

# Inchicronan Central NS

## Parents as Partners Policy

### Introduction

The staff and Board of Management of Inchicronan Central NS are committed in assisting the school community in providing the optimum learning experience for all our pupils. We value the positive relationship we share with the parents/guardians in our school. This policy outlines roles and responsibilities and also informs parents as to how best they can support the school and its pupils. We very much acknowledge the role of parents and the wider community as partners in education and as the primary educators of their children and encourage them to be actively involved in the life of the school. Communication between school and home should be open and positive. We endeavour to create an open and welcoming atmosphere in our school. This policy outlines strategies adopted by the school to promote positive home-school relations.

This policy was devised by the Principal and In-School Management team following consultation with staff and the Parents' Association. The views of the general body of parents are included collated from responses received in a questionnaire.

### Rationale:

The Board of Management and staff fully endorse the following statement in the Primary Curriculum: *Parents are the child's primary educators, and the life of the home is the most potent factor in his/her development during the primary school years. There is a continuing process through which the child's formal learning experience in the school interacts with the less formal developmental experience of the home and the family. It is widely recognised that significant educational, social and behavioural benefits accrue to the child as a result of effective partnership between parents and teachers. Close co-operation between the home and the school is essential, therefore, if children are to receive the maximum benefit from the curriculum.*

Consequently this policy on parental involvement was devised at this time for the following reasons:

- To celebrate and build on the existing good practice in our school
- For its benefits to pupil learning
- The promotion of partnership
- In response to legislation Education Act, 1998; Education Welfare Act, 2000
- As part of the School Self Evaluation Process.

### Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School:

The mission of this school is to enable every child to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually, aesthetically, emotionally and physically to their full potential in a stimulating, friendly, safe, and comfortable environment. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

### Aims:

By introducing this policy the school community hopes

- To build a school community committed to supporting all its pupils
- To establish procedures for the sharing of information in relation to pupil progress and attainment.
- To enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents. Parents as a group have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children. It is our policy to identify parents with specific skills and to invite those parents to share their skills with us at a school and a class level.

Respect for the professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibilities of the Principal, Patron and the Board of Management is always an important consideration.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Parents have a right to**

- Expect that their child will be safe in school
- Be treated with courtesy and respect
- Have access to information about their child's performance and the educational programmes and opportunities available
- Be actively involved in the education of their child
- Have access to a complaints and appeals procedure

### **Parents have responsibility for**

- Sending their child to school ready to learn
- Ensuring that the child attend school regularly and punctually
- Informing the school of any change in the child's circumstances
- Ensuring the child has the required books, copies and requisites.
- Being aware of the child's work and progress
- Keeping in touch with their child's teachers and Principal
- Responding to communication from school
- Attending important school meetings and events
- Complying with school policies
- Working in partnership with the school

### **Principals and Teachers have the right to**

- Be treated with courtesy and respect
- A private existence in their community
- Due process and fairness in relation to any complaints from parents/guardians

### **Principals and Teachers are responsible for**

- Ensuring the safety of the children in their care
  - Complying with school policies
  - Teaching the pupils to the best of their ability
  - Teaching the curriculum as prescribed by the DES
  - Using appropriate teaching methods to allow for differentiation
  - Evaluating and recording children's work at regular intervals
  - Promoting communication with parents and the community
- All staff members, parents, pupils and BoM members share responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Parents as Partners Policy

### **Guidelines /Ways to become involved:**

Parents are invited and encouraged to become involved in the school in many ways and at many levels, for example:

- Develop close links with the school
- Collaborate with staff 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.
- Serving on school bodies (Board of Management, Parent Association)
- Serving on in school committees (Green Schools, Active Schools)
- Fundraising
- Policy development e.g. Code of Behaviour, Relationships and Sexuality Education, Homework, Healthy Lunch Policy etc.
- In the school/classroom during particular activities e.g. sporting activities, trips, sponsored walk, walk to school initiatives etc.

### **Parents' Association:**

A vibrant and supportive Parent Association is in existence in our school. Membership is open to all parents/guardians of pupils enrolled in the school. There is open communication between the Association and the principal which ensures effective communication between staff and parents. Regular meetings are held attended by the Principal. An AGM is held in September each year to which all parents are invited. A chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary are elected. The association operates under a constitution approved by the Board of Management. Meetings are recorded and a synopsis reported to the Board of Management. The Parents' Association organises events such as uniform-swap day, Movie day, children's table quiz and are available to help at events such as school shows, school trips, walk to school initiatives etc. Parents representatives contribute to school committees eg Green Schools, Active Schools etc and organise information evenings for parents. The Association fundraises for equipment and facilities not possible to purchase out of general school funds.

