



*Danu Community Special School
Blanchardstown Road North
Blanchardstown
Dublin 15 P38O
Roll Number: 20548N
school@danucss.ie
www.danucss.ie
Tel: 01 8270755*

Parent/Guardian School Communication Policy

Introduction

This is the first Parent/ Guardian School Communication Policy that has been developed with the Parents/Guardians, staff, and the Board of Management (BOM) of Danu Community Special School (CSS). The family and home are central to the educational development of the child. The staff of Danu CSS recognises that the child's education is more effective when the school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other. Therefore, by incorporating policy, procedures, and practices in relation to communication between home and school and providing a formal complaints procedure, this document aims to encourage all the stakeholders to work together for the benefit of the child and their learning.

Rationale

Danu CSS is funded by the Department of Education (DE), under the patronage of DDLETB. Clinical and family support services for our students are provided by Blanchardstown CDNT. As a DE school, the school operates under the Rules for National Schools and additional Directives and Circulars which issue from the DE and National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Our school ethos is in keeping with the ethos of ETBI.

In line with our Admission's Policy, our school caters to the abilities and needs of students from four to eighteen years of age who have been assessed as having an Autism diagnosis with a Moderate, Severe or Profound General Learning Disability. Our school offers a wide range of activities and experiences in support of each child's academic, social, physical, spiritual, and artistic development. Danu CSS is a multi-cultural, non-denominational school and welcomes students from all faiths and none.

Positive relationships between Parents/Guardians and the school are recognised as a major contributor to students' progress in the school environment. This policy explains how positive communication is facilitated between the school and Parents/Guardians. Under Section 28, Education Act 1998, schools are required to have procedures for processing complaints by Parents/Guardians. The procedure for processing complaints made by Parents/Guardians of students currently enrolled in an ETB school against a staff member employed by ETB is dealt with in accordance with the ETB Complaint Procedure. This can be found on the school website www.danucss.ie.

Relationship to the Characteristics Spirit of the School

The school promotes positive home/school contacts and endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of everyone within the school community. This policy contributes towards these ideals.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to formalise school practices in relation to home/school communication for the following reasons:

- (1) To provide the Danu CSS community with the policy, procedures and practices that will provide structure and guidance to Parents/Guardians and staff in relation to home/school communication so that positive collaboration can take place to enhance each child's educational attainment and thereby foster fruitful and trusting relationships between the school and Parents/Guardians.
- (2) To afford Parents/Guardians and staff an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through the framework of a clear and defined staged procedure in the event of a complaint or an issue arising that needs to be resolved.
- (3) To minimise the opportunity for conflict through affording Parents/Guardians an opportunity to first consult with the class teacher.
- (4) To ensure that the BOM meets its legal obligations by providing an open and transparent process accessible to the whole school community and through which complaints or issues can be resolved in a fair, equitable and non-confrontational way.
- (5) To ensure that concerns of staff, if any, are addressed in relation to their safety, health and well-being in the workplace and their right to dignity at work.

This policy does not cover:

- (1) Complaints that are dealt with through legal channels.
- (2) Matters of professional competence, which comes under the remit of the DE.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to

- Develop close links with the school.
- Inform the school of a change of address, contact details etc.
- Communicate with the school using the means offered.
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values, and distinctive character.
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their child.
- Respond to written communications sent by the school promptly, if required
- Attend school meetings and events when arranged.
- Keep children in school during term time.
- Inform class teacher and office of Respite dates.

- Use the Parent Association (PA) to liaise with the school on Parents/Guardians behalf.

Role of School

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with Parents/Guardians

- Written communication in the daily student's home/school communication notebook.
- Daily Aladdin communication using emails, text messages etc.
- Planned Parent/Guardian meetings to discuss student progress.
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting in October annually.
- IEP Review meeting in May each year. This is in the form of a Parent/Teacher meeting and will be held outside of school hours as per Circular 14/04.
- Provide a written All About Me Plan, IEP, IEP Review and End of Year Report.
- Transition visits/meeting for new Parents/Guardians and students.
- Parents/Guardians are invited to review and contribute to the revision/devising of all school policies.
- Newsletters to keep Parents/Guardians up to date with school events, activities, holidays, etc.
- Invitation to events throughout the year e.g., Coffee mornings, Christmas concert, award ceremonies, Graduation, etc.
- Nominate a teacher representative to attend PA Meetings.

