



Parental Involvement Policy

NB This is a translation of the original Irish Document

All references will be taken from the wording of the Irish document

Introductory Statement

The Board of Management and staff of Gaelscoil Sáirséal recognise the importance of the involvement of parents/guardians in the school setting. This policy was begun in September 2008. Deirdre Ághas and Ríona de Liostúin drew up a draft policy. There was cooperation between the Board of Management, staff and parents/guardians of the school in the process.

Rationale

Gaelscoil Sáirséal is a school community where pupils, teachers and parents/guardians cooperate and help each other for the good of the school. The main aim of this policy is to ensure a good relationship and effective communication between all parties and that the pupils of the school are provided with the highest quality educational opportunities available. This policy will describe the ways in which parents/guardians can support and enhance the school community.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Gaelscoil Sáirséal seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

Aims

- To develop a school community that is committed to supporting every child
- To encourage positive relations between the school community
- To establish procedure 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.

Objectives

- To identify the most effective means by which parents/guardians and the community can support the school and the children in it
- To outline various roles and responsibilities for the school, parents/guardians and the wider school community, in order for this policy to succeed and to be effectively implemented.

Guidelines

These guidelines address parental involvement in the following areas

1. Parent Association
2. Board of Management
3. Vision / Mission and Aims
4. Organisational policies and curriculum plans
5. Communication
6. Guest speakers

1. Parent Association

The Education Act of 1998 states that parents have the right to establish a Parent Association in a school and that this association will be open to all parents/guardians with children attending that school. The Parent Association works in co-ordination with the Board of Management, Principal and school staff to establish

effective partnership between school and home. When there is effective partnership between school and home children are happier and are more likely to achieve greater academic success.

Role

The Education Act of 1998 sets out the role of a Parent Association

“(2) A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of a school and for that purpose may –

(a) advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the Principal or board, as the case may be, shall have regard to any such advice, and

(b) adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents, in consultation with the Principal, in the operation of the school.”

(Education Act 1998 Part VI 26.2)

Parents/guardians in Gaelscoil Sáirséal who are involved with the Parent Association are encouraged to support the school by the following means:

- Create and maintain effective communication
- Network with other parents/guardians and encourage them to take on a more active role in their child's school life
- To raise money for the school by organizing fundraising events. The Parent Association must provide a written submission of all fundraising activities to the Board of Management before these activities are undertaken. The submission must contain a description of the event, the cost of running the event and the expected revenue of the event. All monies raised shall be for a specified purpose subject to prior agreement with Principal/Board of Management.

“Fundraising in the name of the school must have the prior consent of the board of management. A Parents' Association should consult with the Board about fundraising for the school or school projects. The approval of the board is needed before these funds are raised. The expenditure of these funds is by the board of management, in consultation with the parents' association. All monies raised or generated for an agreed project for the school should be lodged to the school account.” CPSMA Handbook

- To organize extra-curricular activities (*See school policy on Extra-Curricular Activities*)
- To help and advise the school staff and Principal on the school planning process. The school Principal, in conjunction with the staff leads the planning process in Gaelscoil Sáirséal.
- To affirm the work being done by the teachers and staff of Gaelscoil Sáirséal.

All of the above to be carried out in partnership with the Board of Management, Principal and School Staff

National Parents Council

It is recommended that the Parent Association of Gaelscoil Sáirséal be affiliated to the Nation Parents Council Primary.

The Members

Every parent/guardian is a member of the wider Parent Association; however, it is not practical for each and every parent/guardian to be part of the Executive Committee therefore an Executive Committee is to be elected from the parent body. The Executive Committee is a small group of elected parents who manage the tasks and affairs of the committee. In order for the Parent Association to be an effective one, this committee must work together as a team.

The members of the Executive Committee are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Parent Association. To become a member of the Executive Committee one must have a child enrolled in Gaelscoil Sáirséal. A representative from each class level in the school must be elected at the AGM. The guidelines

relating to maximum and minimum representatives are contained in the Constitution of the Parent Association. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer are chosen at the AGM.

Training

It is recommended that the Parent Association avail of the training that is provided by the National Parents Council Primary. This training provides an explanation of the role of the Parent Association, it helps parents/guardians to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and procedures for the effective running of the Association and, this training also helps develop an understanding of the importance of developing and maintaining positive relationships with all school partners.

