



Knocknacarra Educate Together
National School

Parental Involvement Policy

This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to establish guidelines and procedures to encourage and support the involvement of parents, guardians and caregivers in our learning community.

Contents

Introduction and Rationale:	1
Relationship to the School's Ethos	1
Aims:	1
Guidelines:	2
Parent Teacher Association	2
Board of Management	2
School Improvement Process	2
Organisational Policies	3
Parents Supporting Children's Learning at Home.....	3
Parents Supporting Learning within the School	3
Guidelines for Parental Involvement during the School Day.....	4
Garda Vetting	4
Communication	5
Education Welfare Officer (EWO)	5
Guest Speakers.....	6
Workshops and Classes for Parents.....	6
Ratification, Review and Communication:	6

Introduction and Rationale:

Knocknacarra Educate Together NS is a relatively young learning community. The key to the long-term development of the school will benefit from effective cooperation between all stakeholders, including staff, parents, children and the wider community. This policy endeavours to provide a framework for encouraging and supporting the involvement of parents in our learning community. The policy was drafted by members of the Parent Teacher Association, including parents and staff members. A draft was shared with the full school community for feedback, and the revised policy was discussed by the Board of Management.

Relationship to the School's Ethos

As an Educate Together national school, the school seeks to ensure the school's lived ethos is equality based, child-centred, co-educational and democratic. A key aspect of organising a democratic learning community is to give voice to all members of the community. The involvement of all parents is sought and encouraged while recognising the special professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibilities of the principal, patron (Educate Together) and the Board of Management. Mechanisms to promote partnership between parents, teachers, pupils and the Board of Management are vital for the long-term health and development of Knocknacarra Educate Together NS. Therefore, this policy addresses the important role of parents in our learning community.

This policy takes a broad definition of parent as any adult recognised legally as the caregiver for a child enrolled in the school, including legal guardians and foster parents.

There are many benefits for the school community when parents are involved:

- Children benefit from greater diversity in the classroom.
- Parental skills may support and complement work already taking place.
- Parental involvement actively supports and encourages children's learning.
- A wide range of activities are facilitated. This can be interesting and fun and has the potential to support a broad, holistic education.
- Parent-teacher relationships are developed and home-school connection is strengthened.
- Communication, trust and respect are enhanced between parents and teachers.
- Parents can learn about the curriculum and school life.
- Parental skills can contribute to the smooth running and development of the school.
- Parental involvement provides the opportunity to make friends as well as support personal development amongst parents.

Aims:

- To build a school community committed to supporting all its pupils by encouraging an active role for parents through collaboration and cooperation with other stakeholders.
- To establish procedures for the sharing of information regarding pupil progress and attainment.
- To enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents.
- To provide opportunities for parents to interact and developing positive relationships among the families of the school community.

Guidelines:

Parent Teacher Association

All staff and parents in the school community are de facto members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Each year a committee is elected to make decisions on behalf of the PTA and manage the organisation. The PTA has a constitution (see Appendix 1) that explains the policies and procedures for the organisation.

Role of the Parent Teacher Association:

- To promote the interests of pupils in co-operation and consultation with the board, principal, teachers and the children of the school.
- To develop partnership and open communication between the parents, teachers, the principal and the Board of Management.
- To advise the principal and Board on matters relating to the school.
- To represent the views of parents, e.g. by having input into school policies.
- To run activities that involve parents, children and staff members, e.g. end-of-term events, the Spring Fair, etc.
- To support parents to become involved in the operation of the school.
- To support parents, e.g. networking with other parents and organising workshops on parenting.
- To raise money for specific purposes in the school.
- To work as a team, have a yearly plan and hold an Annual General Meeting.
- To network with other Parent Teacher Associations, e.g. by joining the National Parents' Council.

The Parent-Teacher Association does not have a role in:

- Addressing individual complaints or mediating between parents and school leaders,
- Making decisions about the day-to-day running of the school or the curriculum or
- Appointing of staff members.

