

# **CREAVERY PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **Policy Statement for School Communication**

**Creavery Primary School  
School Communication Policy Statement**

<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>

## **Context**

This policy will provide guidance for Staff in communicating with parents/guardians/carers (hereinafter referred to as parents), members of the school community and the wider community about school matters.

## **Rationale**

Open and effective communication is vital to the health and well-being of the School community. Effective communication encompasses the exchange of ideas, where people feel they have been heard and their opinions valued, and where information is clear and accurate. All communication needs to be timely, relevant, accurate, well targeted, well delivered, clear and concise, open honest and frank, reciprocal and interactive. This policy's implementation enhances the quality of School community through:

- Providing a framework for effective communication;
- Promoting understanding and co-operative teamwork between the School, parents and pupils;
  - Promoting active participation of the whole School community in effective communication;
  - Contributing to the best learning outcomes for pupils;
  - Ensuring principles of effective communication are displayed by staff in their work in the School;
- Collective understanding that parents, pupils and staff have a common goal.

## **Aims of the Policy:**

1. To improve the quality of service given to pupils at Creavery P.S. by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, pupils and other stakeholders.
2. To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the school, parents and pupils.
3. To be effective, communication must be open on both sides. Staff and parents are encouraged to ensure that all communication remains polite and professional. Where parents feel that standards of communication fall short of expectation, they are referred to our **Complaints Policy**.

## **Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with parents:**

- P1 Open Day – Autumn Term
- Meeting for parents of new P1 intake – Summer Term.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in Term 1 & Term 3.
- Parents receive academic school report of each pupil at the end of each school year.
- Annual Review Meetings with parents whose children have a Statement of Special Needs.

- Bi-Annual meeting with parents whose children are on the SEN Register to review and formulate IEP's/PLP's.
- Consultation throughout the year.
- Written communication – letters, Memos, texts, School App, Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) , Facebook etc.
- Parent Representatives on The Board of Governors are involved in the drafting and review of all school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents through the School App, in written format via letters home or through the new school Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) .
- Regular 'Parent Memos' keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Homework diaries are used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary to certify that homework has been completed.
- Information provided regarding school and community activities on Parents' Notice Board.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education. In all matters pertaining to the well-being and education of pupils, only the parent(s) named on the enrolment form will be consulted by the teachers.

#### **Formal Parent/Teacher meetings aims:**

- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school;
- To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school;
- To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents;
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals;
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.

#### **Annual Academic Report**

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address as given on the Pupil Details & Emergency Contact Information sheet distributed in September each year, unless otherwise requested by parents.

In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings and the Annual Academic Report will be issued to both addresses only on a request made to the Principal.

#### **Informal Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Arranging parent/teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is often difficult. However, parents are welcome to speak to the Principal/Associate Principal or teacher(s) at an appointed time through the School Office.

**Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress is strongly discouraged on a number of grounds:**

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent;
- It is difficult to be discrete when so many children are standing close by;
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at a classroom door.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, musical instruments, sports gear etc. this can be done through the School Office as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum. Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time to facilitate family holidays.

### **School Operational Hours, Communications and Staff Availability**

The Department of Education, employing authorities, sectoral support bodies, and teacher unions have jointly acknowledged the increasing demands placed on school-based staff.

To assist in addressing these challenges, support staff wellbeing and manage workload, the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) has collectively recommended that all schools clearly communicate their normal operating hours and the appropriate ways for parents and carers to communicate with school staff.

We have been asked by the authorities to take the following steps:

- Inform parents and guardians of the school's standard operating hours.
- Clarify communication expectations, including:
- The times during which staff are available to respond to queries.
- The appropriate channels for communication (e.g., email, school app, website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) & phone).
- A clear statement that staff are not expected or required to respond outside of these hours, except in the case of a critical incident where there is a need to inform the school Principal.

This information to parents and guardians is provided at **Annex A** for your convenience.

The Department of Education, employing authorities, and all associated bodies use their best endeavours to ensure communications to schools are issued within normal working hours. When communications are issued outside of these times, it is acknowledged that staff are not expected to respond outside of their normal working hours, except in the case of a critical incident. We would request that parents also adopt this outlook.

### **1 School Mechanisms for Communication:**

- 1:1 Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes in diaries, Parent App, Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) or E-mail). Occasionally a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary.
- 1:2 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be disappointed or frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone or return a call. Our aim will

<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>

always be to return a telephone call to a parent within 24 hours. Return calls may be made by someone other than the person to whom the original call was made, should it be felt that this is more appropriate.

- 1:3 The school has been particularly proactive in encouraging use of modern communications methods including the new Parent App & Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>). All parents are asked in September (Pupil Details & Emergency Contact Information) to give an email address for another possible method of effective communication. Over the years the majority of parents are satisfied with the two-way communication they have with school.
- 1:4 However, this does not mean that the school always gets things right and this policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively and clearly.

