves aware of where and how to seek information and updates, and to keep themselves informed.

This Communications Policy has been devised by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire. The purpose of the policy is to provide information and guidelines to pupils, Parents/Guardians, staff and the wider school community that will ensure effective communication in the best interests of the pupils' education, care and wellbeing while in school.

- **Communication with Parents/Guardians**

Scoil Mhuire recognises the centrality of the family and home to the social and academic development of the child and the nurturing of good moral values. The child's education is most effective when the school and the family are mutually respectful and supportive of each other. Scoil Mhuire operates an open-door policy and Parents/Guardians are encouraged to develop close links with the school, to collaborate with the Principal and staff and to share the responsibility for the education of their child. In all matters pertaining to the education and wellbeing of our pupils, only

the Parents/Legal Guardians named on the Admission Form will be consulted by the Principal and teachers.

- **Meetings for Parents/Guardians of Incoming Junior Infants**

Meetings for Parents/Guardians of incoming Junior Infants are held in May each year. The purpose of these meetings is to help support the induction of our youngest pupils, to inform Parents/Guardians about Scoil Mhuire and how they can support their child's learning, and to answer any questions they may have.

- **School Calendar**

The school calendar outlines the dates of the three terms, Christmas, Easter and Summer closures, mid-term breaks etc. It is issued to all Parents/Guardians in June and is available, including any updates regarding additional closures or important events, on the school website <https://primarieschoolshankill.ie/>

- **Annual Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings are held annually in November over the course of two afternoons. The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is to:

- Let Parents/Guardians know how their child is progressing at school.
- Inform teachers on how children are coping outside school.
- Establish an ongoing relationship and communication with Parents/Guardians.
- Help teachers and Parents/Guardians to get to know the child better as an individual.
- Help the child realise that home and school are working together for their benefit.

Parents/Guardians can select their preferred Parent/Teacher Meeting time using the school's Aladdin Connect App. Where it is not possible for a Parent/Guardian to attend on either of the designated afternoons, a separate Parent/Teacher Meeting appointment can be made at a time which is convenient for both parties. If custody of a child is shared, requests can be made by both Parents/Guardians to meet their child's teacher individually.

Parents/Guardians are reminded that annual Parent/Teacher Meetings are scheduled at timed intervals and of the need to be respectful of other Parents/Guardians who are waiting to meet with their child's class teacher. If a longer meeting duration is required by either the Parent/Guardian and/or the class teacher/special education teacher, a meeting separate to the scheduled Parent/Teacher may be convened.

- **IEP Meetings**

Meetings with Parents/Guardians of children on School Support Plus take place at least one per year. The purpose of the IEP Meeting is to involve all the stakeholders who support the child on a day-to-

day basis to review his/her progress and to revise and update his/her learning targets and actions for the next instructional period. The IEP meeting is attended by the pupil's Parents/Guardians, class teacher and special education teacher.

- **Parent – Teacher Meetings for ASD Class**

The teacher is available to speak with Parents/Guardians throughout the school year to discuss their child's progress or other pertinent matters. An appointment is necessary in order that the teacher may have the opportunity to make alternative arrangements for his/her class if required and also have the time to gather information about the child. Appointments can be made through the school secretary's office or via the Dojo. There will be up to three formal Parent-Teacher meetings.

- **Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Occasions may occur where a Parent/Guardian needs to speak with a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings may need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the pupils in the class do not lose out on any learning time. In such instances, Parents/Guardians are requested not to go directly to their child's classroom but to call to the secretary's office where arrangements for an urgent, non-notice meeting can be made.

- **Home School Communication Apps**

Scoil Mhuire uses the Aladdin Schools software service (www.aladdin.ie) for administrative purposes. Aladdin Schools Connect gives Parents/Guardians access to text messages from the school, as well as details of their child's attendance, test results, report cards etc. via the Aladdin Connect App. Aladdin Schools uses state-of-the-art security to safeguard information entered by the school and data is stored and processed in strict compliance with Irish and European data protection laws.

The ClassDojo App is used as a communication tool between home and school and vice versa in all class settings. The app allows for the sharing of important day-to-day information between Parents/Guardians and teachers, including the communication of homework, the sharing of class work in both photographs and videos, the celebration of school activities etc.

Alternative Apps may be adopted by Scoil Mhuire to aid effective home school communication as they become available.