Planning and Management of the Association

The Executive Committee is a team and openness and co-operation are essential.

The Parent Association, in partnership with the Board of Management should draft a Constitution. The Constitution contains guidelines pertaining to good practice. The aims, structures, sub-committees, members, funding, changes etc should be described in the Constitution.

The Executive Committee should meet regularly. It is recommended that an agenda be set for the meetings and this agenda should be adhered to. The Secretary should take the minutes. The minutes are a record of decisions taken by the Executive Committee, statements by or opinions of individual committee members should not be recorded in the minutes. The minutes should be agreed and signed at the following meeting.

The main aims of the Parent Association for each school year should be agreed by the Executive Committee at the meeting following the AGM. It is strongly recommended that these aims be discussed and agreed with the school Principal.

The Executive Committee has the authority to establish sub-committees to help with tasks e.g.: fundraising/building committee etc.

Annual General Meeting

An Annual General Meeting of the Parent Association of Gaelscoil Sáirséal should be held in October each year. It is recommended that a notice of 10 working days be given before this meeting. The parents/guardians are advised of this in a note that is sent home with the children. To ensure the meeting is run smoothly, an agenda should be set out and strictly adhered to. The school Principal should be provided with this agenda before the meeting.

The school Principal should be invited to attend the AGM.

The work and progress of the Association during the previous school year is discussed at this meeting. A new Executive Committee is elected. It is recommended that fundraising activities, extra-curricular activities, guest speakers and previously organized activities be discussed.

To ensure equality and to protect children's rights, parents /guardians should not mention or discuss incidents relating to individual children at the AGM. Teachers should not be mentioned by name or by inference at the AGM. The AGM is not a forum for parents to raise personal issues or grievances, there is another process in place in Gaelscoil Sáirséal to deal with these issues. The advice of the Principal/Principal's Representative should be adhered to should any of the above mentioned issues be raised at the AGM. In this case the parents/guardians should make an appointment to speak to the class teacher/principal to discuss the issue and come to a satisfactory resolution. Parents/Guardians of the school should be respectful and mannerly towards school staff and members of the school community who attend the AGM.

Meetings of the Executive Committee

The new Chairperson/Secretary should compile a list of names and contact numbers of all the new Executive Committee members directly after the AGM in order to arrange the first meeting of the Executive Committee. A weeks notice should be given before each meeting. The Executive Committee should hold regular meetings. It is recommended that an agenda be set for the meetings and this agenda should be adhered to. This agenda should be discussed with the school Principal before the meeting to ensure that all

aspects of it fall under the remit of the Parent Association. It is recommended that the Principal/Principal's Representative attend the meetings of the Executive Committee. The Secretary should take the minutes. The minutes are a record of decisions taken by the Executive Committee, statements by or opinions of individual committee members should not be recorded in the minutes. If the Principal/Principal's Representative is unable to attend a meeting the Committee should decide on relevant points to be brought to his/her attention. The Chairperson should make an appointment with the Principal and bring these points to his/her attention. It is recommended that the date of the next meeting be agreed, if possible at the end of every meeting.

The Parent Association and School Parents/Guardians

There should be an elected representative from each class level in Gaelscoil Sáirséal on the Executive Committee of the Parent Association. The parents/guardians should be informed of who their relevant representative is and what the role of this representative is. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to consult with their class representative on general matters pertaining to the Association. These general questions may be discussed at the meetings of the Executive Committee and if necessary the Chairperson may bring them to the attention of the Principal. The Parent Association should not act on behalf of any parent/guardian or handle any specific complaint on behalf of a parent/guardian. In the case that a parent/guardian approaches a committee member with a specific complaint the committee member should advise them that they should speak to the class teacher or Principal. See Appendix 1 School Complaints Procedure.

Supporting School Work

The Parent Association supports the work done in the school by encouraging effective communication, inform teachers/Principal of interesting/educational events taking place in the locality, and to use their skills and talents for the good of the school.

Awareness and Support of School Policies

It is advised that a sub-committee of the Parent Association be established to help form school policies. The Principal directs the planning process in the school and the Board of Management approve policies and curricular plans. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to be part of the planning process through the planning sub-committee who reads the policies/plans and passes on the suggestions of the parents. These suggestions are presented to the Board of Management who will then make a decision in regard to their relevance. The members of the Parent Association should be familiar with school policies and should support and respect these policies and the rationale which lead to their formation.