## **2 Communication between the school and parents operates in the following ways:**

- 2:1 Prospective P1 parents and pupils are invited to an Open Evening/Day in Term 1 preceding the academic year of entry to the school. All prospective parents will receive a School Prospectus;
- 2:2 Parents and the pupils accepted into the school are invited to an 'Induction Session' in June where the main channels of communication are outlined;
- 2:6 Details about all severe weather/emergency closure events at the school are published via our School App, Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) and Facebook page;
- 2:7 Weekly Parent Memos are provided which outline the important events at the school;
- 2:8 Consultation between the school, parents, and pupils operates in the following ways:
- Questionnaires are issued on occasions to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email etc.);
  - Parents and visitors to the school can make suggestions for improving the service and are encouraged to leave these with the School Office;
  - School reports are issued with a reply slip inviting parents to comment on the report 'as well as an invitation to come in and discuss it with the class teacher;
  - The 'School Council' is consulted on a range of key issues relating to the school. Meetings take place regularly, with additional meetings for specific issues;
  - Pupils are encouraged to be constructive about how the school can improve provision;
  - Consultation between external agencies takes place with a view to improving the service provided by the school;
  - The Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator works closely with individual pupils, parents and external experts and meetings are held frequently to discuss best practice and provision for individuals and groups.

<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>

### **3 Communication Systems:**

#### **3:1 Parents Communicating with Staff**

Parents wishing to contact staff about a matter related to school have a number of options: Parents should always in the first instance ring the School Office on 028-9446 6915.

- If the matter is related to curriculum or class matters, then the request is to the Class Teacher via the Office. If the teacher is not available and the matter is urgent, contact should be made with the Principal/Associate Principal;
- If the matter is related to a welfare issue the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (DTCP – Associate Principal) should be contacted via the Office. If not available and the matter is urgent, the Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection (DDTPC –Mrs Brown) should be contacted;
- Parents must make clear the nature of the concern during the initial contact with the School Office.

#### **3:2 Procedures for Staff Communicating with Parents**

As a general rule, parents should be well informed about the academic progress and pastoral well-being of their child. The school has many formal and informal communication mechanisms in place for this. The following points provide guidance for staff when communicating with parents about academic, pastoral and discipline issues outside the more formal mechanisms, such as parent-teacher meetings. In all dealings with parents, communication will be professional, open and frank. At the same time, staff will communicate with empathy, understanding and respect for pupils and their parents. The following procedures have been divided between academic and pastoral communications.

#### **3:3 Academic Communication**

This section relates to communication with parents about academic progress of a pupil. Regular communication with parents will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with.

- 3:3:1 Minor Academic issues such as a missed homework will appropriately begin with a note in the Homework Diary. Repeated minor issues or failure to submit formal work, such as homework, will result in discussions with the pupil by relevant staff and telephone contact with the parent(s). If the telephone contact is made by the teacher, it will be discussed with the Principal or Senior Teacher (Mrs J Brown) beforehand. Notes will be kept and entered into the pupil's file.
- 3:3:2 When a significant academic change is being contemplated, such as a pupil moving to a different group for literacy/numeracy, contact will be made with the parents in advance, and an opportunity provided for discussion about such changes.
- 3:3:3 Follow-up phone calls or meetings should be held on a regular basis when a child is at risk academically.

### **3:4 Communication about Pastoral and/or Discipline Issues:**

This section relates to communication by staff with parents about pastoral issues and ongoing or serious discipline issues of a pupil. Early and regular communication with parents will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with. The School will create opportunities for parents to meet with or have contact from key Pastoral Care staff, particularly when families are new to the school. (Related policies: Pastoral Care Policy; Positive Behaviour Policy and Child Protection Policy and Procedures can be sourced on the School App and Website (<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>) .

3:4:1 For less serious one-off classroom discipline issues (disrespect for others, interfering with the learning of others, being unsafe etc.) the classroom teacher will apply normal classroom management strategies; they should record the incident. Parents may be contacted by a note in the Homework Diary or by a phone call. Similarly, the Homework Diary may be used to communicate improvements in attitude or effort by a pupil.

3:4:2 Where a classroom teacher or the Principal has concerns regarding pastoral issues or ongoing/serious classroom discipline issues relating to a pupil, it would be appropriate to first check for any pastoral or discipline alerts or pupil history. It may be necessary to contact the Principal.

3:4:3 For on-going classroom discipline issues or serious one-off classroom discipline issues the classroom teacher will discuss the problems with the Principal.

