

Castaheany Educate Together National School

Revised Parental Involvement Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy was first formulated in 2005 by the staff of Castaheany Educate Together. This policy was later reviewed in November 2011, by the staff of Castaheany ETNS, in conjunction with parents.

Rationale:

Castaheany Educate Together is a school community where pupils, parents, teachers and staff work in partnership to provide the best education for our children. When parents enrol their child in this school they have made the decision to enter into a special partnership within the school network.

"Partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate."

(Gillian Pugh, Working Towards Partnership in the Early Years)

We welcome and value each parent's unique contribution to our school. In addition, parents as a group have a wide range of interests, talents, skills and abilities that also have the power to enrich and extend the educational possibilities for the children. It will be our policy to identify parents with specific skills and talents and to invite those parents to share their skills with us at school and class level.

It is necessary to have a Parental Involvement Policy because:

- Parental involvement benefits pupil learning.
- Promotion of partnership between parents, staff and the Board of Management is vital to the health of the school community.
- A high level of parental interest and involvement is a key feature of Castaheany Educate Together School and this will involve commitment from parents.

Castaheany Educate Together School is to be democratically-run, with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers (*Source: Educate Together Charter*). This maximises the potential for building a genuine partnership between the professional, objective role of the teacher and the necessarily personal involvement of the parent in contributing to their children's education.

Aims:

The aims of this policy are:

- ❖ To build a school community which is 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.

Benefits of Parental Involvement:

- Children benefit from more one-to-one attention in the classroom.
- Children benefit from greater diversity in the classroom.
- Parental skills may support and complement work already taking place.
- Parental involvement actively supports and encourages the child's learning.

- A wider range of activity is facilitated. This can be interesting and fun, and can lead to a broader and more holistic education
- It 'promotes good parent-teacher relationships and a better level of understanding between home and school' (*National Parents' Council*).
- It enhances communication, trust and respect between parents and teachers.
- Parents can learn more about the primary school curriculum.
- Parental involvement allows children to see that school is an extension of home and therefore fosters the idea of the 'school family.'
- Parental skills can contribute to the smooth running and development of the school.
- Parental Involvement provides the opportunity of making lifelong friends, strengthens the links within the school community and parents get support from each other.

Guidelines for Getting Involved:

Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of the teacher, by prior arrangement and for an agreed purpose.

- The happiness, welfare and safety of the children are our primary concern. A child's personal history academic ability, progress and behaviour are strictly confidential. Any doubts about issues of confidentiality must be discussed with the class teacher.
- Respect for the professional role of the teacher is essential.
- Discipline/behaviour remains the responsibility of the teacher.
- All work will be supervised by the teacher.
- Parents who participate should be conscious of and sensitive to the needs of the entire class, not just the needs of their own child.
- Parents coming into the classroom must consult with the teacher before inviting other parents/individuals to participate.
- In the interests of safety, babies, toddlers and younger children cannot be accommodated during classroom/pupil activities.
- The highest standard of respectful behaviour and language is expected from all adults.
- Punctuality and consistency are crucial.
- No fees are payable. Any expenses that you wish to reclaim must be sanctioned in advance by the Board of Management, and must be accompanied by receipts.
- In the case of an on-going project that takes place over a number of weeks, parents will meet with the teacher to discuss the activity. It remains the responsibility of the teacher to determine its appropriateness (e.g. is it suitable for the age group; has something similar already been done, etc.)
- The school ethos must be upheld at all times and it is important to keep in mind that the school is multi-denominational, co-educational, child centred and democratically-run. Consequently, respect for all the partners in education - children, staff and parents - must be upheld at all times.
- In the interests of child safety and protection, the Board of Management asks all parents who wish to help out at the school to fill out a **Garda Vetting form** for volunteers. (*See Garda Vetting and Child Protection policies*). Adults who have, or may have unsupervised access to children must be Garda vetted. Only vetted adults will be permitted to help out at many of our school activities e.g. school tours, Sports Day etc.

Home School Community Liaison Role:

In our school we have a Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator (HSCL). *Some of the aims of the liaison scheme are:*

- ✓ To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children
- ✓ To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.

- ✓ To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning

Scheme Activities:

- ✓ Parents:

While the primary purpose of the scheme is the promotion of partnership in the children's learning, parents frequently identify needs which are not directly concerned with their children's education. Meeting those identified needs is a critical factor in the development of parents' awareness of their capacities and in fostering their self-confidence. Scheme activities which meet parent's needs include:-home visitation with the objective of establishing bonds of trust with parents and families and supporting parents in the identification of their developmental needs and the provision of parents' rooms in schools.

- ✓ Courses and Classes:

Curricular areas so that parents can assist and support their children with their school work personal development through parenting and assertiveness training leisure activities aspects of educational development which range from basic literacy to FETAC level courses and parents coming into the school and helping out with various different activities.

Communication:

Good communication between home and school is **vital**. We use many forms of communication at Castaheany Educate Together.