Board of Management

- Two parent nominees, one male and one female, are elected to the Board of Management. The PTA manages the election process. As with other nominees, parents who become members of the Board of Management do not formally represent or report to parents but rather act in cooperation with all Board nominees on behalf of the school.
- The role and responsibilities of the parent representatives on the Board of Management is set out in the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023.

School Improvement Process

- Parents are regularly consulted as part of ongoing school planning. A whole-school community of parents and staff, along with consultation with the pupils, led to the creation of the current School Plan (2017-2022). The school plan is reviewed normally on an annual basis, and this report is shared with the school community. In Spring 2022 a new consultation process will begin for the establishment of a new five-year plan.
- As part of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, parents are regularly surveyed for their opinions and perspectives, and this information is used in making decisions regarding school improvement plans.

Organisational Policies

School policies, particularly those that affect children and families, are developed and reviewed using a consultative process which involves parents. This includes the annual review of the Child Safeguarding Statement and the Code of Behaviour including the Anti-Bullying Policy. This consultative process may involve the full Parent Teacher Association or a particular policy committee. Draft policies are also sent to the full parent body for feedback. All parents have a role and responsibility in relation to the successful implementation of all policies.

Parents Supporting Children's Learning at Home

- Parents have a very important role in supporting children's learning. The invaluable assistance and guidance provided by parents related to learning is the most important contribution they can make on behalf of their children. Ensuring children are feeling safe and secure is part of this essential role.
- Parents are encouraged to refer to the Homework Policy. The most important aspect of the homework is daily reading, an activity that can be used to strengthen the bonds between parents and children.
- Parents are encouraged to contact teachers regarding any concerns related to academic learning and social and emotional development. Open communication ensures that any issues can be addressed in a collaborative and efficient manner with the best interests of children at heart.
- Parents are consulted when children receive learning support. Parents are included in devising an Individual Education Plan. They are supported in meeting their child's learning goals through in-class activities and one-to-one teaching as well as guidance on how best to continue the learning process at home.

Parents Supporting Learning within the School

Parental Involvement is often about being able to provide a helping hand in one's spare time. It does not always have to be skill or talent based. Sometimes parental involvement is once off; parents may offer to visit the classroom to provide a talk on an aspect of the curriculum that relates to their work or life. Parents may be able to take time to accompany the class on a tour or assist with a once off activity. Parents with free time who are willing to share that time in classroom support are a valuable asset to our school. Class teachers also will notify parents of opportunities for involvement depending on what help is needed at any given time.

Parents may be asked to be involved in activities such as:

- Book Fairs
- Environmental Awareness
- Gardening
- Excursions
- Fundraisers
- Open Evenings
- Sports Day
- Reading a story to a class
- Sharing their own cultures with the students, e.g. celebrating festivals, etc.

Parents with particular knowledge or skills in each curriculum area are encouraged to let the class teacher know. Examples include:

- Language: poet/author, member of drama group, etc.
- Mathematics: architect, builder, carpenter, accountant, engineer, etc.
- Arts: artist, actor, musician, dancer, etc.
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): nurse, dietician, garda, etc.
- History, Geography and Science: laboratory technician, historian, town planner, engineer, etc.
- Physical Education: sportsperson, representatives from local sports groups, etc.

Extra-curricular activities can be organised by parents. Please see the school's After-school Activities Policy for more information.

Guidelines for Parental Involvement during the School Day

- Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of staff members by prior arrangement and for an agreed purpose. Before volunteering, parents must read this policy and the Child Protection Policy, which is available on the school website.
- The happiness, welfare and safety of our children are our primary concerns. A child's personal history, academic achievements/abilities, behaviour/personality traits etc. are strictly confidential. Volunteers should never discuss individual children or staff members. Failure to respect this request is considered a serious breach of policy.
- Respect for staff members in their professional capacity is essential in agreeing on and determining suitability of the contributions made by volunteers. Classroom management remains the responsibility of the teacher. Parent volunteers' work will be supervised by the teacher. All office work will be supervised by the school secretary or principal.
- Parent volunteers should be conscious of and sensitive to the needs of the entire class, not just the needs of any one child.
- The highest standard of behaviour, good manners and language are expected.
- In the interests of safety toddlers and younger children cannot be accommodated during a classroom activity for health and safety, child protection and insurance reasons.
- Parents can work in conjunction with the teachers in a planned and co-ordinated way. Teachers may meet with volunteers when necessary to discuss, plan and decide suitability prior to commencement of project. Parents coming into the classroom must consult with the teacher before inviting other parents/individuals to participate. Should any differences or difficulties arise, the school's existing grievance procedure should be utilised.
- No photographs should be taken without the permission of staff members.

