

## **Shellybanks ETNS Communication Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

This Communications Policy has been formulated by school staff in collaboration with the PTA and children of Shellybanks ETNS, before final ratification by the Board of Management.

### **Rationale**

Good communication is essential to the smooth running of an efficient school. In recognition of this fact, Shellybanks Educate Together National School has in place a policy on communication between the various individuals, groups and organisations connected with the school.

### **Mutual Respect**

The policy reflects the ethos of the school, and is based on trust, respect, clarity and openness. In the same manner that we expect good manners and mutual respect from children, this is also applicable to staff, parents, Board members and visitors. Mutual Respect through communication whether face to face communication, on the phone or through writing or email is engrained in our ethos. This ethos can best be encouraged where there is a high level of co-operation between staff, pupils and parents.

### **Aims**

Shellybanks ETNS works to promote and support good communication structures between the following:

- Staff
- Children
- Parents/Guardians
- The wider school community (for example, 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.

### **Staff Communication**

- Regular staff meetings are held and promoted teachers meet regularly (ISM) to work on the school's development and School Plan.
- In addition to the formal communication that takes place during staff meetings, the Principal is 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. Staff must update themselves with this information regularly.
- Emails are used for circulating minutes of staff meetings and various correspondence (see appendix 1 on policy in relation to communication by email) .
- Teachers carry out informal meetings on a daily basis, before school, during school and after school. This process of communication is ongoing and continuous.

- Formal inter-teacher communication takes different forms:
- Teachers at different class levels meet regularly in a structured manner to plan and share ideas
- Regular whole-staff meetings are held. An agenda is drawn up. Minutes are recorded and circulated following the meeting.
- The INTO staff rep should regularly update staff as necessary.
- Teachers and staff are expected to speak to each other in a respectful manner

### **Staff and Children**

- Teachers/SNA's communicate with children on an ongoing basis while teaching.
- This is carried out in a positive respectful manner.
- Teachers do not shout at children.
- Children are expected to speak in a respectful manner to teachers and staff in the school

### **Children and children**

- Children communicate with each other formally and informally throughout the school day.
- Children are expected to speak to other children in a respectful manner.
- It should be noted that communications between children regarding out of school activities i.e. celebration of festivals, birthday parties/outings/trips etc. should take place before or after school time. This would also include the exchange of cards and presents between children.
- Teachers will not facilitate the handing out of invitations. We ask that parents are sensitive when handing out invitations.
- Class reps through the Parent's Council can give email addresses to parents if this may be as easier and less visible method of communicating regarding parties.

### **Communication between Parents and the School**

- An information and introduction session is held for all new parents in the school in the Spring preceding the school year in which children begin their time in Shellybanks ETNS. Here, the Principal provides them with a wide range of information about the school, focussing on what life at Shellybanks ETNS will be like for their children. Parents are also introduced to a range of school policies, and are provided with our Code of Behaviour. All new parents must sign-up to this Code.
- There is regular contact with parents as individuals both informally and formally. Most of these take an informal character – insofar as is possible, the Principal operates an open door policy – something which is invaluable in the process of ongoing communication. Currently the principal is a teaching Principal and therefore arranges meetings outside of class times.
- The Weekly Bulletin is distributed via email every Monday. This includes input from the BOM, staff, children and the PTA.

- Parents may request a meeting with the Principal through the school office or via email at [info@shellybanksetns.ie](mailto:info@shellybanksetns.ie) .
- Different methods of communication are preferred by different teachers: all have the same objective, i.e. to keep parents informed of their child's well-being, progress and curricular activities in school. For example, while some teachers like invite parents into their class to view a particular event or presentation or invite parents to share a particular expertise/hobby with the class. Others like to send out information via the class rep system or weekly bulletin. They also regularly update the school website with information and photos about class activities.
- Teachers also communicate frequently with individual parents on matters of concern. On occasion, teachers will write to parent/s giving information or seeking an appointment for a formal meeting. Alternatively, teachers may phone a parent for the same purposes.
- The majority of parent/teacher communications can be dealt with on an informal basis, often by speaking to the teacher at drop-off or collection time. All parties have a responsibility to ensure that this does not interfere with the work of the children and their teacher. Thus, other than for minor issues, or issues which can be dealt with very quickly, parents/guardians wishing to speak to their child's teacher should make an appointment to do so either in person, through the school diary or through the school office.
- A School Report on each child's progress is sent to each parent once a year.
- A formal Teacher-Parent meeting takes place once every school year. It is extremely important that all parents attend these meetings.
- When a child is absent parents are requested to inform the school in writing through the school diary or in the homework folder.
- Regular and unbroken attendance has a direct bearing on a child's progress in school. In view of this we actively discourage children taking extended holidays during the academic year. Should an extended absence be planned, parents/guardians are expected to inform the school in writing beforehand
  - Please note: If a child misses 15 days in a school year, the school will write to the parent [s] of the child expressing its concern. In this communication, the school will also notify the parent of the schools obligation to inform the National Education and Welfare Board [NEWB] should the child's level of absence reach 20 days.
- In accordance with Department Rules for National Schools, a child who is absent for fifteen consecutive school days without valid reason must be taken off the roll on the Saturday following the fifteenth day. This is a Department of Education and Science regulation and could result in a child losing his/her place in the school.
- The Collection of Children: The school should at all times know who is collecting your child. If, at any time, you alter the pick-up arrangements for your child, the school should be given written authorization by the parent/guardian. In an emergency situation, the parent/guardian must leave a message on the answering service or speak with the Principal/teacher. At no time, will a child be released to anyone unauthorized/unknown to us

