



Communication Policy

Introductory Statement

The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other and aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning so that the child's education can be effective.

This policy was developed by the staff and Board of Management of Darver NS, and in consultation with the Parents Association in the school year 2022/2023. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings. It also includes guidance pertaining to online communication through email or other means.

Darver NS staff and Board of Management believe that:

- Good communication between home and school is important because with positive and active partnership the child gets the best that primary education can offer.
- Teachers can provide a more enriching educational experience for children when they are supported by and working closely with parents.

We know from research that children do better, behave better and are happier at school where parents and teachers work closely together and when parents are able to give their children support at home.

- National Parents Council document Working Effectively as a Parents Association

Darver NS staff and Board of Management are committed to

- Developing close effective links with parents

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- Participating in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the central and fundamental role of parents as primary educators of their children
- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of Darver National School
- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents in school policy and decision making

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Collaborate with the school 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
- Become actively involved in the school and Parents Association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians will be consulted by staff. It is essential that all parents and legal guardians are named on the enrolment form.

Behaviour of all adults 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. All adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children. All adults will treat our children, staff and other parents with the utmost respect while on the premises.

- All adults within the school are expected to speak to each other with respect - shouting, other aggressive tones and bad language are not acceptable in any instance. If any adult displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building and/or school site. Incidents involving the above behaviour will be reported to the Board of

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Management for review. In severe cases, and if required, the Gardaí will be called.

- Please see **Appendix 3** for the Darver NS Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians.
- The school will respect all children and parents' right to privacy so staff should not be asked to speak about any child except your own.
- Please see **Appendix 2** for an outline of the roles and responsibilities of school personnel.

Things that the school needs to know to keep your children safe and healthy:

- It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that may cause anxiety to your child and could affect his/her education. Your first point of contact should always be your child's class teacher.
- The school should at all times know who is collecting your child. The school secretary should have a list of people and their contact information who you have authorised to collect your child (Appendix 1). It is the responsibility of parents to notify the school of any changes to collection arrangements. You can provide this information by email or by dropping in to the school office. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorized/unknown to the school. If, at any time, parents alter the pick-up arrangements for their child, the school should be notified in writing.
- In an emergency situation, the parent can leave a message on the answering service or speak with the principal/teacher.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with Parents.

Annual Consultation throughout the year including:

- Welcome day for new Junior Infants and their parents in May each year
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November (a short, written record of the meeting is maintained by each teacher).
- Class teachers / Special Education Teachers meet with parents whose children have additional educational needs.

Written communication including:

- Homework diary (1st – 6th class), to inform parents about assigned homework, to confirm that homework has been completed and to relay messages between parents and teachers.
- Emails sent from class teachers to parents.
- Emails sent from parents to class teachers, via the office (schdarver.ias@gmail.com).
- School website (<http://www.darverns.ie/>) which contains general information about the school, relevant school policies, the school calendar, school newsletter archives and the school contact information.
- Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays, changes to current policies, new school policies and other school concerns.
- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year (shared via Databiz).
- Text messages for general reminders (e.g school closures, fiver Fridays, bake sales etc.)
- Some pupils with additional educational needs may have a home school diary. This is not a means of reviewing academic/social progress but rather serves as a useful tool to share information between home and school.
- Class blogs or other online platforms e.g. Class Dojo, for sharing class news.

Generally, communication sent from the school will be 'paperless'. Emails sent from the school will be sent to the email address(es) provided at enrolment, unless otherwise requested by parents.

Other structures and processes including:

- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. The Parents' Association receives policies in draft form and provides feedback to the Board of Management. The document once ratified by the Board is made available to all parents via the school website or in hard copy if requested through the school office. Any feedback arising is brought to the attention of the Board.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. school concerts/performances, bake sales etc.

- Involvement of parents in curricular areas and focus weeks when appropriate eg. STEM Week / Intercultural Week / World Book Day / Aistear / Guided Reading; sharing knowledge or reading groups etc.
- The Databiz Eolas app. We encourage all parents to utilise this app. Through this app contact details can be updated, consent can be given, absences can be explained, school reports can be viewed, payments can be made and other useful applications.

Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school.

If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, they can contact the school secretary via email (schdarver.ias@gmail.com) or phone ([042-9379280](tel:042-9379280)), to arrange a suitable time. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint, **Appendix 4** outlines the procedures to be followed.

Classes begin at 9:20am and finish at 2:00pm (infants) and 3:00pm (1st-6th) and this time should not be interrupted. Meetings with the class staff at the classroom door or in the yard to discuss a concern/child's progress are discouraged on a number of grounds:

- Staff cannot adequately supervise their class while at the same time speaking to a parent.
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by.
- It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door.

However, teachers and other members of staff may be available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school as long as confidentiality issues are not impacted. If matters raised cannot be resolved immediately or if the parent or staff member needs to discuss the matter further an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties.

On some rare occasions a parent may need to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear during class time etc, this can be done by knocking on the external window/door of the classroom and leaving the item outside so that learning is not disrupted.

