



Lucan CNS



Effective Communications Protocol for Lucan CNS

Effective Communications

This is a whole school policy for students, staff and parents in Lucan Community National School. This compliments the ETB grievance procedures policy for national schools, which can be found on our school website. This policy aims to ensure effective communication strategies are implemented and embedded in Lucan CNS, between the school and all our partners in Education.

In ensuring inclusivity and co-operation, this policy maintains and improves the current channels of communication among all stakeholders in the school and with all our partners in education, namely communication between staff and children, staff and parents and the school and the wider community.

Relationship to our school mission statement

Good communication is essential to maintaining a positive working and learning environment. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect in a happy, caring and supportive environment means that people feel included, consulted and informed. This requires that we use of a variety of channels of communication so as to ensure that the relevant people receive the necessary information.

The goal of this policy is to contribute to effective communication within the school, with the Board of Management, with the staff, with parents and with the local community, so as to maintain a good working, social and personal environment. This promotes efficiency and contributes to achieving the objectives of our school.

Channels of communication.

This policy encourages the use of the most effective communications mechanisms, depending on context, while ensuring the rights of staff, students and parents.

- i. The school encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of relevant and appropriate information through a variety of mechanisms. (see **Appendix 1** for the range of communications mechanisms used in the school)
- ii. The school is committed to consultation with staff, students and parents over school matters, in a way that is consistent with effective management.
- iii. The staff recognise the importance of face-to-face communication, in that it can frequently be more effective than written communication
- iv. The school seeks constantly to improve communication and will consult staff, students and parents to seek their views.

- v. All internal communications should be expressed clearly and mechanisms put in place to ensure this happens.
- vi. As far as possible staff and/or students and parents are informed of important school issues no later than the media or other external bodies.

Use of email and the web

Email and the web are used modes of written communication for all staff, students and parents. Clear guidelines are provided by the ETB on the use of electronic media. Refer to the ICT policy for details.

Lucan CNS is a digital Primary school, utilising all the benefits of a such a platform for our staff, parents and students.

Communication between Staff:

Staff Email: Each staff member is assigned an ETB-School based email: This is for teacher's professional use and is used for school/professional work only. Teachers may use this email address for liaising with parents and/or the wider school community. The use of the email for students and parents is at the discretion of each class teacher.

Staff Sharepoint: All internal planning, amalgamation of resources for pupils, policy development, timetabling for staff are uploaded on an internal website for Lucan CNS via Sharepoint. Collaborative planning, sharing of resources and best practice are all brought together on this platform, combined with face-to-face staff meetings. Disemmination of information for staff is done through internal emailing, staff meeting presentations on CPD, staff noticeboard in the staffroom and our online noticeboard on Sharepoint.

Communication with Parents:

The School Website: The school website is the school's main platform for disemminating relevant information to the parents and wider community. The website outlines:

- School policies
- Information on activities at various class levels
- A Parent's section with relevant information and updates
- A noticeboard on the main homepage outlining important dates for the term
- Homepage links to the school's twitter handle where teachers upload daily activities taking place in their class.
- A section for the Board of Management outlining updates and reports for parents from meetings
- Enrolment forms and
- Contact information

Aladdin Data-base:

Aladdin is an admin web-based software system enabling the school to organise

- Parents/Guardian contacts and information
- Enrolment figures for the Department of Education
- Streamline attendance and tracking of roll books
- Collection of monies at each class level
- Ease the burden of some administrative tasks
- Send email and texts to parents
- Upload important messages for individual teachers from the office

The Aladdin system is used for sending relevant information to parents. Texts are used when possible and important documents such as policies, PDF documents such as Newsletters are emailed.

Teacher and Parent Communication:

Classdojo:

Class Dojo is a web-based tool which connects parents, teachers and pupils in building a learning community online and within the classroom. Teachers use this tool for reinforcing good behaviour, particular skills they are focusing on in the classroom and also use it as a platform to share the good work of the class with parents. Teachers use the messaging tool within this for passing on particular information to parents. Guidelines and streamlining of the usage of this tool for Lucan CNS is set out in **Appendix 2**.

The aim of Classdojo is to ensure greater connectivity between the parent and the classroom. This does not replace face-to-face meetings and discussions/concerns a teacher/parent may have regarding their child. The sole purpose of Classdojo is to enhance learning opportunities and expand the conversation of learning between parents and child at home.