### **Communication with the Board of Management**

- The Board of Management hold regular meetings. The agenda is set and notice of the meeting sent to each board member. Minutes are recorded. Communication to the Board is kept by the Secretary and dealt with at every meeting.
- Parents' Representatives on the Board of Management give representation to matters concerning the parent body.
- Teacher Rep gives representation from the Staff
- Health and Safety Rep gives feedback
- Buildings and Maintenance Rep gives feedback
- Treasurer discusses Finances and gives a Financial Report
- Should a parent(s) have a concern regarding their child, they should, in the first instance, speak with their child's teacher and/or Principal.
- Occasionally, parents may wish to have a matter discussed at Board of Management level. For this to happen, the matter should be forwarded, in writing, to the Chairperson of the board at least 10 days before the next planned Board of Management meeting. Parents will be informed of upcoming Board Meetings.
- The Board members also receive updates from the Principal via the Principal's Report to give them an insight into daily school life.
- Board members are expected to speak to each other in a respectful manner

### **Parent-Teacher Association [PTA]**

Shellybanks ETNS is fortunate to have a wonderful PTA. The PTA has a huge influence on school life in Shellybanks ETNS and makes an exceptional contribution. There is regular contact, both formal and informal, between the school/Board of Management and the PTA. The Parent/Principal/Teacher relationship, fully recognizing the intense involvement of parents in their child's education and the professional role of the Teacher, is a wonderful resource to the school.

- The PTA frequently send updates via email and the Weekly Bulletin to parents, keeping them fully informed of the many events being organised by the PTA.
- The chairperson of the PTA meets the Principal before each of their meetings to give an opportunity to for all relevant information to be communicated to the PTA committee.
- The school's Deputy Principal has been a member of the PTA since its inception and is an excellent conduit for information flowing to and from the PTA.
- The two parent nominees on the Board of Management attend a number of PTA meetings during the school year. Their role is to represent information and decisions of the BOM to the PTA. Parent nominees should attend a minimum of two PTA meetings during each school term.
- The Principal will receive feedback from the meetings of the PTA about issues of relevance. This feedback takes the form of the chairperson of the PTA sitting with the Principal in the days after a PTA meeting. This also provides an opportunity for the Principal to convey BOM decisions to the parent body.
- Class Reps- PTA members are also the class reps for their individual classes. Contact details are shared with the class rep at the beginning of the school year, unless requested otherwise. The rep system is an additional means of communication from the PTA to the parent body. It may take the form of email or Whatapp groups. All

communication via the class rep system should be respectful and not specific to individual children.

### **Parents' Contact Details**

Parents' contact details, including emergency contact details, must be provided to the school. These contact details are used only for the purpose of communicating with parents on issues relating to their child(ren).DW

It is vital that the school is aware of any changes to methods of communication with families. The responsibility for informing the school of a change of address, phone numbers or email rests principally with parents/guardians.

During the first term of each school year, parents will be asked to update their contact details as held by the school.

### **School Information**

[www.shellybanksetns.ie](http://www.shellybanksetns.ie)

Information and updates about a variety of topics is available on the school website, [www.shellybanksetns.ie](http://www.shellybanksetns.ie). This is maintained by a designated member of staff, who holds a post of responsibility in relation to this. Information on the website includes:

- School Calendar
- News and pictures from classroom activities and school trips
- School Policies
- School Handbook
- PTA pages

### **Department of Education and Science**

Generally speaking, communication to the school is addressed to the Chairperson of the Board or the Principal or both. The school deals with a wide range of departments within the Department of Education and Skills, from those dealing with employment matters to those concerned with funding to those dealing with curriculum.

### **The Inspectorate**

The Principal or Chairperson communicates with the Inspectorate by phone call or in writing.

### **Educate Together**

The school maintains close contact with its patron body, Educate Together. This can be done through the Principal, the Chairperson or the patron's nominee on the Board of Management.

### **Other Agencies**

There is regular two-way communication with a wide range of other organisations/ agencies

such as the Health Board, Psychological Services, Social Services, Gardai, National Education and Welfare Board and the County Council.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Policy re Communication by Email**

- 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 Shellybanks ETNS 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..
- Parents must expect a reasonable period for response, as normal working hours are to be respected.

## Appendix 2

### Communication with Separated Parents

In cases where a child's parents are going through or have been through separation, Shellybanks ETNS strives to deal with all parties in a sensitive and compassionate manner, with the primary focus being the welfare and development of the child concerned. The school asks parents experiencing separation to speak confidentially with the Principal and/or teacher. The school will follow the procedures below, with the aim of supporting children whose parents are going through separation. These require active co-operation between the parents affected and the school:

- The Board and staff of Shellybanks ETNS will endeavour at all times to deal sensitively and caringly with children experiencing parental separation and with both parents.
- Parents of a pupil are asked to inform the school if they are separated. The school needs to know what the child's living arrangements are – i.e. with which parent they normally reside, or what shared arrangements are in place.
- Contact details (including emergency contact details) should be provided by both parents. The school must be kept informed of collection arrangements, and changes to these must be communicated in writing.
- Parents should inform the school of any difficulties their child may be experiencing as a consequence of separation (e.g. emotional upset).
- In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the assumption will be that both parents continue to be involved in and committed to their child's education, and so are equally entitled to be made aware of all important details and events relating to this.
- 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.
- 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 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.

## **Ratification and Review**

This policy was ratified by the BOM on 6th March 2017

Signed Jessica Ryan Chairperson  
Signed Johanne O'Sullivan Principal