The Parent Association and Communication with School Staff

One of the fundamental roles of the Parent Association in any school is to support the work being done in the school and to affirm that work. The Parent Association and School Staff should treat each other respectfully at all times. There is a tradition of respect and co-operation between Parent Association and School Staff in Gaelscoil Sáirséal, this helps to foster a positive learning atmosphere in the school. The Parent Association should be aware of the procedures that are in place in the school for meeting with a member of staff.

If a parent/guardian wishes to speak to a teacher or the Principal they must contact the school office in order to arrange a meeting. Members of the Parent Association are not permitted to speak to a class teacher or the Principal with regard to children of other people. Groups of parents/guardians are not permitted to attempt to meet with teachers/Principal without an appointment. Individual children will be discussed with their parents only.

The Parent Association and Communication with the Board of Management

The Parent Association of Gaelscoil Sáirséal is a sub-committee of the Board of Management. Any issues which need to be brought to the attention of the Board of Management should be in written format. The prior permission of the Board of Management is required before the Parent Association organizes fundraising or social events. The submission should include a description of the proposed event, the costs involved and the

expected income to be raised. Any monies raised by the Parent Association must be for a specific purpose which has been agreed by the Principal and Board of Management.

The Parent Association and Money

With the permission of the Board of Management, the Parent Association may hold their own bank account. The amount of money contained in this account should not exceed the day to day running costs of the Association and the cost of organising Board of Management approved events. As with any account opened in the school name, two Board of Management approved signatories must be nominated. It is advised that one signatory be a member of the Board of Management and the other be a member of the Parent Association. The Parent Association must keep accurate accounts of all monies and present a copy of their annual accounts to the Board of Management each year.

2. The Board of Management

There is a mother's representative and a father's representative on the Board of Management of Gaelscoil Sáirséal. To fair representation these representatives should not be related to any other Board members. Sandra Nic Oscair is the current mother's representative and Jim Cleary is the current father's representative. These representatives are elected by the parents of Gaelscoil Sáirséal. Jim Cleary is the Treasurer of the Board of Management. The Parents' Representatives attend all Board of Management meetings. They inform parents/guardians of relevant information with the prior approval of the Board. Board of Management meetings are Private and Confidential, parent representatives should not inform parents of any issues discussed during Board meetings except those which have received Board approval.

3. Vision/Mission and Aims

The following is a quote from the mission statement of Gaelscoil Sáirséal:

"Our aim is to create a virtuous, Gaelic setting in Gaelscoil Sáirséal where the children's ability to learn is boosted by a positive, happy learning atmosphere. The teachers understand that they are "in loco parentis" and our aim is to foster a loving, understanding and respectful relationship between staff and students. Our goal is to achieve an open, cooperative, communicative and positive atmosphere where teachers and students work hand in hand for the good of the school. Gaelscoil Sáirséal believes strongly in the principle of equality and this philosophy is promoted among teachers and pupils alike in order to promote mutual respect.

Parents/guardians should support this vision and help the school staff to achieve this vision. The good and positive example set by parents is a key element to the achievement of this vision.

Our aim is to achieve the general aims for Primary Education as set out in the Revised Curriculum for Primary Schools 1999. Parents/Guardians will be informed of these aims through the school handbook.

4. Organisational Policies and Curriculum Plans

When the Organisational Policies and Curriculum Plans of Gaelscoil Sáirséal are being reviewed school parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to present their opinions to the Board of Management through the Principal. Questionnaires will be distributed among parents/guardians looking for suggestions or appropriate changes. Every effort is made to use the talents and skills of the members of the school community and any helpful suggestions or advice which comes to light through the questionnaires will be welcomed. These suggestions will then be put to the Board of Management for discussion.

Members of the school community will be given the opportunity to participate in the drafting of new school policies before they receive Board of Management approval. Parents/guardians may read any of the school curricular plans or organisational policies in the school by making an appointment to do so.

Parents/guardians will be informed of various relevant policies through the school handbook.

Parents/guardians are given information on the class curriculum during the information meetings at the beginning of the school year.

Parents/guardians may support and enhance the school curriculum by encouraging their child's interest in a particular subject area, by encouraging their child to take part in sporting and extra curricular activities, by sharing any information or special talent with the Principal that could help enhance the work being done in the school.

