



Parental Involvement Policy

Preamble

The Educate Together Charter describes schools that guarantee equality of access and esteem to children irrespective of their social, cultural or religious background, are learner centred in their approach to education and are run as participatory democracies, with respectful partnership between school management, staff, parents and pupils. In Maynooth Educate Together NS our mission is to provide the best possible education, combining the Irish Primary School curriculum and the Educate Together ethos, which fosters development of children's talents, abilities and personalities. We support children in developing attitudes which will enable them to become open-minded, creative, respectful, responsible and caring members of society. The National Parents Council confirms that educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve higher levels when parents and teachers work together in their education. Our school recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children.

In devising this policy, due consideration has been given to Section 9 of the Education Act 1998. This policy has been formulated by the school Principal and staff in consultation with the Parents Association and has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Introduction

- Our school is a community where pupils, parents/guardians and teachers collaborate and work in partnership for all children. When parents/guardians decide to send their child to our school they are entering a very important relationship. "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).
- The school ethos is multi-denominational, co-educational, child centred and democratic. Parental involvement contributes to a spirit of mutual respect for all the partners in education - children, teachers and parents.
- In keeping with the principles of the Educate Together ethos, our school encourages democratic input into its management. This means that democratically elected committees have an advisory role in the planning of the school and the involvement of all parents/guardians is sought and encouraged.
- A high level of parental involvement is a feature of our school and this involvement requires a commitment from parents.

- Parents as a group have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children. It is our policy to identify parents with specific skills and to invite those parents to share their skills with us at a school and at class level.
- In-parental involvement is to be normalised and encouraged within a structured framework in which a balance between core disciplinary objectives is sought.
- Continuity of parental involvement within this structured balance of disciplines is to be addressed and volunteers solicited in advance of each school year.
- Respect for the professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibilities of the Principal and the Board of Management is always an important consideration.
- Parents are invited to become involved in the school in many ways and at many levels, for example.
- Serving on school bodies and other relevant and related fora (Board of Management, Parent-Teacher Association, ET Board of Directors, ET National Forum).
- Fundraising
- Organising Social Events
- Policy making eg. Code of Discipline, Relationships and Sexuality Education, Learn Together Programme, Homework Policy, Parent-Teacher Association Constitution, Healthy Eating Policy.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

- Parental involvement has wide ranging benefits for the entire school and wider community. It fosters a sense of togetherness and friendliness as well as a continuity of purpose as the school reinforces its position as a welcoming and inclusive environment. This community ethos expresses itself in a variety of ways.
- 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 wide 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
- 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.

How to Get Involved

- Parents are, first of all, invited to consider their skills, interests and time available and communicate this information to the class teacher, the Principal and/or to the PA.
- Parents can consult, with appointment or in writing, with the class teacher about hobbies, skills or interests they can share with the class bearing in mind that needs change from year to year.
- Ongoing projects over a number of weeks may enhance and enrich the work the children are involved with in the classroom. Parents will meet with the teacher in advance to discuss the activity in a planned and co-ordinated way. Classroom teachers are ultimately responsible for all classroom projects and activities.
- Parents may help with tours and trips, organising the school library, art and PE resources and may also like to make costumes for school concerts.
- Parents may get involved in many extra-curricular activities such as chess, yoga, football, music and art and they would be particularly welcome to initiate project work with the children in the areas of the school garden, a children's newsletter etc.
- Opportunities are endless – baking, woodwork, cultural exchanges and discussion – the school welcomes all ideas.

Guidelines for Getting Involved

- Parents come into the classroom with the agreement of the relevant teacher and for an agreed purpose. The suitability and viability of all suggestions is to be agreed with the classroom teacher in consultation with the Principal.
- A child's personal history and academic achievements are strictly confidential and parents must maintain this confidentiality. Any doubts about issues of confidentiality must be discussed with the Principal and/or teacher.
- Respect for the teachers in their professional capacity is essential. All parental involvement activities operate under the direction of the class teacher.
- Parents who participate will 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 will consult with the teacher before bringing any other individuals into the classroom.
- No fees are payable. Any expenses that parents wish to reclaim will be sanctioned in advance by the Board of Management and must be accompanied by receipts.

All Parent/Guardian Volunteers must comply with Garda Vetting requirements before being approved to volunteer in the school.

Since the introduction of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016, there is a statutory requirement that people who carry out 'relevant work' (i.e. work or voluntary activity that involves regular and necessary access to and/or contact with children and/or vulnerable adults) must be Garda Vetted prior to commencing employment or relevant volunteer work. Criminal offences will now apply to Boards of Management in the event of failure to comply with these requirements.

Under the legislation, statutory vetting will include a check for any relevant 'soft information' – which is information other than criminal convictions held by the Garda Síochana that leads to a bona-fide belief that a person poses a threat to children or vulnerable persons.

Garda Vetting is approved for specific volunteering activities only and if additional voluntary roles are planned to be undertaken they must be approved by a further Garda Vetting application. All Garda Vetting is carried out using the E-Vetting process which is two stage on-line procedure. If you are interested in being a volunteer in Maynooth Educate Together NS, please contact the School Principal by e-mail: principal@maynoothet.ie