In-school Procedures for Parent/School Communication

1. Reporting Educational Provision and Progress to Parents/Guardians

Circular 56/2011 Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been adopted by the BOM. References to parent/school communication are:

Parents/Guardians have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of Parents/Guardians to support their children in this way by sharing meaningful information with Parents/Guardians about the progress that children are achieving in the education system. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that staff use, such as formal assessment tasks and outcomes, documented progress on objectives and milestones reached in their short and long-term planning, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, and examples of students' work. Teachers will contact Parents/Guardians regularly through the student's communication book and Aladdin. In turn, Parents/Guardians will often be able to enrich staff's knowledge of their child's progress through providing further information about their child's learning at home.

2. Parents/ Guardians Teacher Meetings

A. Parents/Guardians -Teacher Meeting for Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Following a period of assessment (in September/October), teachers devise an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student. Parents/Guardians are invited to attend a meeting to discuss their child's IEP, usually in October. Each IEP meeting is scheduled to last for 15

minutes and Parents/Guardians will meet with the class teacher and any teacher(s) who also contribute to the students' learning programmes. The school Principal/Deputy Principal may also attend. A written IEP will be provided to Parents/Guardians.

The purpose of the IEP meetings is.

- To establish and maintain effective communication between the school and Parents/Guardians.
- To let Parents/Guardians know how their children are progressing in school.
- To help students realize that home and school are working together.
- To set goals and targets for the students in conjunction with Parents/Guardians.
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling.
- Learning more about the child from the parent's perspective.
- To learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing.
- To meet demands for accountability.
- To share with the Parents/Guardians the problems and difficulties the child may have in school.
- To identify ways in which Parents/Guardians can help their children.
- To negotiate joint decisions about the child's education.
- To inform the Parents/Guardians of assessment results according to school Policy.

The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned, however, regrettably, the school will not be able to provide supervision for students or siblings during parent/teacher meetings.

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by Parents/Guardians.

Both Parents/Guardians can make requests to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings. Regrettably, it is only possible to reschedule dates/times in exceptional circumstances.

B. Parents/Guardians -Teacher Meeting IEP Review

A formal follows up Parent/Guardian-Teacher meeting will be held once a year for all students (Circular 14/04) in May. The class teacher will initiate this meeting and details regarding time, etc. will be worked out in consultation with Parents/Guardians. These times must take place outside the school day. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the child's IEP progress to date in relation to his/ her educational targets. This meeting is scheduled to last 15 minutes and is held with the Class teacher. The school will attempt to co-ordinate times where siblings are concerned. A written IEP Review will be provided to Parents/Guardians.

C. Informal Parents/Guardians - Staff Meetings

In addition to these formal meetings, if a parent/guardian wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by requesting an appointment in writing via Aladdin and stating the purpose for the meeting. They can also contact the school office to arrange. This is to ensure that staff are adequately prepared in advance.

Impromptu meetings with the class teacher during the school day to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on the following grounds:

- The teacher cannot adequately supervise class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- There is insufficient time and opportunity for the teacher to prepare for such an impromptu meeting.
- It is difficult to be discreet when staff and children are close.

Occasions occur where a parents/guardian needs to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The School Principal will aim to facilitate such meetings by making every effort to ensure that the children in the class are adequately supervised and do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

If Parents/Guardians wish to drop in lunch boxes, clothing etc., this can be done through the office. Children coming late to school should be dropped off at the main entrance and await handovers from class staff. This is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

Meetings between Parents/Guardians and school staff are conducted professionally and in good faith. Audio and/or video recording of meetings is not permitted on any phone or device. If school staff have reason to believe that any meeting is being recorded other than by the process of *agreed* Minutes, the meeting will be terminated by school staff and the school Principal notified. Parents/Guardians will be invited to a reconvened meeting later.

3. School Reports

Danu CSS aims to help Parents/Guardians to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information gained from assessment tests. The National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary students to Parents/Guardians, including information from assessment tests.