### **Board of Management:**

The Board of Management manages the school on behalf of the Patron and is accountable to the Patron and the Minister of Education and Skills. The BOM is constituted of eight members. Two of the members are Parent Nominees elected following the Procedures and Guidelines for Boards of Management. The Board of Management has a minimum of one meeting per school year and not less than five meetings in any school year. One parent nominee is delegated as liaison officer with the Parent Association reporting relevant board business.

### **Policy Consultation and SSE**

Parents are invited to take part in the review of policies in the school. Parental consultation regarding policies where appropriate is conducted through various measures but primarily through the Parent Association. Parents are made aware of draft policies on our school web site and a hard copy is also available on request from the school office. On occasion parents are invited to form a policy development committee in the formulation/revision of certain policies. Parents are involved in the School Self Evaluation process through the use of questionnaires, surveys & focus groups.

### **Curriculum Plans**

Parents are advised at formal Parent/Teacher meetings and informal meetings throughout the school year of ways in which they can support their child's learning. Hints, tips and advice are provided to parents as to how best they can support their child's learning. Parents of children attending SET are invited to meet the teacher formally and informally to consult in the devising of School Support Plans.

### **Communication**

- **Formal Parent Teacher Meetings**

We realise the importance of early and honest communication with parents and parents are invited to attend formal parent teacher meetings in the first term to discuss their child's progress academically and socially. The meetings are held outside of formal teaching hours in accordance with Circular 14/04

The purpose of Parent/Teacher meetings is

- *To facilitate an exchange of information among staff and parents*
- *To establish and maintain good communication between school and parents*
- *To let parents know how their children are doing in school*
- *To learn more about the child from the parents perspective*
- *To identify ways in which parents can help their children*
- *To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education*
- *To inform parents of standardised test results*

The SET team in the school are also available to meet parents on that day. A timetable is drawn up allocating 10 minutes to each meeting and times for siblings are co-ordinated. To meet the needs of parents who are unavailable to attend on the selected dates an arrangement is in place to organise a



meeting on a day that suits all parties involved. Requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's class teacher individually.

- **Formal Meetings- School Support Plans**

Formal timetabled meetings on the subject of the School Support Plans for the parents of pupils who attend the SET take place in September/October. Parents may request a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child's needs and progress.

- **Informal Meetings**

Informal meetings are held as frequently as needed and parents are requested to (a) email the class teacher; (b) write a note in the homework journal if they wish to meet the teacher or (c) to arrange an appointment through the school secretary.

- **Homework Journals**

These provide an effective means of daily communication between parent and teacher from 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Class. A homework folder is used in the Infant Classes. Parents should check journals/folders on a nightly basis and sign the relevant section when homework is completed. Teachers and parents may use the journal to communicate with each other.

- **Absence Notes.**

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act and to comply with school policy parents are required to provide an explanation in writing following a child's absence from school. This can be uploaded onto the schools online communication portal (Aladdin).

- **Induction Meeting for New Parents**

An induction meeting is held each year in June for the parents of the incoming Junior Infant Class. Parents are invited to this meeting by letter or email. Parents receive an induction pack at this meeting. School policies and information is discussed. This meeting provides a forum to allay any fears they may have regarding their child's learning and happiness. The Infant Curriculum is outlined and parents are advised on ways to help their child. Parents are made aware that Inchicronan Central NS is an open school that encourages and fosters good communication between all the partners in education. Parents' questions are invited and answered at this meeting.

### **End of Year Report Cards**

Parents/Guardians receive an End of Year Report Card in June every year. This Report Card outlines each pupil's progress for the year including their performance on Standardised Tests (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>). The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas

- *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 can support their child's learning*

An NCCA explanatory letter is also included with the Report Card to explain test scores. Reports are distributed two weeks before the end of term to facilitate parents who wish to discuss their child's report card with the class teacher.

- **Web Site**

This is an excellent means of communication between parents and school. The web site is used to celebrate happenings and achievements in the school and also to disseminate information and school news. The web site is updated regularly.

- **Notice Boards**

Notice boards are located at the main door and at the main entrance. Relevant current information is displayed.

- **Sacramental Preparation**

Parents can take an active role in the preparation of their children for First Confession, First Holy Communion & Confirmation. A committee is formed each year to co-ordinate the running of the Do This In Memory Programme, a parish based initiative for Second Class children. Parents are also involved in the preparation of pupils who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- **Newsletters**

A newsletter is produced twice monthly and emailed to all families. The newsletter contains news and reports of school and class events. The calendar for the coming year is decided in June each year and is distributed to parents in the summer newsletter.

- **Aladdin Connect**

- The school uses Aladdin Connect to securely communicate and share information with parents/guardians.

- **Posted Communication**

- All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested. It is the responsibility of each parent to provide up to date information to the school. A request for post to be sent to a second address must be made in writing to the Principal.