- ❖ The school principal meets with every child and family who is new to the school. At this meeting every parent is given a welcome pack. In our welcome pack, some of the items we include are information on the curriculum, information on our Stay Safe and RSE programme in school, tip sheets on how to help your child in school, information about our PTA and BOM and so on. Every June, we have a New Parents' Information Evening. At this meeting, parents are given information about the school and the curriculum. Some of the resources that we have in the school are on display at this meeting and parents get to meet with some of the school staff. There is tea and coffee afterwards and parents are given an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.
- ❖ Class Meetings - Every year, usually early October, we have class meetings, where the parents are invited to come in to the school to meet with their class child's class teacher along with the other parents from that class.
- ❖ Like every school, we have our standard yearly parent-teacher meetings. We provide the services of professional interpreters for these meetings, if needed. We feel that this helps to make our school more inclusive, families more welcome and staff better equipped to support parents. Additional meetings and incidental meetings can be facilitated throughout the year, on request from a member of staff or also parents can request a meeting. The procedure for a parent to request a meeting is to talk to Deirdre(our school secretary) in the office and Deirdre will arrange a time that suits both a staff member and the parent
- ❖ Another way we communicate is through the homework journal. Teachers or parents can write notes in the homework journal to communicate messages. Parents/guardians are requested to sign the homework journal every day, when homework is completed. Comment/notes are welcome
- ❖ School Newsletter- approximately once a month a school newsletter is sent home to all the parents, which will have all the latest school news, upcoming events and important dates. If parents wish, these newsletters can be emailed to them.
- ❖ Noticeboards are used as a means of communicating with parents e.g. displaying notes and upcoming events.
- ❖ School Website: This informs parents and prospective parents of the ethos of the school. It is used to communicate upcoming events in school
- ❖ Face to Face-the school principal, deputy principal and HSCL are in the yard every morning. Meet and greet in the morning
- ❖ Email, Text Messages and Phone: are all used as methods of communicating with parents. If you do change your number, it is very important to give your new number to the school.
- ❖ Should any differences or difficulties arise, the school's existing complaints procedure should be used.**

How to get involved:

There are many ways to get involved at Castaheany Educate Together.

a) Participation in classes:

Parents are, first of all, invited to consider their skills, interests and time available and communicate this information to the class teacher, HSCL teacher and/or the PTA. Parents can consult, by appointment or in writing, with the class teacher about hobbies, skills or interests they can share with the class. Parents can work in conjunction with the teachers in a planned and co-ordinated way. On-going projects over a number of weeks may enhance and enrich the work the children are involved with in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to discuss any ideas they may have with the class teacher. Opportunities for getting involved in the school are endless - baking, gardening, cultural exchanges, Art, Music, Drama, Maths for Fun, story-time, Book Fair, school tours, Sports Day, helping in the library, fundraising and much more. The school welcomes all ideas.

b) Courses and Classes: Every year we run a number of classes/courses for parents in the school. For example Healthy Food Made Easy, First Aid, Computer Classes, English Classes, Jewellery Making, Yoga, Family Learning Course and many more.

c) Attend meetings. E.g. Parent-Teacher meetings, Class meetings, PTA AGMs, etc. All meetings are notified via newsletters, website and posters around the school well in advance.

d) Read the newsletters and website

e) Make an appointment to speak with your child's teacher to discuss any concerns you might have from time to time.

f) There is a parental role in supporting your child's learning in each class. Take an active interest in your child's progress through examining his/her homework and signing the homework journal and behaviour book every night.

g) Learning support and special needs- Parents/guardians are consulted about children receiving learning support. Parents are included in devising an IEP/IPLP. Please attend all meetings you are invited to and keep in touch with your child's class and support teachers.

h) Attend breakfast mornings, coffee mornings and the annual Food Night.

i) School planning and policy-making- this is a consultative process which involves parents/guardians in policy formation. The school sends home drafts of all new or revised school policies to all families for feedback and ideas. Please take the time to read the drafts and give them some thought and consideration. Parents have a role and responsibility to read, inform themselves on and support all school policies. From time to time we will ask parents to be involved on consultation sub-committees. Information will be highlighted in school newsletters.

Parent Teacher Association: (PTA)

All parents or guardians of children attending Castaheany Educate Together N.S. are deemed to be members of the Parent-Teacher Association.

The committee of the PTA:

The members of the PTA will elect a number of members who will have responsibility for managing the activities of the PTA. This team will serve as the committee of the Parent-Teacher Association.

Board of Management:

Two parents/guardians are parent nominees on the Board of Management., one male, one female These parents are elected onto the BOM for its 4-year term, usually at the PTA AGM.

**** Agreed Procedure if you have a concern:**

1. *Meet with the Class teacher*
2. *If still concerned, meet with the Principal*
3. *Meet with the Chairperson of the Board of Management*
4. *Bring the matter formally, in writing, to the Board of Management*

Timeframe for Implementation:

This policy will be implemented from 14th May 2012.

Timeframe for Review:

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years' time, 2015,

Ratification and Communication:

A draft of this revised policy was sent to all members of the school community for feedback and suggestions in April 2012. A small sub-group met again in early May and the Board of Management ratified the final draft on 14th May 2012.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

For parents & guardians volunteering at Castaheany Educate Together NS

I am familiar with the school's Parental Involvement Policy.

Confidentiality: I will not discuss my thoughts on how a pupil might be doing [academically/behaviourally/socially/and/or any] with any party. (Concerns in this area should be discussed with the class teacher or principal only.)

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

Sample