Parents/guardians play a central role in formulating an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) for their own child. (This only applies to children who are in receipt of resource/learning support teaching) They provide important information to the teacher and help choose appropriate objectives in conjunction with the class teacher and the Learning Support/Resource Teacher. Parents/guardians can provide support by revising work done in school and completing extra tasks when needed.

Please see the school policy on Extra Curricular Activities for ways in which parents can become involved in that area.

It is expected that parents/guardians will support the Curricular Plans and Organisational Policies of Gaelscoil Sáirséal.

The following is a list of Organisational Policies that are available to the parents/guardians

- ✚ Child Protection
- ✚ Behaviour
- ✚ Equality
- ✚ Mobile Phone
- ✚ Anti-bullying
- ✚ Extra-Curricular Activities
- ✚ Enrolment
- ✚ Medicines
- ✚ Healthy Lunch
- ✚ Supervision
- ✚ Assessment
- ✚ Homework
- ✚ Parental Involvement
- ✚ Health and Safety
- ✚ Accidents and Injuries
- ✚ Attendance
- ✚ School Tours
- ✚ Substance Use

5. Communication

Gaelscoil Sáirséal recognises the importance of communication between the school staff and school parents/guardians. Certain procedures are in place to encourage good communication

Information Meetings

Parents/guardians are given information about the class curriculum and ways to support and help their children during the information meetings which take place at the beginning of the 1st term. Parents/guardians are encouraged to speak to the teacher about any questions or concerns they may have about their child's progress.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Parent/Teacher meetings take place at the beginning of February each year. The aim of these meetings is to provide parents/guardians with information about the progress of their child and to give parents/guardians the opportunity to discuss any issues they may have with the teacher. The teacher will give advice and tips to the parents/guardians during the meeting.

School Report

Written school reports for every child are sent home at the end of the 3rd term. These reports describe the academic and social progress of each child during the school year. Results of end of year tests and any standardised tests are provided in these reports. A report on attendance and punctuality is also included. Any additional work which is necessary during the summer holidays is noted.

Homework Diary

Children from 1st to 6th class use a homework diary. There is a weekly space for teacher/parent/guardian notes. Parents/guardians are encouraged to use the homework diary for short notes regarding homework/early collection/illness. It can also be used to arrange a meeting with the class teacher.

Newsletter

The school newsletter is used to share information and news with the parents/guardians. School events are described and parents/guardians are reminded of school policies.

Notes

Notes are sent home from the school office. They are given to the children to put in their school bags. Parents/guardians are reminded at the beginning of the year to check their children's bags daily.

Notice Board

A parent/guardian notice board for infants is in the hall and there is another one for 1st - 6th class outside the secretary's office. Information about school events or other interesting events in the locality are displayed on these notice boards.

Fundraising

The secretary provides receipts to all parents/guardians when they pay school costs/annual contributions.

Meetings with teachers

The procedure in Gaelscoil Sáirséal for organising a meeting with a teacher is as follows: parents/guardians may request a meeting with a teacher by writing a note in their child's homework diary or by contacting the school office. Parents/guardians should not expect teachers/principal to meet with them without a prearranged appointment. This procedure is in place for practical reasons; the teacher must prepare for the meeting, organise supervision for the class if necessary.

6. Educational Welfare Officer

Parents/guardians are reminded of the role of the Educational Welfare Officer during the information meetings. The importance of regular attendance is emphasised. Reference is made to attendance during the Parent/Teacher meetings and in the school report.

7. Guest Speakers

Guest speakers are welcome in Gaelscoil Sáirséal. The Parent Association, in consultation with the school principal, may organise guest speakers to speak to the parents/guardians. This will take place outside of school hours.

8. Implementation

This policy will be ratified by the Board of Management during the 3rd term of the 2008/2009 school year and will be implemented during the 2009/2010 school year.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed during the 2013/2014 school year.

10. Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

School Complaints Procedure (INTO guidelines)

<http://www.into.ie/ROI/LegalAndIndustrialRelations/ParentTeacherRelations/INTOManagementComplaintsProcedure/>

The INTO and CPSMA reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the board of management, except where those complaints are deemed by the board to be:

- on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Science;
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher s/he should approach the principal with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the board of management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the board of management.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties with five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:
 - supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.
3. If the board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
 - the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
 - the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
 - the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
 - the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and
 - the meeting of the board of management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.
3. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
4. CPSMA or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement 'days' means school days.