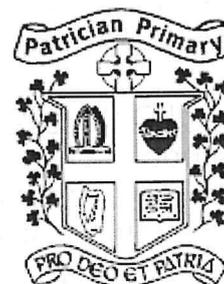


# Patrician Primary School

## Parental Communication Policy



### **Rationale:**

This policy was developed to give an overview to parents/guardians on how to communicate with the school.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents/guardians and staff on various types of parent/staff meetings and other forms of communication in Patrician Primary.

The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other, so that the child's education can be effective. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

### **Parents/guardians are encouraged to:**

- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the teacher and all staff members in the school (see Patrician Primary Dignity at Work Policy)
- 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 Parent Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them

### **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 constitutional role of parents/guardians as primary 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.

## **Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with parents/guardians:**

### 1 School Online Weekly Newsletter

- The school sends an email out to all parents/guardians via our Aladdin system. This mainly happens on Mondays. It includes many of the activities that are taking place that week e.g. extra-curricular afterschool activities, upcoming matches, trips and tours, important reminders for parents/guardians, info leaflets of relevant events happening in the locality etc.
- The email is a no-reply service
- Parents/guardians are automatically subscribed to this service on enrolment. Parents/guardians should ensure that they continue to be subscribed to this service in order to be aware of the many ongoing events within the school. Only the family email addresses that are given to the school on enrolment will be included in the subscription lists
- If parents/guardians are not receiving these emails, they should contact the school office

### 2 Emails, text messages and phonecalls:

- The school may email home at various times throughout the week for items that are not included on the newsletter. It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to ensure to check emails regularly.
- When appropriate, parents/guardians may also be informed of relevant school items via text message
- In the event that parents/guardians wish to contact the school, the following methods should be used:
  - Phone: 045 432 174
  - Email: [info@patricianprimary.ie](mailto:info@patricianprimary.ie)
  - (It is important to note the school secretary is often working away from her desk or on another call. Emails are checked regularly during school hours if you cannot get through on the phone immediately)
  - Note in HW journal for class teacher (It is the responsibility of the child to hand this to teacher)
- When necessary, parents will be contacted via phonecall (e.g. injury or illness). It is recommended that parents/guardians save the school landline into their phone in case of an emergency phonecall
- Staff will endeavour to reply to any queries as quickly as possible. This does not necessarily mean on the same day as we receive them. Teachers cannot reply to email or phone queries during classtime.

Note: *Change of details and Emergency Contacts:*

- It is extremely important that families keep the school up to date with the following items:
  - Change of phone number
  - Change of email address
  - Change of home address
  - Change of family circumstances
  - New emergency contacts
- Only the emergency contacts and other significant family members on our database may collect children from school. In the event that we do not know who the contact is, we cannot let the child be collected by them from the school

Note: *Order of Communication*

- All initial parental communications must be made directly to the class teacher via a note. In the event that parents/guardians are writing a note to request a meeting with the teacher, a brief reason must be given in the note.
- Initial parental communications may also be made directly to the school secretary. In the event that parents/guardians are phoning or emailing the secretary's office to request a meeting with the teacher, a brief reason must be given
- It is NOT appropriate for parents/guardians to contact teachers or SNAs using staff phone numbers or individual staff email addresses unless the staff member has given permission for parents/guardians to do so.
- It is NOT appropriate for parents/guardians to contact the school principal before engaging with the class teacher first. Any emails or other messages in this situation will be passed directly on to the class teacher.