Garda Vetting

In many cases, parents will be required to complete the Garda Vetting process whenever the involvement requires a scheduled, regular visit to the school at the request of the school. Accompanying a class on a once-off excursion, volunteering for a single event or attending whole-school events open to all families will not require Garda Vetting. For further information about this requirement, please read the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and the Garda Vetting Policy.

Communication

Successful communication between parents and staff members is an essential aspect of parental involvement. The various methods of communication are summarised below. More information is available in the school's Communication Policy.

- Formal parent-teacher meetings are organised on an annual basis, usually late in the first term. Child-led portfolio sharing meetings are also followed by an opportunity for parents to meet formally with teachers, usually in the third term. Additional meetings and incidental meetings can be facilitated throughout the year.
- Parents may request a meeting or phone call with a staff member. Parents may email staff members or contact the school office to make an appointment.
- Teachers may also request meetings. The parent will be contacted by phone, in person or by email. Decisions and matters arising are recorded in the teacher's notes and, if necessary, in child's file.
- An end-of-year written report is issued for each child in June via Aladdin. A pupil profile is also shared with parents as part of the first-term parent-teacher meeting.
- Approximately weekly during time, the school newsletter is emailed to parents. This is the primary vehicle for whole-school communication. The newsletters are posted on the school website. The PTA may contribute to this, and it is an important vehicle for the PTA to communicate with its members with regards to its activities and school life and events. The principal approves the content. Opportunities for parental involvement are shared in the newsletter.
- The school website (www.ketns.ie) is an important way of sharing information about the school with both prospective and current parents. The school has a public Facebook page and a closed Facebook group for parents. Please see the Social Media and School Website Policy for more information.
- Communication from class teachers to parents is normally paperless. Class teachers may send emails to parents as required.
- The children have a Homework Diary, which can be a useful tool for home-school communication.
- Arrangements for enrolment, open evenings, school events and assemblies will be communicated through the school website, text, email and/or other relevant means.
- A parent notice board is outside the main office. This is to be used as a means of communicating with parents e.g. displaying notes, competitions, upcoming events (drama productions, adult education classes, club notices, etc.)
- All fundraising goals and activities are agreed upon through consultation with the PTA and Board of Management, with the principal acting as liaison. These are then communicated to the parent body via email. For each event, the purpose of the money raised is clearly stated in advance. When the money has been spent, that is also communicated to the parent body and the principal issues a thank you.
- Parents are encouraged to read and follow the Complaints Procedure as described in the school's Communication Policy to address any concerns as early as possible.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents are to be made aware of the role of the Education Welfare Officer in communicating with parents whose children have missed more than 20 school days. Education Welfare Officers are part of [Tusla's Education Support Service](#), the Child and Family Agency. This will be communicated to parents through information nights and the welcome booklet. On reaching 15 days, parents will be informed by letter that their child has been absent for 15 days and that the EWO will be informed at 20 days.

Guest Speakers

The principal and the PTA are responsible for selecting and inviting guest speakers to address the parents of the school.

Workshops and Classes for Parents

The school plan recommends developing special activities for parents in the evenings for their personal development. The school provides the facility for these activities. Activities require the approval of the Board of Management. In the past, Irish classes for parents were organised in the evening. Additional options, led by parents, will be pursued beginning in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Ratification, Review and Communication:

This policy was ratified on the date below. It is available for access on the school website at any time. Parents may request a hard copy at any time. It will be reviewed as necessary but no later than 2024.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 23/06/21