The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:

1. The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
2. The child's learning dispositions
3. The child's social and personal development
4. Ways in which Parents/Guardians can support their child's learning

All primary schools **must** use one of the report card templates (available at www.ncca.ie) for reporting to Parents/Guardians on primary students' progress and achievement at school. However, special schools have been asked to wait for a specific template to be issued which will be designed for the specific purpose of reporting to Parents/Guardians of a child with special needs. In the meantime, Danu CSS will continue to use the existing school template which is based on the NCCA templates but differentiated to reflect the learning and achievements of the cohort of learners in our primary classes. Students who participate in Junior and Senior Cycles will receive a written report on the progress and achievement of Priority Learning Units (PLUs) and short courses.

4. Telephone Contact

The school may, on occasion, need to contact Parents/Guardians by telephone, e.g., if a child is unwell and/or excessively distressed for a period of time. **Parents/Guardians are requested to ensure that they are always contactable by telephone during the school day. It is not acceptable for the school to be unable to contact Parents/Guardians, particularly when their child is unwell and/or distressed.** This is particularly important in the case of an ill child, for whom it is planned, will transfer to respite care at the end of the school day or when a child is due to travel home by bus.

Parents/Guardians are advised that class teachers are not readily available to make or receive telephone calls during the school day as they are required to remain in their classrooms teaching and supervising their classes. If a parent wishes to pass information to their child's teacher, they may do so by or writing in the home/school communication book or Aladdin. Alternatively, Parents/Guardians can contact the school office and leave a message with the school Secretary who will pass it on to the relevant teacher. All information is treated with confidence.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety for your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education. In all matters pertaining to the well-being and education of students, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by staff.

5. Reporting of Behaviour/Accident/Medical Incidents to Parents/Guardians

The class teacher/ Principal/ Deputy Principal may need to telephone a parent regarding a behaviour incident, an accident or medical situation. It is important that Parents/Guardians are available to take this call. The reporting to Parents/Guardians of minor behaviour, accidents or medical incidents will take **written form** in the home/school communication book. Should further clarification regarding the incident be required, Parents/Guardians can request a phone call or a face-to-face meeting with the class teacher and school Principal/Deputy Principal. If Parents/Guardians wish to request such a meeting, they should contact the school office to arrange a suitable date/time.

Complaints And Compliments

1. Complaints Procedure

The aim of this procedure is to assist people to raise a concern/complaint and have it dealt with in as straight forward and quickly a manner as possible. It is not always easy for people to raise such an issue. It is therefore important that the procedure assists people to do so. The procedures outlined below do not pertain to:

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

Procedures

A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should follow the procedure for complaints made by Parents/Guardians, of students currently enrolled in an ETB school, against a staff member employed by ETB, in accordance with the ETB Complaints Procedure. This can be found on the school website.

2. Compliments

The school regularly receives compliments regarding students, staff and school events. Where compliments and commendations are received by central school email, to protect the privacy of parent/guardian email addresses, the content of the email (e.g. the “body” of the notification) will be “cut-&-pasted” into a new email and forwarded by the Principal/school office, to the staff concerned. The school values such positive feedback and appreciates the time that Parents/Guardians take to express appreciation.

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 the stakeholders e.g., the staff, Parents/Guardians, bus escorts 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. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones, including passive aggression, are not acceptable and in addition, this extends to aggressiveness in writing through 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 might be called.

- All stakeholders will treat our students with the utmost respect while on the premises.
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent/guardian's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy, so it is asked that Parents/Guardians respect other children's rights to privacy.
- 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.
- 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 9:00 am and finish at 2.40pm; where possible, meetings should be arranged outside of these times.

Safety, Health, and Welfare in The Workplace

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

The BOM 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 students, Parents/Guardians, other staff members or intruders. In respect of the occurrence of the above, all staff should be aware of DE Circular 40/97, Scheme for Leave of Absence Following Assault, teachers Circular 61/17; SNAs Circular 62/17 and staff other than teachers or SNAs in ETB schools, Circular 43/20. These deal with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on 24.06.2028 or as deemed necessary by the BOM and in the event of any future DE circulars or legislation.

Implementation

The BOM ratified this policy on 24.06.2025.
Copies are made available to parents on request and via the school office. A copy will be uploaded on to the school website.

Signed: Jahn Walsh
Chairperson, Board of Management.

Signed: Patricia Dodder
Principal

Date: 24.06.25