Personal and confidential information

Personal data is protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

The privacy of personal communications is preserved in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

Some categories and items of information regarding both staff and students need to be kept confidential. All staff are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom the information is transmitted. The ETB Data Protection Policy outlines the role of staff in this

regard. Internal communications using electronic media must be conducted under the acceptable Usage Policy of the school.

Policy in relation to face to face communication channels

(i) Teacher with Teacher:

Recognising its importance, the school encourages best practice in communication among all staff; between mainstream teachers and SNAs and ancillary staff ; and between senior management and all staff. In promoting a caring and nurturing culture in Lucan CNS, good personal relationships between staff members are encouraged, promoted and fostered.

Ethos:

Central to ensuring a courteous and respectful environment is the school's focus on creating and maintaining a positive ethos and culture among staff.

Culture Committee:

A focus on values and beliefs is paramount to ensuring cohesion and a shared vision among all staff. Via a series of staff culture workshops, a culture committee, with ISM team, ensures the monitoring and progress of this at whole school level. The Culture committee is made up of three staff members who monitor core values and whole-school participation among our staff.

Restorative Practice:

An ethos of Love and Respect is promoted and practiced through a series of training sessions, most notable "Restorative Practice (RP)". All staff are trained in RP each year, whereby they are given the language and skills around conflict resolution and restoring relationships. Constructive and respectful dialogue with a solution focused approach is encouraged among all staff members.

Sharing of best practice:

Staff meetings are held at least twice a month. The minutes are recorded, circulated by Deputy Principal and filed away by the Principal. An Agenda is sent to all staff prior to the meeting. Communication at these meetings centres around:

- Staff Well-Being: checking in
- School Improvement Planning: curricular and organisational
- Sharing of CPD
- Policy development

(ii) Teacher and Principal:

In ensuring the wellbeing and support of all staff members, mentoring sessions are offered to all staff each term. Times and dates are emailed by the Principal to all staff members. These sessions offer each class teacher a

chance to reflect on their goals for the term, form plans for the term ahead and foresee any challenges that may require support/guidance from the school in how these can be achieved, both from a teaching perspective and personal one. Notes of these meetings are kept on record by the Principal, a copy of which is given to the teacher.

(iii) The Principal and Deputy Principal:

Effective communication between the Principal and Deputy Principal is essential to ensuring a close and effective partnership in education for the entire school community. A shared vision, focus and plan ensures that all staff are led in one direction – “making a difference, every day in every way.”

The Principal and Deputy Principal meet every Monday morning. This meeting outlines important dates for the school, particular issues which may have arisen unexpectedly, planning reports with various teams for initiatives and areas of focus on staff and areas for focus for whole staff meetings.

In ensuring a cohesive and collaborative approach, both the Principal and Deputy Principal undertake external “Forbairt” training together through PDST. This consists of workshops away and locally with a focus on Effective Leadership.”

Further 1:1 meetings take place each month with a core focus on strategies for development in Lucan CNS, plans for the year and term ahead a focus on key performing indicators to ensure we are achieving our goals.

Newly appointed teachers

All new teachers and current teachers take part in an induction course at the start of the academic year. They are also supplied with an updated policies and procedures.

Newly appointed teachers are mentored by the Deputy Principal, most notably in relation to on-going planning and probation. Assistance with planning templates, whole school planning and teaching methodologies take the format of these meetings, weekly. Mentor meetings also take place between teacher and Principal where supports are implemented if required in the above. On-going evaluation and support is provided by the Principal in the form of observation of classes, team teaching with newly appointed teachers and constructive feedback given at the end of this.

(iii) Ancillary staff

The ancillary staff are very important in supporting the teachers and students in having a orderly, safe and clean school environment. Maintaining courteous and professional relationships with the ancillary staff is important for all members of the school community.

In particular, teachers are requested to instruct and supervise students leaving the classroom tidy in order to

facilitate room cleaning.

(iv) Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

SNAs are recruited to assist in the care of students with special educational needs within the school. They play an important role in ensuring that the student understands his/her school tasks and can thus participate to the best of his/her ability in the school.

It is the policy of the school to support effective communication between the SNA, student, parent and teachers, taking into account the particular special educational needs of the students involved.

The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is very important in supporting and promoting learning in the school. This relationship is best when based on mutual respect. Communication between SNA and class teacher is of paramount importance as it has a direct impact on the child/children they are caring for.

It is understood that the all communication regarding the progress of all children comes directly from the class teacher to the parent. It is not the role of the SNA to deliver such information to parents, unless requested to do so by the class teacher.