- If a serious problem is identified, parents will be contacted as soon as possible (preferably on the day but no later than 24 hours) by phone, by the Principal.
- Notes are to be made of any phone contact or face to face interviews and filed for future reference and communication.
- A formal letter will be sent by the Principal to inform the parents of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied.
- Information will be emailed to relevant academic/pastoral staff so that they are aware of the situation and can access relevant details.
- Follow-up contact with parents will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe.

3:4:4 For serious discipline issues outside the classroom:

- The Principal will contact parents preferably on the day of the event, but no later than 24 hours. If an investigation has not been completed, this contact is to inform parents that the matter is under investigation;
- Notes are to be made and kept of any phone contacts or face to face interviews;
- A phone call will be made, followed by a formal letter to inform parents of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied;

<http://creaveryprimary.schoolwebsite.scot/home>

- Follow-up contact with parents will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe;
- When an investigation results in the possibility of serious sanctions being applied, such as a suspension or expulsion, then the matter would be referred to the Principal. The initial contact will be a phone call, followed by a formal letter sent by the Principal to inform the parents of the outcomes of any investigation and any sanctions imposed;

3:4:5 For Pastoral issues where there may be concern for the welfare of a pupil, the matter will initially be referred to the Associate Principal (DTCP). The decision to contact parents would be taken following investigations and consultation with the Child Protection Team.

- When the pastoral issue is “reportable” (refer to Child Protection Policy) the matter must be reported direct to the designated Child Protection Officer, Associate Principal (DTPC) and DDTPC. Decisions to contact parents would be based on the procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

### **3:5 Responding to and following up Parent Enquiries.**

This section deals with responses to parent enquiries to teaching staff about pupil related issues.

3:5:1 Where a parent has contacted a staff member by phone or personal meeting, notes will be taken and all aspects of the conversation should be clarified.

3:5:2 When the contact is by email or if the staff member was not available to take the initial phone call, the parent should be responded to within 24 hours of the initial contact.

3:5:3 Where some action is agreed on following a meeting or communication, a time-frame should be established to either review progress or resolve the issue.

### **Procedures for Staff Communication with Parents & the Wider School Community.**

Should a staff member be directly approached by telephone, email or in person to answer specific factual questions on financial, logistic and/or high-level administrative matters then they should refer the enquiry on to someone with access to such information or to the Principal/Associate Principal. A response to this kind of enquiry will be made by the Principal/Associate Principal.

Matters of a private or sensitive nature regarding a teacher’s work or the work of others and questions inviting a teacher to offer judgements or personal views will not be discussed.

If questions are not factual but enquire into the area of policy and procedures, reasons or rationale for policies and procedures staff will courteously explain that a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) would be better equipped to answer the query and refer it on as outlined above.

### **Internal Staff Communication procedures:**

1. Communication with colleagues will be conducted in a professional and courteous manner.
2. Confidentiality and privacy are to be respected and maintained at all times.
3. All forms of communication with colleagues will reflect an understanding, empathy and respect for individual circumstances, differences and needs.
4. There is no time or room in this workplace for passing on hearsay, rumour or gossip. Staff will not engage in it or tolerate it from others. In particular, staff will not pass on to the actual person who was the subject of the hearsay, rumour or gossip what was being said about them.
5. If staff are uncomfortable or are concerned about matters that have been communicated, implied or suggested to you, and do not conform to this policy in fact or spirit you are to refer it to the Principal.
6. It is your responsibility to report any breaches of this policy to the Principal.
7. We have a responsibility to hold each other mutually accountable for maintaining and promoting a safe and respectful working environment.

## Annex A

### COMMUNICATION FROM SCHOOLS TO PARENTS AND CARERS

Dear Parent/Carer,

The Department of Education, employing authorities, sectoral support bodies, and teacher unions have jointly acknowledged the increasing demands placed on school-based staff. In support of staff wellbeing and to help manage workload effectively, schools have been asked to clearly communicate their normal operating hours and the appropriate ways for parents and carers to get in touch.

Please note the following:

#### **Normal Operating Hours**

- Monday: 08:45-15:45
- Tuesday: 08:45-15:45
- Wednesday: 08:45-15:45
- Thursday: 08:45-15:45
- Friday: 08:45-15:45

#### **Contacting the School**

If you need to get in touch with us, please use one of the following methods:

- Email: [info@creaveryps.antrim.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@creaveryps.antrim.ni.sch.uk)
- Phone: 028 9446 6915

#### **Speaking with Your Child's Teacher**

To speak with your child's teacher, please contact Mrs D Saunderson in the School Office to arrange a meeting or send an email to the school's email info account – see above.

**School staff are not expected or required to respond to communication from parents or others outside of the school's normal operating hours, except in the case of a critical incident.**

Yours sincerely



T R McMaster B.Ed. MBE

**Associate Principal.**