3 Meetings

3a Parent-Teacher Meetings

- Parent-teacher meetings for the families of all pupils will generally take place each November. It is the responsibility of at least one parent/guardian to attend these meetings.
- The main function of these particular meetings is to give parents/guardians an overview of their child's academic progress.
- In the event that parents/guardians are separated and would like individual parent-teacher meetings, the school must be informed of this on enrolment or in the event of a change in family circumstances. If the school is not aware of this request, we cannot schedule separate parent/guardian meetings
- Parent-Teacher meetings are generally scheduled for 10 minute slots. Parents/guardians should be mindful that meetings may run over and there may be some wait time for appointments. Meetings that run over time and still have unresolved issues should be finished in a timely manner and an appointment for another standalone meeting should be made
- Parents/guardians have the option to take part in these meetings over the phone. This is not always an ideal form of communication, depending on the content of the meeting. In a number of situations, teachers may request that these meetings are held face-to-face

### 3b *Class Meetings*

- Meeting for parents/guardians of incoming 2<sup>nd</sup> class will generally take place mid-June prior to starting school. It is the responsibility of at least one parent/guardian to attend these meetings.

### 3c *Other Meetings*

- Meetings may be requested at any other stage in the school year by either staff or parents/guardians

### Note: *Behaviour at Meetings*

- Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. (See Dignity at Work Policy for more details). This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents/guardians 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 (see school Code of Behaviour), 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. Examples include:
  - 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 may have to 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/guardian's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents/guardians 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
  - No meetings, phonecalls or videocalls should ever be recorded by any party. If a staff member becomes aware of this, the meeting will cease immediately and the Gardaí may have to be consulted by the school.

Note: Informal / Unscheduled Meetings

- Patrician Primary School prides itself on providing a welcome atmosphere to everyone in the school community. The school encourages all communication between parents/guardians and staff on a number of matters
- However, unscheduled meetings with staff at the classroom door, over the yard wall or outside of the school environment to discuss concerns or to make a complaint is not allowed for a number of reasons:
  1. Staff cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent/guardian
  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/guardian is talking to staff in front of their peers

4 Report cards:

- Parents/guardians receive a school report card for their children at the end of each school year
- Report cards provide the following information
  - The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
  - The child's learning dispositions
  - The child's social and personal development
  - Ways in which parents/guardians can support their child's learning
  - Attendance statistics
- Report Cards and Standardised Test Scores
  - Standardised test scores will be included in report cards which will be posted to parents.
  - If necessary, the school will endeavour to help parents/guardians to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. Standardised tests provide a snapshot of children's progress. They should not be viewed in isolation. Children may have been unwell or preoccupied during the test. Best practice would say that standardised test scores should not be shared with children. Children should not do any extra preparation at home for standardised tests. A teacher may contact a parent/guardian before sending out the report card to inform them if there were some unexpected results in the standardised tests.
- Parents/guardians have the right to respond to report cards for a period of two weeks after receipt of the report in the post. This right to respond should be taken in the form of an appointment with the class teacher to discuss any queries about the report card contents.
- In the case of parents/guardians who are living separately and require report cards sent to their individual addresses, this should be made clear to the school on enrolment or immediately after any change in family circumstances. Changes in details such as new addresses should be given to the school immediately.
- Report cards are generally sent via post. Children cannot be given report cards to hand deliver home.

## 5 School Support Plans:

- Meetings with parents/guardians whose children may have extra needs with the school Special Education Teaching (SET) team may take place throughout the school year. As part of this, parents/guardians are invited to contribute to their children's School Support Plans either in person, over the phone or via videocall.
- Parents/Guardians of children with extra needs may also be contacted throughout the year for meetings and updates with regard to School Support Plans.
- Parents of children with extra needs may also be contacted to fill out forms regarding applications for resources or assessments
- Copies of school support plans will be sent home to families or given at meetings throughout the year.

## 6 Parent Association and policies:

- Through the Parent Association, parents/guardians are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of various school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents/guardians in written format via email and/or the school website.
- According to the Education Act and the NPC (National Parents Council), the principal is entitled to (but not required to) sit in on Parent Association meetings as a guest. This guest status means that the meeting should not be treated as an opportunity to confront the principal on any potential complaints. (See School Parental Complaint Procedure below).
- Any parent/guardian is welcome to attend parent association meetings at any time.
- The Parent Association Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place in September of each year. This meeting will include the election of committee members (chairperson, treasurer, secretary) and the publication of Parent Association accounts.