To ensure smooth running of the classes, the class teacher and SNA ensure that effective plans, timetables and classroom practices and roles are set out before the academic year commences.

(v) Communication among students: The Student's Voice

The students form a class contract within each class on how to establish and maintain good communications and relationship between students and staff. It is through the channel of respectful and constructive dialogue that students are encouraged and guided in engaging with one another. Restorative Practice is followed through by all staff members when engaging with children. The use of restorative dialogue is guided by staff when discussing conflict which may arise between students. All staff and children use the language of RP in this regard. **(Appendix 3)**. The use of RP circles is used in resolving issues which may arise at whole-class level.

To assist in creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for learning, all students are expected to treat one another, school staff, parents and school community in a loving and respectful manner.

Learning good social and interpersonal skills with one's peers is an important part of school life. The school code of behaviour outlines the implementation of the policy in relation to this matter. Everybody in our school community is required to treat all students with consideration and respect and to have regard for other people's rights and feelings.

Student Council:

Lucan CNS is a new developing school catering for children from junior infants up to 4th class. This year sees the start of a new student council forming, a committee representing children from junior infants - 4th class. The purpose of this council is to give a democratic voice to our students, thus preparing them for a future of making informed and constructive choices and decisions for the greater good – keeping in line with our moral purpose of “Making a difference.” The student council is an important communication mechanism between the students and all school partners.

(vi) Teacher and Parents:

Teachers report to parents in the end of year reports, at parent teacher meetings and at other times deemed appropriate on the progress of their child. Meetings occur between teachers and parent/s at the request of either party at a time convenient to both parties. Appointments for such meetings are made through the school secretary or between the class teacher and the parent.

The quality of a child's education is based on the quality of the relationship between parent and teacher. We believe that a courteous, collegial and collaborative approach to a child's education is paramount in determining success for our students. With this in mind, Lucan CNS sets out the following practices to ensure that parents feel a sense of belonging in our school community, feel they can easily approach their class teacher if concerned or require support in helping their child at home. These practices further develop and foster parental relations within our community:

- Teachers greet parents each morning ten minutes before official instruction time. At 08.20, children line up in their class lines with their parents/guardians and each class teacher attends to their class line. This time gives parents a chance to get to know their class teacher a bit better and liaise and develop friendships with other parents of their child's peers. It also facilitates the possibility of parents letting their class teacher know if something out of the ordinary has occurred with their child that morning or the day before, which may impact on their wellbeing that day. For other concerns where more time is required to discuss, an appointment through official channels as outlined above, is made.
- Class Dojo: An online connection with parents ensures another channel through which teachers can inform parents regarding various initiatives in the class or indeed seeking assistance from parents with these class-based initiatives.
- September Information Evenings: Every September, each class teacher holds an information evening which outlines their plan for the year ahead. Each teacher goes through their classroom management strategies, the teaching methodologies used in class, expectations and rationale around the homework for the year and how effective communication will take place for the year ahead. This is followed by great discussion and getting to know one another as a class community over teas/coffees and refreshments.
- Parent Information Evenings: Various information evenings are held for parents during the year, usually one per term. These information evenings are sometimes linked with NPC of Ireland providing evening sessions on Internet Safety, GMGY, Parents committee set up and Restorative Practice training for parents. Information evenings specifically link in with the teaching and learning within the school community.
- Parent-Teacher evenings take place during the second term. At these meetings, teachers outline the progress of the students and outline ways in which home can support the child's learning at school.
- School-based initiatives: For all initiatives in the school in relation to teaching and learning such as STEM, Literacy, Maths and many more, the focus is three pronged. Each initiative incorporates the child, the parent and the teacher. All of our initiatives encourage parental participation, whether it be in the form of parents coming into the class discussing the importance of friendship in their lives, or visiting the children's showcasing of work – all of this fosters a greater sense of unity and commitment to our pupil's learning and the work taking place in school.

- A strong link with our Parent-Teacher-Partnership: With the start of a new PTP, a meeting takes place between the PTP and the Principal and Deputy Principal where the needs of our school are looked at for the year ahead, various initiatives are discussed and the PTP outline how they can enhance and contribute to the shared vision for the school. The Principal, DP and PTP are in regular contact, ensuring the smooth running of the school for our pupils and high positive, parental engagement and support.
- A termly newsletter highlighting the schools achievements is emailed at the end of each term and available for download from the school website. (This will begin December 2018)

(vii) Board of Management:

The Board of Management meets at least four times a year. The Board includes two teacher representatives including Principal, two Patron representatives, two Parent representatives from the PTP and two community representatives. The Chairperson is appointed by the CEO of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB.

