



Knocknacarra Educate Together
National School

Continuing Professional Development Policy

This policy has been formulated to support the ongoing professional development of all staff members, setting out processes and procedures regarding staff collaboration on planning and policy-making as well as supporting individual and whole-staff efforts to upskill and engage in reflective practice.

Original Ratification: 2019

Reviewed: 2024

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Introductory Statement and Rationale

Knocknacarra Educate Together National School is a primary school which operates under the principles of Educate Together schools: equality-based, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run. To support the creation of a vibrant learning community, it is important to ensure that staff members are given opportunities for learning and collaboration. As a democratically run learning community, the school relies on a collaborative, team approach and a collective responsibility to ensure the ongoing development of staff members as a group and individually. Professional learning should be an integral part of the life of the school, and much of this can be situated in developing opportunities within the school community for dialogue and collaboration as well as supporting individuals to participate in learning experiences outside of the school community.

Aims

This policy:

- sets out the type of meetings and other forms of collaboration as part of requirements related to Croke Park hours,
- introduces the establishment of voluntary peer support and
- establishes a programme to provide financial support for professional development activities.

Guidelines

Staff Meetings

- Staff meetings are organised using the required Croke Park hours all staff must complete annually. The decisions regarding the use of these hours are reviewed annually, giving staff members significant flexibility in how they choose to fulfil this requirement. That being said, staff meetings are an important part of meeting this requirement.
- Staff meetings that focus on logistics issues, ongoing training and review of core policies and other essential information will take place four times per year, lasting two hours. All staff members will attend. It is envisioned that other forms of communication will be used including email and the Aladdin notice board between these meetings, as required.
- Once per term for a one-hour period, the teaching staff will meet to develop and reviewing components of the school plan. The in-school management team will take the lead in developing curriculum documents, and these meetings will be discussion-based reviews of draft documents with input from all teachers concerning current and future practice.
- As part of ongoing School Self-Evaluation, the whole staff will meet termly for one hour to progress the current focus.
- Support teachers and class teachers will meet and collaborate to support the implementation of team teaching. It is expected that they will meet formally for a minimum of one hour per term, but it is acknowledged that staff will likely voluntarily contribute on an informal and formal basis far greater time in planning and evaluating their approaches to team-teaching.
- On occasion, and as agreed by staff members, additional meetings may be held in the year.

Additional Activities Counted Towards Fulfilment of Croke Park Hours

- Parent-teacher meetings, usually taking place in the middle of the first term, will be extended to 7.5 hours, extending the time by 5 hours beyond the required 2.5 hours. This applies to mainstream teachers, acknowledging that support teachers will have additional meetings related to writing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and team teaching.

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- ISAs are expected to complete additional hours related to cleaning, preparing learning spaces and activities and other tasks mutually agreed with the principal.
- Additional professional development activities will be agreed on an annual basis, through mutual agreement with staff members in response to the changing needs of the school.
- All staff members keep a personal record of professional development hours which is submitted to the principal at the end of the academic year.

Supporting New Staff Members

- As explained in the Staff Induction Policy, new staff members, whether newly qualified or probated with experience, will be assigned a permanent staff member as a point of contact. These pairs are invited to meet both formally and informally with new staff members on a regular basis for a two-year period. It is up to the staff members involved to negotiate the form, structure and timetabling.
- In addition, more experienced teachers, on a voluntary basis, may pair up to act as peer coaches or critical friends for one another. A variety of activities may be used including lesson study, planning discussions and peer-to-peer dialogue on professional issues, both practical and theoretical. Time for observation and collaboration for participants can be negotiated with the principal for those who wish to participate, giving them time during the teaching day to complete tasks related to peer support.

Reading and Discussion Club

- All staff members are invited to participate in monthly professional dialogue discussions. These are completely voluntary and will take place after school.
- The focus of these discussions will either be a book read over a period of time, individual articles or videos. Staff members are welcome to attend the discussion, even if they have not had time to prepare by reading or watching the material.

Continuing Professional Development through the PDST and the Education Centre

- Continuing professional development opportunities through the Professional Development Service for Teachers and the Education Centre are posted in the staff room or circulated via email.
- Staff are encouraged to take up these opportunities on a regular basis. In an effort to support attendance, if a substitute will not be provided the principal will arrange, with sufficient advanced notice, for participation by ensuring teaching responsibilities are covered.
- As part of the curriculum reform process, school closures will take place from time to time to facilitate ongoing professional development. When the professional development is only for certain staff members, other professional development opportunities will be organised in consultation with the principal and staff members.

Scholarships to Support CPD Expenses

- The Board of Management will set aside a budget of €1800 on an annual basis to support professional development activities. This money will come from the general funding as the Department does not provide funding designated for this purpose. A reserve of €800 will be used to support the principal's and deputy principal's attendance at key conferences and membership for the principal and deputy principal in the IPPN. The balance will be available to support other staff members' professional development, with a maximum of €500 given to any individual in an academic year.

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- Staff members may apply at any time by submitting an application form (see Appendix B).
- Based on the applications received and criteria set out below, the funding will be allocated by the principal. Part-funding of activities, to ensure support is evenly distributed, may be an option.
- Fees related to seminars, workshops, university courses, online activities and materials may be considered for funding. Fees related to summer courses that earn EPV days are not eligible.
- The key criteria for funding will be as follows:
 - Opportunities for whole-school development as an outcome of an individual's participation
 - Opportunities for personal learning
 - Record of past applications
- Staff will be expected to provide a short reflective summary to the Board after completion of the professional development experience.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed no later than 2027, first by the staff and then the Board of Management.

Ratification by the Board of Management

This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the date below. The policy is given to staff members during induction and is available as part of the school plan online. A hard copy is available on request.

Paul Adams, Chairperson

Date of ratification: 16/12/2024

Appendix A – Application for Continuing Professional Development Funding

Staff Name:

Title of Professional Development Activity:

Brief description of the activity (no more than 150 words)

Is the activity aligned with your Personal Professional Development Goal? (no more than 100 words)

What do you hope to learn on a personal level? (no more than 100 words)

How can your participation in this activity benefit the school community? (no more than 100 words)

Have you applied to the Board of Management for funds to support continuing professional development previously?

What is the cost of the activity? €

How much funding are you applying for (maximum €500)? €

Would you be willing to receive partial funding for the activity?

Signature

Date