- **Annual School Reports**

Written School Reports are made available to Parents/Guardians in mid-June via the school's Aladdin Connect App. A Parent/Guardian may request a hard copy of their child's School Report through the school secretary's office.

Where a pupil transfers to another school from Scoil Mhuire, either primary or post-primary, a copy of their School Report is provided to their receiving school in line with current legislation.

- **Pupil Absences**

Parents/Guardians are required to formally notify the school of the reason for their child's absence, late arrival or early departure on each occasion that it occurs. This can most easily be done via the school's Aladdin Connect App. It can also be done by written note or email to the school – secretary@scoilmhuireshankill.ie

- **HSCL Communications**

Scoil Mhuire's Home School Community Liaison Coordinator will communicate regularly with Parents/Guardians on a wide range of school matters, including opportunities for them to become actively involved in their child's learning at school or to avail of learning opportunities that are important to them. The HSCL Coordinator's role is also to assist Parents/Guardians on a one-to-one basis as they support their child to succeed at school. Sensitive family matters are treated respectfully and confidentially.

- **General Communications**

Scoil Mhuire endeavours to keep Parents/Guardians up to date regarding ongoing and upcoming school activities and events. Such means of communication include:

- Regular whole-school and individual class messages via ClassDojo.
- Issuing text messages via Aladdin Connect for important reminders and emergency updates.
- School website updates and blogs, school Instagram Page.
- Assemblies hosted by individual classes.
- Individual teachers may send letters pertinent to their class, e.g. regarding class trips or events. Parents/Guardians are asked to check school bags regularly for such communications.
- Phone calls to individual Parents/Guardians.

- **Complaints Procedure for Parents/Guardians**

If a Parent/Guardian wishes to make a complaint about a matter that is of concern to them, they should speak with their child's class teacher in the first instance. The full process for dealing with complaints is outlined in Scoil Mhuire's Parental Complaints Procedure which is available on the school website.

- **Staff Communication**

Scoil Mhuire has a large team of teaching, SNA and ancillary staff. High quality staff communication is essential to ensure that all staff are aware of the many ongoing developments in the school and their direct involvement in important decision-making processes. Effective staff communication also serves to maintain a good working, social and personal environment as well as benefitting the quality of provision for pupils and the efficient running of the school.

- **Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals**

To ensure the smooth operation of the school, the Principal and Deputy Principal continually exchange information. In addition to ongoing informal contact, time is set aside on a weekly basis for discussion between the Principal and Deputy Principal on major issues and for planning.

Meetings of the aforementioned team and Assistant Principals 2 occur on a termly basis.

- **School Management & Staff Members**

The Principal operates an open-door policy in relation to staff. The Principal is available to meet staff members both formally and informally. In some instances, an appointment with the Principal may be helpful to ensure that adequate uninterrupted time is available for both parties.

Regular staff meetings are held, including general staff meetings and special interest group meetings, to keep staff informed of school developments, to allow for appropriate consultation and to facilitate staff input into decision-making processes. Special interest group teams address a range of important areas including literacy, numeracy, digital learning, wellbeing, and planning and assessment. New groups are established in response to identified school needs.

Day-to-day information is communicated to staff via regular staff bulletins, staff WhatsApp group and by means of email. Every effort will be made to restrict email communication to staff to between 8am and 4pm. The text message service will be used in case of emergencies if contact is needed outside of these hours. Exceptions may be made in exceptional circumstances, such as illness, where the essential running of the school is in question.

Staff members who are going to be absent shall contact the Principal between 7am and 8am via mobile call or text to allow time for substitution arrangements to be put in place.

School trips, class outings and the engagement of external visitors to talk to/work with class and/or year groups shall be cleared with the Principal in advance. In the case of the latter, the provisions of Scoil Mhuire's Child Safeguarding Statement and legal requirements regarding Garda Vetting shall be complied with fully.

- **Staff Members to Staff Members**

Regular class grade meetings are convened to allow for the exchange of ideas, the formulation of short-term planning and the monitoring of school-based developments.

The tradition of support and encouragement for new staff members, including through staff member involvement in the national teacher induction programme *Droichead*, and the informal, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere of the staffroom are acknowledged and commended.

Under the direction of the SEN Coordinator, teams of staff meet regularly and work collaboratively on aspects of best practice, including continuing professional development, planning and assessment, policy formulation, and problem solving to best meet the additional needs of individual pupils. These teams include SEN teachers, SNAs and the Special Class teacher.