Communication between the Board and school community takes place via the agreed report at the end of each meeting. This report is made available to the parents via reporting back through the two parent representatives and to the staff via the teacher representative to the board. As the board is made up of voluntary representatives, it can be difficult for the wider school community to familiarise themselves with the board. With this in mind, the school website has a section on who the board of management is and the work undertaken by the Board.

Communication with external Agencies:

NEPS: The Principal liaises with National educational Psychological Services with regard to making of referrals where necessary. One-to-one meetings with Parents/Guardians for these meetings are organised by the Principal and necessary paperwork regarding this is undertaken by the Principal with the class teacher of the child in question and gone through in detail with the parents of the child. All communication with external agencies is done through the school.

Túsla:

The DLP, the Principal, liaises with the services of Túsla with regard to child welfare. This includes the National Education and Welfare Officer regarding child attendance at school and social services regarding child protection. When referring onto these services, parents/guardians and/or staff personnel are immediately informed by the Principal. The schools director of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB are immediately informed of all matters relating to child protection and all relevant documents sent into head office.

Review and Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually or biannually if required. The following are indicators to gauge the success and the effectiveness of the policy:

- Feedback from questionnaires distributed yearly and completed by the teaching staff.
- Record of in school team meetings
- Record of staff meetings and communications issues addressed each year

- Feedback from parent questionnaires yearly
- Feedback from the Parent-Teacher Partnership representing parents view
- Overall general satisfaction with communication in the school and the opportunity to give feedback on communications.

Monitoring procedures

The Culture Committee will monitor the satisfaction/ improvements in communication each year from September. The Principal and Deputy Principal will monitor intra-departmental meetings. The Student Council will monitor communication from the child's perspective. .

Appendix 1 Agreed forms of communication used in the school

Verbal:

- Interpersonal communication,
- Classroom work
- Announcements,
- Staff Meetings
- Phone Calls

Written

- Letters/ notes to staff, students, parents etc.
- Notice Boards in staff room and in different areas in the school Calendar of events on the staff sharepoint
- Student reports
- Teacher to Teacher email / Teacher to Parent e-mail

Meetings

- Students Council
- Staff meetings
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Professional Development staff days
- Subject/initiative team Meetings.
- In School Management meetings

Electronic

- Email between all users and staff of the school Email of regular updates from Principal Sharepoint Portal
- Aladdin: Text messaging and email service
- Student Class Dojo

Appendix2: Class Dojo:

Class Dojo is a secure parent-teacher platform administered by the class teacher to further link the parent with their child's learning at school. The rationale behind the use of this is to afford a quick messaging service to the class teacher and stay informed of the child's progress in school in a whole-class capacity. This additional service operated by the class teachers is a privilege and needs to be treated as such among teachers and parents. This requires consistency among class teachers in the use of the service which may cause confusion around how it be utilised as an effective communicative tool.

The following guidelines are in place to ensure consistent usage of Clasdojo among our staff and parents.

1. Clasdojo is operated when class teachers are in the school building only. It is not operated on weekends.
2. All teachers operate the messaging service.
 - The Messaging service is to be used for quick, lower level messages that do not require a face to face meeting and where there is little prospect of miscommunication on either side. Examples of these are asking parents to send in a plastic bottle for science class next week or a parent may message to inform of a child's absence that day.
 - Messaging is not to be used for concerns a parent may have regarding a child's progress and vice versa, concerns a teacher may have regarding a child's progress. These concerns are raised at an appointed, face to face meeting between teacher and parent.
3. Points awarded focus on skills being taught, or values being highlighted and positively reinforcing behaviours. In line with our Restorative approach and the belief that one cannot punish children into good practice, negative marking is **not** used. This is explained to parents as part of the information evening. It is important for parents to realise that just because their child may/may not receive a point that day, it does not mean they are underperforming. It means that their child is particularly good at that skill and that he/she will be receiving points on another day/week focusing on a particular skill they need reinforced. If the class teacher has concerns, they will make contact with you to discuss this further. No news is good news 😊

Appendix 3: Restorative Practice

The use of consistent language and approaches to inappropriate behaviour and conflict is essential in ensuring all children, teachers, parents and wider school community of Lucan CNS experience a caring, respectful and positive learning environment.

The following language is used when facilitating dialogue and restorative circles. Questioning takes the form of:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about it since?
- Who has been affected by it and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to happen next