

## **Communication Policy**

This is a whole school policy for students and staff in the school. It deals with communication within the school and between the school and our partners. To contribute to ensuring inclusivity and co-operation this policy emphasises maintaining and improving the current channels of communication among the users of the school and with the partners in education.

### **Relationship to school mission statement**

Good communication is essential to maintaining a positive working and learning environment. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect in a happy, caring and supportive environment means that people feel included, consulted and informed. This requires that we use of a variety of channels of communication so as to ensure that the relevant people receive the necessary information.

### **Goal- what is the policy intended to achieve?**

The goal of this policy is to contribute to effective communication within the school, with the Board of Management, with parents and with the local community, so as to maintain a good working, social and personal environment. This will promote efficiency and contribute to achieving the objectives of the school.

### **Overall approach to effective communication**

- ✚ All parties will be communicated with through a variety of agreed channels of communication.
- ✚ The target audience will be involved actively rather than passively where possible in the communication
- ✚ There will be provision for reinforcement (and repetition).
- ✚ There will be opportunity for feedback to check that information is being received and understood.

### **Means of communication.**

This policy encourages the use of the most effective communications mechanisms, depending on context, while ensuring the rights of staff, students and parents.

- i. The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms. (see Appendix 1 for the range of communications mechanisms used in the school)
- ii. The school is committed to consultation with staff and students over school matters, in a way that is consistent with effective management.
- iii. The staff recognise the importance of face-to-face communication, in that it can frequently be more effective than written communication
- iv. The school seeks constantly to improve communication and will consult staff and students to seek their views.
- v. All internal communications should be expressed clearly.
- vi. As far as possible staff and/or students are informed of important school issues no later than the media or other external bodies.

### **Use of email and the web**

Email and the web are frequently used modes of written communication for all staff and students.

Clear guidelines are provided by the College on the use of electronic media. Refer to the ICT policy and school journal for details.

IT access is made available to the widest possible number of staff and students, and provision is made for communicating with those who do not have IT access.

Subject department web sites are the primary source of information about a department, and it provides the necessary information for effective internal communications.

Best practice is promoted and followed in the production of web pages, notably with regard to clarity of structure and currency of information.

### **Personal and confidential information**

Personal data is protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988.

The privacy of personal communications is preserved in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

Some categories and items of information regarding both staff and students need to be kept confidential. All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom the information is transmitted.

Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted under the internet usage policy of the College.

### **Policy in relation to some significant communication channels**

#### ***(i) Teacher with Teacher:***

Recognising its importance, the school encourages best practice in communication at intra-departmental level; between year heads and class teachers and subject teachers; and between senior management and all subject teachers. Also, good personal relationships between staff members are encouraged.

Department meetings will be held at least 3 a year per subject. The minutes are recorded and posted on sharepoint.

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Meetings between the year heads and class teachers are held at least once a term.

New teachers are offered an induction course at the start of the year. They are also supplied with an updated staff handbook.

Notices are posted in the staffroom in an accessible area for teachers and are updated regularly. Announcements made in the staffroom at breaktime are also e-mailed to all teachers.

### **(ii) Administration staff:**

The administration staff is involved in a wide range of supporting activities for all staff, students and parents. They assist with the smooth running of the school on a day to day basis.

### **(iii) Ancillary staff**

The ancillary staff are very important in supporting the teachers and students in having a orderly, safe and clean school environment. Maintaining courteous and professional relationships with the ancillary staff is important for all members of the school community.

In particular, teachers are requested to instruct and supervise students leaving the classroom tidy in order to facilitate room cleaning.

### **(iv) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

SNAs are recruited to assist in the care of students with special educational needs within the school. They play an important role in ensuring that the student understands his/her school tasks and can thus participate to the best of his/her ability in the school.

It is the policy of the school to support effective communication between the SNA, student, parent and teachers, taking into account the particular special educational needs of the students involved.

### **(v) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is very important in supporting and promoting learning in the school. This relationship is best when based on mutual respect.

The student contract found in the journal is the primary document articulating how to establish and maintain good communications and relationship between students and staff.

To assist in creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for learning students are required to treat all school staff and students with due respect.

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The Student Council is an important communication mechanism between the students and other school partners.

### **(vi) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

Maintaining clear communication between teachers and parents is important in achieving the objective of educating our students to the highest standards.

An important aspect of this relationship is the subject teacher, class tutor, or year head reporting the student's progress and behaviour to the parent/guardian. The student's journal is an important channel of communication between the teachers and parent/s. Communication may also occur between teachers and parents/guardians using other means for example phone call, letter etc as is considered necessary at the time.

Teachers report to parents in the end of term reports, at parent teacher meetings and at other times deemed appropriate.

Meetings occur between teachers and parent/s at the request of either party at a time convenient to both parties.

### **(vii) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

Learning good social and interpersonal skills with one's peers is an important part of school life. The school contract outlines the implementation of the policy in relation to this matter.

Students are required to treat all students with consideration and respect and to have regard for other people's rights and feelings.

### **(viii) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)**

The Board of Management meets three times a year. The Board includes two teacher representatives.

The function of the teaching staff representatives is to:

- Represent views of staff at the BOM
- Report back to staff on all matters pertaining to the functioning of the school.