Day-to-day information is communicated between staff by means of email. Every effort should be made to restrict email communication to between 8am and 4pm. All communication should be carried out in a respectful and courteous manner and to minimise the volume of emails received daily, emails should be sent, where possible, to the relevant staff members only.

- **Staff Members & Pupils**

All communications between teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff and pupils shall be carried out in a courteous and respectful manner. Teachers shall endeavour to ensure that all instructions to pupils are clear and unambiguous.

The Student Council, serves as an important two-way channel of communication. Scoil Mhuire pupils are given a voice and their suggestions, ideas and concerns can be communicated at meetings and in turn to the Principal and senior in-school management team.

All communication between teachers and pupils shall occur during school time or during designated out-of-school events and scheduled extra-curricular activities. There shall be no communication between staff and pupils via personal mobile phones or any personal social media applications.

- **Board of Management**

The Board of Management consists of the Chairperson and a further nominee of the Patron, the Principal and a teacher nominee, two parent nominees and two representatives of the community. The Board's main function is to manage the school on behalf of the Patron and for the benefit of the pupils, and to provide an appropriate education for each pupil in the school. The Principal keeps the Board fully informed on all relevant issues. The Principal carries out the Board's instructions and assumes responsibility for the implementation of the Board's decisions.

The Board of Management meets on a regular basis throughout the school year. Decisions made by the Board that are pertinent to Parents/Guardians and pupils are communicated to families and staff. The Board issues an agreed report to the staff and school community following each ordinary meeting of the Board.

- **Parents Association**

The Parents Association is the structure through which Parents/Guardians in Scoil Mhuire work together for the best possible education for the children. The Parents Association works with the Principal, staff and the Board of Management to build an effective partnership between home and school. The Parents Association advises the Principal and Board of Management on policy issues. It

also organises a wide range of activities and events in the school. The Parents Association is a support for Parents/Guardians in Scoil Mhuire. It is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or Parent/Guardian.

The Parents Association holds an Annual General Meeting to which all Parents/Guardians are invited to attend at the beginning of each school year. The AGM provides the opportunity for the Parents Association to report on the work completed during the previous school year and to plan for the school year ahead. Parents Association officers and committee members are elected at the AGM. It is open to every Parent/Guardian in Scoil Mhuire to become an active member of the Parents Association and active membership is encouraged by the Board of Management.

- **Scoil Mhuire & the Local Community**

Scoil Mhuire works actively with a range of local and community organisations for the benefit of its pupils. Members of the local community are encouraged to participate in various school events.

Scoil Mhuire keeps the local community updated on the work of the school through the school website, Instagram page and through a regular contribution to the local newsletter, SCAN.

- **Appropriate Communication Between Stakeholders**

In Scoil Mhuire positive and respectful communication between all stakeholders, whether verbal, written or online, is of critical importance. All stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school, between home and school, and in the wider community. Examples, while not exhaustive, include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting, threatening or other aggressive tones or gestures are not acceptable. Belittling inferences intended to undermine staff professionalism are also 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 school building or grounds.
- All stakeholders will treat our pupils with the utmost respect while on the premises. Where a Parent/Guardian has a concern about another pupil, they must bring this matter to the attention of their child's class teacher. They may not speak with the child directly on the school premises.
- Scoil Mhuire staff should not be asked to speak about another Parent/Guardian's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is requested that Parents/Guardians respect other children's right to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important that the time of meetings 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 or after school. However, should a Parent/Guardian 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 8.50am and finish at 2.30pm (1.30pm for Junior & Senior Infants) and all parties are asked to be cognisant of this.

- Where stakeholders communicate with each other in writing, they are expected to do so with respect. Where a Parent/Guardian wishes to express a concern in writing regarding a staff member, he/she will adhere to the provisions of Scoil Mhuire's published Parental Complaints Procedure.
- All stakeholders are expected to use online forms of communication and social media in a manner that respects all other stakeholders. The use of online social media to demean or defame Scoil Mhuire pupils, their Parents/Guardians, staff or any members of the school community will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th May 2026. Its implementation will be monitored on an ongoing basis through feedback from pupils, Parents/Guardians, school management and staff. The policy will be reviewed at appropriate intervals.

Signature: _____

Sarah Kenny, Chairperson

Date: 22/5/26