## 7 Website:

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

- Regular updates of the school website keep parents/guardians up-to-date with school holidays, school policies and other school concerns
- School closure calendars for the following year will be also be sent with report cards via post. These closures will also be available via email on request and on the school website
- The school website will also provide details for vendors of different aspects of the school uniform
- The school website will also provide details of the Board of Management members along with agreed BoM reports.

## 8 School Events and Garda Vetting:

- Parents/Guardians are invited to share their expertise with the school in a structured way (e.g. volunteering for after-school activities, acting as a once-off guest speaker to classes etc). Garda Vetting requirements will be communicated to parents/guardians prior to such events
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to help out in annual fundraising events if possible. Such events are crucial to continuing to provide activities and resources for the children. Garda Vetting requirements will be communicated to parents/guardians prior to such events
- Parents/Guardians are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school masses and school concerts

## 9 Legal Orders

- In the event that parents/guardians are separated and there is an issue over custody, the following applies to all schools:
  - The school cannot refuse parents/guardians the right to collect their child from school without a written legal order that specifically instructs the school to do so
  - This legal order must be signed by a solicitor, a member of An Garda Síochána or a judge
  - A copy of this written legal order must be provided to the school on enrolment or immediately after any change in family circumstances
  - The school cannot accept any legal orders that do not reference school matters

## 10 Parental Complaint Procedures:

- The Aims of the Parental Complaints Procedure:
  1. encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
  2. allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action and by keeping people informed of progress
  3. ensure a full and fair investigation;
  4. have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
  5. respect confidentiality
  6. address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

# Revised Parental Complaints Procedure



**Note:**

- A copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school. This procedure comes into effect on the 1st of January 2024.
- Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the school patron.

## Purpose/Objective

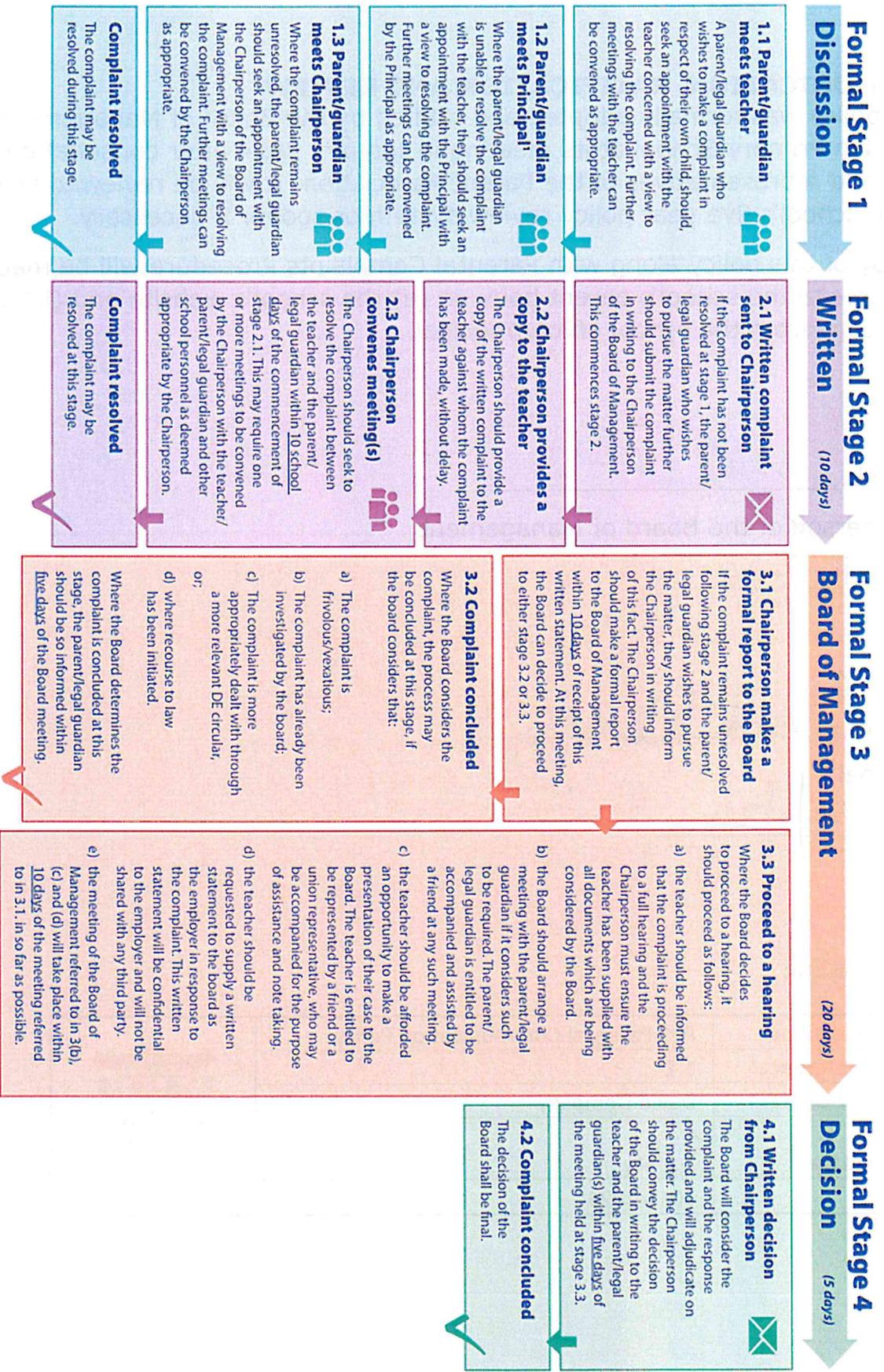
The parental complaints procedure was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the management bodies of primary schools, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023. It is designed to provide an open and clearly defined process to facilitate parents/legal guardians in raising concerns about their own child/children in an agreed, fair and transparent manner.