## **Roles and responsibilities on each of the partners of communication**

The following have a responsibility within the school environment:

- Principal and Deputy principal to all the relevant parties
  - All events
  - Ensuring that all communications re personal and confidential nature are treated accordingly.
- Year Heads and Assistant year heads
  - Communicating with all relevant parties in relation to the year group
  - Teachers
- Tutors (Class Teacher)
  - Reporting to YH
- Admin Staff
  - Conducting and co-ordinating communications between
    - parents and staff and vice versa
    - parents and son/daughter
    - DES and school
    - Outside agencies and the school
    - Suppliers and the school
    - Local community and the school
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- Resource Staff (Remedial)
  - The Resource staff play an important role in mediating between parents and staff particularly in relation to students with special needs.
  - In relation to students with an SNA the Resource staff have an important role in initiating and supporting the relationship between the student and the SNA.
  - The Resource staff also play an important role in liaising with outside agencies such as Social Workers, NEPS etc.
- Career Guidance
  - Guidance Counsellors play a critical role in communicating with students, staff and external agencies with regard to students' personal well-being and career planning.
  - Guidance Counsellors have a responsibility to ensure that all communications of a personal and confidential nature are treated accordingly.
  - Communicate with year-heads & class-tutors with regard to student welfare and academic progress
  - Regular communication with Principal and Deputy Principal
  - Communicate with subject teachers in relation to academic progress of students.
  - Meet with care-committee weekly.
  - Liaise with Programme Co-ordinators – LCVP, LCA and TY.
  - Communicate with SPHE Co-ordinator.
  - Communicate with Resource and Special Education Needs teachers in relation to students with special needs.
  - Liaise with outside welfare agencies – Social Workers, Child and Family Centres, Education Welfare Officer etc.

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Liaise with NEPS

Make referrals to private Counsellors when necessary.

Communicate with Parents/Guardians – one-to-one meetings.

Liaise with Employers, Colleges, Training Agencies and Professional Bodies.

### **Review and Evaluation:**

**The following are indicators to gauge the success and the effectiveness of the policy**

- The changes made to improve communication based on the feedback from questionnaires distributed yearly and completed by the teaching staff .
- Record of intra-departmental meeting per year
- Record of staff meetings and communications issues addressed each year
- Extent of the use of powerpoint in the assembly area
- Overall general satisfaction with communication in the school and the opportunity to give feedback on communications.
- The number of channels through which some items of information were communicated to groups for example .....

### **Monitoring procedures- who will do what to see the policy is working**

- Communication policy group will monitor the satisfaction/ improvements in communication each year from September.
- Principal will monitor intra-departmental meetings.
- Student Council will monitor the records from the use of the Powerpoint in the Assembly area.

**Review procedures:**

The SDP committee will evaluate the effectiveness of the policy at yearly intervals from the implementation of the policy. They will make recommendations on necessary changes.

**In-service education in areas of weakness**

- ✚ Induction for new staff provides information on mechanisms and good practice in internal communications.
- ✚ Best practice guidelines are maintained for managing internal communications in departments, including departmental meetings and the use of the web.

## **Appendix 1**

**Agreed forms of communication used in the school**

**Verbal**

interpersonal communication, classroom work, announcements, meetings etc.

**Written**

- Letters/ notes to staff, students, parents etc.
- Notice Boards in staff room and in different areas in the school
- Calendar of events in the staff room
- Student reports
- Student Journal
- Annual School Newsletter

## Meetings

- Students Council
- Staff meetings
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Professional Development staff days
- Subject Department Meetings.
- School Development Policy Steering Committee
- Task Groups (Ad-Hoc).

## Electronic

- Email between all users and staff of the school
- Email of regular updates from Principal
- Portal
- Text messaging
- PowerPoint in Assembly
- Internal phone line

## Appendix2

### Communications Policy Survey Results

Suggestions on how communication can be improved between the various partners:

#### Teacher to Teacher

- More Department Meetings
- “Lets do Lunches” between teachers as a chance of meeting.
- More socializing on free periods might mean less meetings.
- Notice board in staff room updated regularly and thus more effectively used.
- More year Year Head-tutor meetings.
- Outside school department meetings.

- More student information passed onto teachers from year/head/management
- More verbal communication.
- Notice Board in staff room in a more accessible area.
- One to one teacher collaboration
- Less announcements made at break time as the teachers on supervision miss out.

#### Teacher to Student

- Students need to be made more aware of emailing teachers.
- More use of I.T.
- More time needed.
- Announcements made at break times not heard!
- Intercom/journals more effectively used.

#### Teacher to Parents

- Improve communication via the journal.
- Parents should give home email addresses for communication purposes.
- More phone calls home.
- Email

#### Teacher to Board of Management

- Should be a 2way system
- Reports from BOM meetings should be emailed to all staff.
- Encourage staff to get involved, not just A.P holders.
- Memo's given to teachers post BOM meetings
- More feedback to staff.

#### Teachers to S.N.A's

- More meetings between teachers and their S.N.A's to discuss relevant matters.
- Email
- Monthly meetings

#### Student to Student

- Pastoral classes

- Encourage organized study groups

#### Senior Management to All Staff

- Weekly emails giving various information, including names of students who have been suspended.
- More staff meetings to let management know of staff concerns and vice versa
- Address staff with major problems
- Use white board more effectively in staff room
- More verbal communication between Management and all staff.
- More announcements at break time
- Daily email from management regarding day to day issues as they arise.
- More written communication in pigeon holes.
- Regular meetings not at break time.
- Email not intercom.
- A combination of communication methods not just email.
- More staff meetings