- **Telephone Contact**

Parents may contact the school office on 065 6827183. Teachers may not take telephone calls during teaching time as they are required to be in their classrooms teaching and supervising their classes. A parent may pass on information via the school secretary, through email to the class teacher and teachers can return calls if necessary outside class time.

The school may on occasion need to contact parents by phone. Parents provide contact phone numbers on the enrolment form and also nominate an alternative contact should they be unavailable. It is the responsibility of each parent to ensure contact information and phone numbers are up to date.

### **School Events**

The school hosts events during the year that involve the participation of parents/guardians in school life. Examples of these include Christmas Shows, Graduation Evening, Sponsored Walk, Sports Day etc.

### **Liaising with other agencies**

- **TUSLA**

- Parents are made aware of the role of the Education Welfare Officer in communicating with parents whose children have missed more than 20 school days.

- **NEPS**

- Pupils may be referred by the Principal to the NEPS Educational psychologist for assessment, following consultation with parents.

- **SENO**

- Applications may be made to the Special Education Needs Organiser for in-school supports for pupils with special needs. Parental input is integral in the process.

- **HSE**

- Nurses and other personnel from the HSE visit the school to administer national programmes such as vision and hearing tests and to administer vaccinations. Parental consent is required.

### **Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School**

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents 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, 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.

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones, including passive aggressiveness, are not acceptable and in addition, this extends to aggressiveness in writing through the home/school communication, which is also 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 rare cases, the Gardaí will be called.
- All stakeholders will treat our pupils with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's right to privacy.
- Should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved. Classes begin at 9:20a.m. and finish at 3:00p.m. and this time should not be interrupted.
- 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 will be agreed beforehand and these should be respected by all parties.

### **Procedures for Addressing Complaints**

It is acknowledged that disagreements and/or complaints may arise from time-to-time. The primary thrust of the Parents as Partners Policy outlined above is seen as supporting a preventative rather than a curative response to the difficulties that may occasionally develop.

It is envisaged that all disputes/challenges should be addressed initially at a more informal level, usually involving contact and communication between parent(s) and teacher(s). Experience has shown that where a mutually respectful willingness among parent(s) and teacher(s) exists to discuss difficulties and to engage in a solution-driven approach to addressing such disputes/challenges, then the majority of such matters are resolved speedily and to the satisfaction of all involved. Where a satisfactory resolution of the issues is not achieved at the more informal level, then parent(s) and/or teacher(s) may wish to pursue the matter further and involve themselves in a more formal approach to seek resolution of the matter.

Appendix 1 outlines the Complaints Procedure agreed by the INTO and CPSMA in 1993 and adopted by the Board of Management of Inchicronan Central NS.

### **Health and Safety Issues**

Inchicronan Central NS prides itself on being an open, welcoming place for all members of the school community. However, in order to provide a safe and supportive environment for all who work and learn in the school the following procedures are in place:

- All school access/exit doors are controlled by an access control system. All visitors (including parents/guardians) to the school must report to the secretary's office to gain admission to the school.
- A closed circuit monitoring/recording system (CCTV) has been installed outside the school building. This is operational outside of school hours.
- As the BoM is responsible for the Health and Safety of all members of the school community, parents/guardians are not allowed to challenge/reprimand another person's child on the school premises.
- The willingness of parents to be involved in a voluntary capacity with such support activities as is valued and very much appreciated by the school. However, in order to protect the privacy and integrity of all members of the school community, such volunteers are required to respect the confidential and/or sensitive nature of information which may come to their attention during the course of their work in the school. All parents must complete Garda Vetting before participating in activities in the school.

### **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for Boards of Managements and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

The Board of Management takes its duty of care to school employees very seriously. It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, including passive aggressive behaviour, shouting, bullying and threats. Additionally, assaults or other forms of intimidation may occur. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other members or intruders.

In respect of the occurrence of the above, all staff should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97**, which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular can be found in Appendix 2.

#### **Success Criteria**

The school evaluates the success of this Policy through:

- Positive and supportive engagement and participation of parents, staff, BoM members and pupils in the education process
- The extent to which there exists a mutually-beneficial, supportive and positive atmosphere and relationship among all members of the school community
- Feedback, as appropriate, from all members of the school community
- Indications that the smooth and efficient running and organisation of the school is enhanced through the implementation of this policy
- The indications that the facilitation and implementation of the Home/School Partnership Policy are enhancing the learning opportunities of the pupils of the

#### **Timeframe**

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Inchicronan Central National School on

05/12/22.

The first annual review will be held on Nov/Dec '23 and procedures will be reviewed annually each Nov/Dec.

#### **Communication**

Following ratification this policy will be uploaded to the school website.

#### **Ratification**

The policy ratified by B.O.M on.. 05/12/22

Signed: Shane O'Donnell ( Chairperson)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_