Online and Social Media Communication

Darver National School has a website <http://www.darverns.ie/> and Facebook page (@Scoil Dairbhre). Parents are encouraged to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters, comment and contribute to posts and share information to help publicise the school and the achievements of our children.

The Scoil Dairbhre Facebook Messenger is not regularly monitored and therefore is not a suitable means of communication with the school. Messages sent to the school Facebook Messenger can be easily missed. As mentioned above, if a parent/guardian wishes to contact the school they should do so through the school office via phone or email.

The school name or anything that identifies the school should not be used online or on social media (for example class Facebook page which might be set up by parents) by members of the public including parents without express written permission from the Principal or Board of Management. Darver National School will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

Communication between School/Board of Management/Parents' Association

The Principal and Deputy Principal attend Parents' Association Committee meetings and bring any relevant items back to the Board for discussion.

Parent nominees on the Board of Management attend Parents' Association meetings as members of the PA.

The Principal and the Chairperson of the PA meet monthly to discuss any relevant items.

Email communication between School and PA is generally limited to:

- Principal to Chairperson/Secretary
- Treasurer to Treasurer
- School Secretary to PA Secretary/Treasurer/Chairperson

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- On occasion, by agreement, there may be links with the Deputy Principal if a certain area falls under their remit.

Communication with outside agencies

Darver NS has enjoyed and benefited from links with state agencies. These include:

NEPS / NCSE / SESS / SENO / HSE / Tusla / EWO

Darver NS also aims to make links with the community through:

- Links with local schools (Principal meetings, pupil events, Sacraments)
- Links with the community Gardaí/Firemen/Nurses
- Links with local events (Community Centre)

Communication through the school office

Parents can contact class teachers through the school office - either by phone ([042-9379280](tel:042-9379280)) or email (schdarver.ias@gmail.com). All incoming calls and emails are dealt with by the school secretary and are forwarded on to the relevant class teacher. Teachers will endeavour to get back to parent queries in a timely manner, bearing in mind that they are teaching from 9.20am-3.00pm.

Communication by email - response time

Response times to emails from the school secretary can vary depending on the demands in the office at any given time. It is considered reasonable that 3-5 school days are allowed for a response (with the exception of holiday periods during which email is only checked intermittently).

Response times to emails from the Principal can also vary greatly depending on the demands at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff and overall running of the school. A response time of 5-7 school days is considered to be reasonable.

Teachers are in class during the day and will not have time to access emails. They may be engaged in planning, meetings or personal matters after school

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hours and so again 3-5 school days is considered to be a reasonable response time.

There may be occasions where a parent is trying to contact the school by phone and/or email and are not receiving a response. Office hours are limited and the secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times. We encourage parents to leave a message on the voicemail if they are unable to get through to the school secretary.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together
- To share with the parent any problems or difficulties the child may have in school
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- To get general feedback from the parents regarding the school
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- To inform the parents of standardised test results

Organisation of parents teacher meetings

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes, usually in the first term towards the end of November. If a parent wishes to arrange an additional meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by contacting the school secretary.

Darver National School uses prepared guidelines to give structure to the meetings. These can vary from teacher to teacher but must include feedback on attendance, behaviour, punctuality, standardised test results (where applicable) and overview of progress through the curriculum. Parent/Teacher meetings may take place in classrooms, offices, support rooms or through on-line platforms when necessary. Each meeting is allocated an appropriate time slot. If a longer meeting is required these will be scheduled for another day.

In order to facilitate the smooth operation of Parent/Teacher meetings, it is important that meetings should be kept to the allocated time. Times of meetings are agreed beforehand and should be adhered to so that all parents are seen on time as far as is possible.

Planning meetings for Students with Additional Educational Needs

For children with additional educational needs, formal scheduled parent/staff meetings relating to the child's **School Support Plan** will take place in October/November. **Support Plan** review meetings will take place in February/March each year. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment. **In the case of separated/ divorced parents, Darver National School will facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.**

School Reports

Darver National School produces formal reports for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school annually in the third term using report card templates as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie). The reports are issued by email/ through the Databiz Eolas app in the week prior to school closing for the summer break to allow parents time to ask for clarification from the class teacher on anything contained in their child's report. The report will cover

- 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

Reports for children in their final year of primary school (sixth class) will be in the form of an **Education Passport**. These support the transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary and follow a standard template.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

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


It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

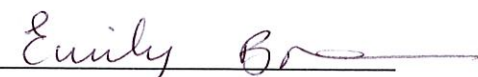
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In this respect, all staff should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular can be found attached to the school's Health and Safety policy.

