Communication Policy

St. Mary's B.N.S.

January 2024 - 2027

Introductory Statement

This Policy on Communication was written following consultation with all the staff of St. Mary's B.N.S. in October 2008 and was most recently reviewed in January 2024.

Rationale: This Policy on Communication will form the basis for communication between all members of the school community. It will also inform new or temporary staff about communication within our school.

Vision: We believe that good communication is necessary to fully appreciate the uniqueness of each child and to assist them in reaching their full potential. By establishing effective and efficient communication among all members of our school community, we hope to provide quality education. We seek to create a supportive, respectful school and classroom environment where we work together.

Aim: The aim of this policy is to ensure that communication between all members of the school community – Board of Management, principal, staff, children, P.A., parents/guardians, visitors and the local community is both effective and efficient at all times.

GDPR: All communication in our school is in line with GDPR regulations (see our GDPR policy on www.marysbns.ie)

Staff Communication

A variety of means of communication are used to ensure that both teaching and non-teaching staff are kept fully informed about the life and work of the school;

- All staff – teaching and non-teaching – and the Principal communicate with each other on an informal basis each day.
- Staff communicate with each other through internal group email, a whole staff Whatsapp group and smaller Whatsapp groups e.g. Health & Safety Committee, Classroom Teachers, SEN team, SNA group etc.
- Notices or information which arise for a specific day in the week are posted on the St. Mary's Staff WhatsApp before school by the Principal. Teachers, the secretary and other non-teaching staff may also post notices when the need arises. Staff are asked to post notices on the WhatsApp group for events and activities etc. which do not necessarily affect children from classes other than theirs, but which it is important for other staff to be aware of, for example class visits, social events, games fixtures etc. All staff are expected to read the notices before the start of each school day.
- The other staffroom noticeboard includes DES circulars, union information, yard duty rotas, bulletins, courses, school tour information, meetings, or other advisory source news, social events and timetables.
- The school secretary and website co-ordinator compile the yearly calendar which provides an overview of important dates in the school year such as holidays, various committee meetings, social occasions, celebrations of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation and First Communion, etc. This calendar can be viewed on the school website.
- Teachers are encouraged to inform the website co-ordinator of dates and/or events for inclusion in the calendar. The Féilire na Bliana is updated regularly throughout the year.
- Messages from the office can be sent via the school intercom system e.g. if

we are staying in for break.

- All staff are provided with the relevant agenda and minutes of meetings via email which they attend.
- Staff may contribute to the agenda by writing items on the blank agenda form which is emailed to all staff prior to the meetings. The Assistant Principal then presents the relevant agenda for the meeting.
- It is sometimes necessary that a teacher may need to make an announcement to staff during break times.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher making an announcement during break times to inform members of staff who are not present in the staffroom at the time the announcement is made, e.g. teachers on yard duty.
- Staff may use the internal telephone system to contact one another during the school day. A list of all internal numbers is placed by each phone. New staff are shown how to use the system by the Principal.
- Teachers minimise their use of mobile phones and only use them when absolutely necessary or at break times.
- Teachers meet with each other at the start of each school year to communicate information about their new class. These meetings are organised by the principal and deputy principal. Relevant information is passed from teacher to teacher at these meetings.
- Class teachers meet with the relevant Special Education Team (SET) teacher/s at the beginning of the school year and following standardised testing to discuss individual pupils' progress and educational needs.
- Teachers communicate with each other at our monthly teachers' meetings, during Croke Park hours and at planning meetings.
- When a member of staff is unable to attend school due to illness, he/she contacts the principal on his/her mobile phone as soon as possible so that substitution cover can be put in place. If unable to contact the principal, staff are requested to contact the Deputy Principal or office as soon as possible.
- Applications are made to the principal when requesting EPV Days. Where possible the Principal will be given 2 weeks' notice of a request to take an EPV.
- There are 8 posts of responsibility in the school.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal have regular meetings each week.
- Postholders' Meetings are held monthly.
- Postholders bring matters relating to their post to the attention of staff at monthly meetings and occasionally by circulation of notes/messages/email/Whatsapp. Teachers may also consult with or seek advice and support from postholders regarding their subject area.
- When a staff member sees any area of the school that needs attention, he/she brings it to the notice of the principal or the caretaker. This includes the replacement of bulbs, breakages, leaks etc. in the classroom and toilet areas. The caretaker notes these jobs and deals with them as soon as possible.
- All new Sub Teachers, trainee SNA's, Transition Year students and Student Teachers must read and sign a set of guidelines for their role prior to working in the school. Guidelines include information on starting time and finishing times, break times, mobile phone usage, dress code, allergies, parking arrangements etc. See Work Experience Policy folder.
- The SET meet regularly to discuss current pupil needs.

Board of Management

- The Principal and an elected staff representative attend Board of Management Meetings. The Board of Management meets at least 5 times per year.
- The teachers' representative reports back to the staff on decisions made by the Board, in accordance with the Board's instructions.