It is recognised that parents/legal guardians are the primary educators in a child's life and as such from time-to-time concerns may arise which they may need to engage with the school. It is expected that engagement will be timely, courteous and resolution focused to ensure that the important relationship between the parent and school can be preserved and respected. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively.

## Procedural Points

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns will be dealt with either informally or formally at the earlier stages of the procedure. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution at the earlier stages, the procedure does allow for the escalation of the matter to the Board of Management. This procedure sets out, in four stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed. It is expected the parties will follow each stage in sequence.

- Where the term written correspondence is used, this refers specifically to a letter or email correspondence from a parent/legal guardian(s).
- Only complaints about a teacher which are written and signed by a parent/legal guardian, and which relate to their own child, will be investigated.
- Where a complaint raised by a parent/legal guardian is deemed by the employer/board of management to relate to the following, this procedure will not apply;
  - matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
  - 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.
- In all circumstances, any form of written correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be supplied to the Chairperson of the board of management **only**. Any deviation from this could be deemed prejudicial and as acting outside the scope of this agreement.
- **Days in this procedure refer specifically to school days.** A school day is a day on which the school is in operation. Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure.
- Group/collective complaints are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process.
- The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any stage.
- Issues should be raised in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child that issues are raised to achieve early resolution at the earliest possible stage with the teacher, ideally while the pupil is in that teacher's class.



<sup>1</sup>Where a complaint is received about a principal the above process commences at Stage 1.2.

**COMMUNICATION, RATIFICATION AND REVIEW:**

This policy was formally adopted and ratified by the Board of Management of Patrician Primary School at its meeting in January 2024 after consultation with staff and representatives of the Parent Association. It will be reviewed as part of the school’s five year policy review system or sooner if necessary.

A copy of this policy along with Parental Complaints Procedure will be made available to the school’s parent body on (a) the school’s website and (b) in hard copy from the school office/principal.

Signed: 

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 16-1-24

Signed: 

Principal

Date: 16/1/24

**Version Control**

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<b>Version Reference</b>	1.1	
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