Ratification by the Board of Management

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on
1/3/2023

Signed 
Chairperson, Board of Management


School Principal & Secretary, Board of Management

Date 1/3/2023



APPENDIX 1

Please list below the people approved to collect your child/children from Darver National School:

1. Name: _____
Phone: _____
Relationship to child: _____

2. Name: _____
Phone: _____
Relationship to child: _____

3. Name: _____
Phone: _____
Relationship to child: _____

4. Name: _____
Phone: _____
Relationship to child: _____

- I/We understand that it is our responsibility as parents/guardians to notify the school of any changes to the above collection arrangements.
- I/We indemnify the Board of Management and authorised members of staff in respect of any liability that may arise regarding the collection of children.

Signed _____ Parent/Guardian

_____ Parent/Guardian

Date _____



APPENDIX 2

Roles and Responsibilities of school personnel

Board of Management

- To provide a comfortable, safe environment
- To support the Principal and staff in implementing school policies
- To ratify the new policies and review existing policies
- To ensure policies are communicated to the whole school community

Principal

- Promote a positive climate in the school for all colleagues, pupils, parents and visitors, showing courtesy and respect for all.
- Ensure that school policies are implemented in a fair and consistent manner and arrange for their regular review.
- Adopt a whole school approach to the operation of the school and to teaching and learning in the school by implementing the school's policies and curriculum plans.

Teachers

- Provide a positive atmosphere for colleagues, pupils, parents and visitors, showing courtesy and respect for all.
- Implement school policies fairly and consistently by following the agreed procedures and protocols.
- Adopt a whole school approach to the operation of the school and to teaching and learning in the school by implementing the school's policies and curriculum plans.
- Work with SNAs to ensure they are providing the best for the children in their care.



APPENDIX 3

Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians

- Show courtesy and respect towards all members of the school.
- Encourage children to have a sense of respect for themselves, each other and for all property.
- Ensure that children attend school regularly and are punctual.
- Notify the school of the reason for all absences by note in diary, on the Databiz Eolas app or by email or phone.
- Collect children at the school gate at home time - children must be accompanied to cars by parents for safety reasons.
- Equip pupils with appropriate school materials, a sufficient healthy lunch and full uniform.
- Show interest in, support and encourage their children's school work.
- Ensure that children have their homework done to the best of their ability and sign the homework journal after homework is completed (1st – 6th class).
- Check school bags for notes sent home.
- Make sure all children's coats and personal property are labelled.
- Cooperate with teachers in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others.
- Become familiar with the Code of Behaviour and support its implementation.
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same.
- Strictly supervise pre-school children when in the school or on the school grounds.
- Become familiar with and support our policies, our practices and our procedures – these can be found on our school website (<http://www.darverns.ie/>)
- As the Board of Management is responsible for the Health & Safety of all staff and students, parents/guardians are requested not to approach or reprimand another person or their child on the school premises.

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- For questions or concerns regarding any aspect of your child's education:
 1. You need to meet with the class teacher and/or learning support teacher (if relevant).
 2. Appointments should be made through the secretary in the school office.
 3. If needed, the Principal may assist after the initial meeting with the class teacher has taken place.

*** Please note that negative or threatening behaviour or communication of any kind (by phone, letter, email or face to face) about or towards the Principal, secretary, teacher, SNA or another member of staff will not be tolerated. If a person displays behaviour such as this they may be asked to remove themselves from the building and/or school site. Incidents involving the above behaviour will be reported to the Board of Management for review. In severe cases, and if required, the Gardaí will be called.

Staff members have the right not to engage with or reply to parents/guardians who display any of the above behaviour.

If you wish to make a complaint, you must follow the INTO/CPSMA Parental Complaints Procedures for Primary Schools adopted by the school which is highlighted in Appendix 4 below.



APPENDIX 4

Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in primary schools.

Stage 1-informal stage

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly 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 staff he/she 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-formal stage

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
 - i. Supply the staff with a copy of the written complaint and

- ii. Arrange a meeting with the staff, and where applicable, the Principal 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
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
 - a. The staff should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
 - b. He/she should be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
 - c. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

Stage 5

Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.



APPENDIX 5

Online Communication Policy

Darver NS teachers may organise live online communication during school closure because of COVID19 or otherwise. Teachers do not have to organise live online communication and do not have to explain a decision not to do so to parents. Online meetings will involve groups of pupils / whole classes. One to one meetings may be arranged for some pupils, however this will only occur with prior consent of the parent.

Parental permission will be sought by the school in advance of online meetings. Sharing the link for the meeting with your child is understood as giving permission.

Our school's Code of Behaviour and our Anti-Bullying Policy will be applicable in the online learning environment together with our school's Internet Acceptable Use Policy. School and Class Rules apply in any online classroom.

If deemed necessary by the teacher, a parent / guardian must be in the room with the pupil for the duration of the meeting. The pupil may wear earphones.

The child must have their camera turned on at all times.

Invitations to meetings will be sent to parental email addresses or shared on Google Classroom / See-Saw / Class Dojo. Only the teacher may share this link. The meeting may not be recorded or photographed in any way.

Live online communication is to facilitate contact with the pupils only. Parents can email the school office with any queries they have.

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The teacher/administrator will be in charge of each meeting. He/she will remove pupils immediately in case of misbehaviour and if necessary shut down the meeting.