Health, Safety & Welfare Committee

- This committee meets at least twice yearly.
- Decisions taken are communicated to staff, pupils, Parents' Committee and Board of Management.
- Some boys have individual medical needs. Close collaboration is maintained between parents and staff to ensure that proper care and administration of medicines etc. is maintained.
- The whole staff are briefed on the use of adrenalin pens by parents twice yearly.
- For more information see the school's Health, Safety and Welfare Statement on the school website.

Communication with the Children

- Staff communicate informally with children daily.
- Staff and children address one another in a respectful, considerate manner.
- Teachers communicate with pupils through the Seesaw and Class Dojo.
- Teachers regularly remind children of our Molanó Code and the importance of courtesy, good manners and respect in the way we interact and communicate with others.
- The Student Council meet once a month, Matters discussed are brought to the attention of staff, pupils and the Parents' Committee.
- Children going on a message to the office or into another classroom should do so in a mannerly way.
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children.
- Messages for a particular child which are received in the office during the day are given by the secretary to the class teacher and/or to the child concerned.
- When necessary, a boy will be permitted to contact his parents. He should be sent to the secretary in the office when this need arises.
- In the interest of safety, pupils to be collected early must have a note from a parent/guardian.
- External doors and windows may be used to display posters and other information about social events, sports events and other events in both school and the local community.
- Communication with the children also takes place at our weekly Tionól on Friday morning where children pray together, share their work, perform for each another and sing together. It also provides opportunities to celebrate such things as sports achievements and welcome new boys to our school.
- The use of mobile phones by pupils on school grounds is forbidden. Pupils' phones should not be seen or heard during the school day.
- Party Invitations should not be distributed in class.

Communication with Parents: Written

- All parents are encouraged to visit the school website for up to date information.
- As of September 2020, all classes have agreed to use Seesaw or Class Dojo as a communication resource between teacher and pupils/ parents.
- Parents can contact teachers via the teacher's school email address.
- Letters are sent out to parents on a variety of different topics. They are sent out via Aladdin by the School Secretary or the Teacher.
- 'Record of Absence' must be completed on Aladdin. A parent can input a reason as to why the child is absent and the teacher will record this when taking the class roll each morning.
- Various other notes are required from parents/guardians on behalf of pupils. These can also be recorded by the parent on Aladdin.
- These include:

  - If he needs to leave school early or for a period during the day (for a dentist appointment etc)
  - If he is going to be late for school.

- From time to time information, news and other matters of concern for parents are sent home by means of letters with the children.
- Occasionally, letters may be sent out in sealed envelopes. These should not be opened by pupils.
- Some letters are of a general nature and therefore sent to all parents, whilst others may be specifically for one class or year group.
- Should a teacher require to send a letter to parents for any reason, e.g. class tour, give details to the school secretary who will type the letter and sent out via Aladdin.
- All letters from teachers to a class should be approved by the Principal before they are copied and ready for distribution.
- Great care is taken to ensure that each letter and féilire is of a high standard and is presented in such a way as to project a positive image of the school.
- Children involved in serious accidents or incidents in the yard receive a blue card to inform parents what has happened. Parents sign and return this card to the class teacher who keeps it on record.
- A Parents' Notice Board is situated in the entrance hall outside the Secretary's office. This is used to display information, news, adverts, letters and other items of interest to all parents.
- A school report on the progress of each child is emailed via Aladdin to parents in mid-June.
- Teachers give written details of children's performance in standardised tests to the parents of children from Rang 2 to Rang 6. These are given at individual parent/teacher meetings in November so teachers can also verbally explain the results, as per DES Guidelines.
- The school makes available a range of documentation for parents. These are on the school website and copies are also kept in the school office where they are available on request. They contain copies of all school curriculum policies and copies of policies that the school is requested to have in relation to sex education, health and safety, curriculum, special educational needs provision, enrolment, etc.

Communication with Parents: Verbal

- Parent/Teacher Meetings are held in November for 1st to 6th classes and in February for Infant classes. These take place before or after school by prearranged appointment at a time that is mutually convenient.
- Parents are welcome in school but are expected to make an appointment if they need to speak to a member of staff in particular.
- An appointment can be made to see a child's class teacher or the Principal or Deputy Principal or Special Education Teacher at a mutually convenient time.
- Occasionally parents/teachers may take the opportunity to have a quick word with the teacher/parent when bringing or collecting a child from school.
- Parents of children starting in Junior Infants are invited to a meeting in May where they are informed of details regarding daily life in our school and where possible, they meet the relevant class teachers.
- The Parish also communicates with parents of children in Rang 2 and Rang 6 by means of email and Parents' Meetings regarding the preparation of children for receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation.
- We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.
- An admission's application form is filled out on the school website by parents which includes contact numbers and other information. On admission to the school, this information feeds into the Aladdin database. Should any such information change thereafter, the onus is on parents to inform the secretary so that our database can be updated accordingly.
- It is school policy to contact parents/guardians by telephone in the event of an emergency pertaining to their son.
- Every September, parents of pupils of Rang a 1 to Rang a 6 sign and return a copy of the school rules contract.
- In the event of an unplanned closure or other matters requiring urgent notification, parents may be contacted via a notice and email on Aladdin.

Parents' Association

- The Parents' Association meets nine times a year. For further information, see our school website (www.marysbns.ie)
- An elected staff representative attends the monthly Parents' Association meetings. The teacher representative provides a verbal account of the meeting at staff meetings.
- Both Principal and teacher representative attend meetings giving information & updates
- Parent representatives are elected by parents in the school onto the Parents' Committee.
- All parents are invited to meetings.

School Website, Email and Twitter

- The school website is designed to inform parents and other interested parties about current and future school events, activities, holidays, etc.
- The school website is updated regularly by staff. Reports on extra-curricular activities like sport, concerts etc. are encouraged. Our school website

address is www.marysbns.ie
- The féilire is posted on our school website.
- The website also provides opportunities to share some of the children's work with the wider school community.
- Our school Email address is **secretary@marysbns.ie**
- The school secretary endeavours to process email on a daily basis.
- The Deputy Principal regularly tweets about school activities & news through our school twitter @Stmarysbns
- The principal regularly uses email to communicate with parents.

Communication with the Community

- Members of the local community are informed and invited to school functions such as concerts, football and hurling finals etc. by means of a billboard at the school gate.
- Announcements regarding school life may be made at masses in the local parish and notices may be included in the Parish Newsletter.
- Classes are brought into the local community on nature walks, trips to the local parks, castle, village, church, etc. for educational purposes.
- Community representatives visit our school occasionally to speak to the children at Tionól, or to accept gifts or charitable donations.
- The school chaplain and members of the Parish Team visit the school regularly.

Communication with Other Schools

- Discussion and liaison on matters of mutual concern with all schools in the parish are maintained.
- Close communication and co-operation is maintained with Loreto G.N.S. in regard to school holidays etc.
- We share an SET post with Loreto Primary School. Close communication exists between the principals of both schools.
- Teachers who wish to communicate professionally with teachers in other schools are encouraged to do so. This may be done by means of personal contact with specific staff or through more formal channels such as IPPN conferences or other informal groups and by means of sports fixtures and other inter-school events such as choirs etc.
- Communication with the local secondary schools happens from time to time when representatives may visit Rang 5 and Rang 6. Occasionally, the Parents' Association invite secondary school representatives to an open evening.

Communication with Outside Agencies

- Contacts are maintained with support agencies including NEPS, the Library Service, HSE, Gardaí, the Education and Welfare Officer, Diocesan Support Service, Dublin Bus, etc.
- The school regularly cooperates with other educational establishments including St. Patrick's College, Marino College, Hibernia College, Froebel College and others. These contacts are usually via the Principal.
- Regular contact is maintained with Ballyboden St. Enda's G.A.A. club. Information regarding coaching and training sessions may be distributed to children in written form. Coaches visit the school regularly to work with classes at prearranged times.

- Contact is maintained with other outside agencies through the distribution of incoming literature and the occasional participation in events and/or competitions e.g. Credit Union Quiz.

Media

- Communication with media sources is usually via the Principal. No statement is made to the media without consultation with the BOM and only through the Principal/Deputy Principal/ Chairperson of the Board.
- When deemed appropriate leaflets, flyers, literature, newspaper supplements, etc. may be distributed to children.
- Occasionally pupils may be photographed for inclusion in newspapers, e.g. at sports events, finals, etc.
- Children are directed to previously evaluated educational resources or previously sourced safe websites by the class teacher.
- Following request from BoM the PA designed & implemented 'Voluntary Code of Conduct for safe use of devices and social media' including regular information sessions on safety & awareness.

Modern Communication Methods

- As a school we endeavour to use the latest aids to effective communication e.g. Email, website, Aladdin, Twitter, Class Dojo, Seesaw, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Whatsapp groups for Class PAC reps.
- Our communication methods are constantly under review and we aspire to keep pace with the latest technological advancements in this area.

Complaints

- The school follows the INTO/CPMSA Complaints Procedure Guidelines for Primary Schools (see school website)
- In Accordance with our Health, Safety and Welfare Statement, all complaints will be treated seriously and with due regard to the sensitivities of the complainant and to the rights of the person against whom the complaint has been made.
- Complaints will be dealt with promptly and sympathetically. As far as possible every effort will be made to handle complaints in confidence.
- Complaints should be made in accordance with accepted complaints procedures as outlined in our Health, Safety and Welfare Statement.

Implementation: This policy will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff and parents/guardians.

Review: It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum communication in the school.

A review of this policy will take place in November 2026. On this date we will refer to the aim and content of our policy, check they are being implemented throughout the school and make any necessary changes.

The following people will be involved in the review.

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Secretary
- Whole staff
- Parents' Association

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management

on _____ 2024

Signed: _____

Mr. John Hughes, Chairperson - Board of Management