

# THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

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— *Tús Maith* —

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY**

June 2015



## ***Introduction & Rationale***

In keeping with the Mission Statement of St. Attracta's Junior School which states: ***"acknowledging that parents are the primary educators, we are inspired by a shared vision of excellence and we espouse a partnership approach"***, we see our school as a community where parents and teachers work in partnership for our children. As Gillian Pugh wrote in her book ***"Working Towards Partnership in The Early Years"***, partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate".

In St. Attracta's Junior National School parental involvement has been a strong feature of school life for many, many years. We are extremely fortunate to have parents who are committed to the school, who take an active interest in all that goes on, and who support and work with the staff and the Board of Management.

Parents are involved at many levels, throughout the school, and are regularly consulted in relation to policy developments and school planning issues. On a formal basis we have parental representation on the Board of Management and an active Parents' Association, working with and on behalf of the school and the children.

At regular intervals, through written communications from the school, parental support is encouraged, sought, and commended. We are particularly keen to engage the involvement and support of new parents/guardians. This message is communicated to them during the Open Day, held annually in the school, and particularly during the "Meeting for the Parents of New Children Starting school in September", which is usually held in late May / June. This message is reiterated yet again at the meeting held towards the end of September, by individual Junior Infant Class Teachers, which informs parents of the programme of work for the year and indicates the huge benefits derived from home and school working together. This message is at the heart of the information meeting for all parents who wish their child to participate in the CAPER (Children and Parents Enjoying Reading) Project.

## ***The Benefits of Parental Involvement***

- ✓ Parental involvement actively supports and encourages the child's learning
- ✓ It promotes good parent/teacher relationships and a better level of understanding between home and school
- ✓ It enhances communication, trust and respect between parents and teachers
- ✓ Parents learn about the curriculum
- ✓ Parental involvement allows children to see that school is an extension of home and therefore fosters the idea of the "school community".
- ✓ Parental skills can contribute to the development and smooth running of many school activities
- ✓ Parental involvement may support, complement and enrich teaching and learning for all learners

## ***The Board of Management & Parents***

Parents are represented on the Board of Management which works to ensure that all members of the community and visitors to the school find St. Attracta's Junior School an open, welcoming, inclusive place

### ***The Parents' Association***

St. Attracta's Schools have a very strong and active Parents' Association which represents parents in both schools; they are wholly committed to the schools with whom they have an excellent working relationship.

The Parents' Association in St. Attracta's holds its AGM in October each year, during which a committee is elected. The committee provides support to the school in many ways and the Chairperson of the Parents' Association liaises regularly with the principal throughout the year.

Fundraising is part of the work of Parents' Associations'; it consults with the Board of Management about fundraising for the school or school projects. Expenditure of these funds is by the BOM in consultation with the Parent Association. This ensures there is full accountability.

The Parents' Association is actively involved in many of our school activities and they provide a very useful service to parents through the operation of the Pupil Insurance Scheme and after school Swimming Lessons.

In order to support the work of the Parents' Association, a teacher attends their monthly meetings and acts as a link between the school and the parents. This ensures that projects which the parent association may undertake are compatible with the way the school runs on a day-to-day basis and also opens a channel of communication to keep the staff informed about the Parents' Association activities.

### ***Communication:***

In St. Attracta's JNS we work hard to ensure that we develop positive, open communication with parents through:

#### ***Informal Meetings***

It is common practice in our school for class teachers to meet and greet parents and children at the outside classroom door each morning. These brief incidental chats are invaluable in getting to know parents and their children, in helping young children to settle into school and class life and they also send a clear message to parents of our openness and willingness to communicate. If a parent or teacher has a particular concern it is sometimes raised at the door and a meeting arranged to discuss the matter at a mutually convenient time either before or after school in order to avoid any disturbance to teaching and learning during the school day and to ensure privacy to both parties.

#### ***Formal Meetings***

From time to time certain concerns necessitate a formal meeting where the presence of the class teacher, a Special Education Teacher and/or the principal may be necessary.

In St. Attracta's Junior School a dedicated meeting room in the administrative area is always available for parents and teachers to meet in comfort and to ensure privacy.

### ***Parent Teacher Meetings***

Individual parent/teacher meetings are organised each February. The main purpose of these meetings is to report to parents on their child's social, personal and educational development.

### ***Other Forms of Communication***

- sending home letters about the different events happening in school, e.g. holidays, achievements of classes or children, fundraising for the school or worthwhile causes
- updating our school website regularly
- informing parents of specific activities in which their children are involved
- using the homework notebook to communicate short specific child-related messages
- Information Notes home from class teachers advising parents on work being done in class and how to support their child
- New parents Coffee Morning in September
- Open Day and Information Meeting for parents of new pupils
- Meetings on the Sacraments of Reconciliation & Communion
- Meetings with psychologist/learning support teachers
- Text-a-parent messages
- Parents' Association Quarterly Newsletters

In addition to the above, the following also ensure a smooth transition into the school for the child,

- Information Booklet for Parents of New Pupils
- School Prospectus
- School Website

### ***Homework***

The regular undertaking of homework provides a very obvious and practical way in which parents can demonstrate their interest in and commitment to their child's education. It presents an opportunity for parents to make a valued contribution to and influence their child's education. It is an ideal opportunity to develop a meaningful and workable partnership between home and school. Our Homework policy outlines ways in which school and home can work together to help children achieve their full potential.


### ***Policy Development***


We value parental opinion on issues of concern and to that end, we regularly consult with parents. Consultation sometimes takes the form of questionnaires and the feedback we receive is invaluable.


On other occasions we seek input and feedback on school policies. In recent years, we have consulted with parents on many policy documents and guideline statements which are available from the school and on the school website. They include


- Anti-Bullying Initiatives
- Child Protection
- Healthy Eating
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Parental Involvement
- Pupil Attendance Strategies
- Relationships & Sexuality Education
- School Uniform


***A brief summary of each of the main areas in which parents are currently involved in St. Attracta's junior school***


 ***The School Library*** - here a number of parents work with staff to maintain the library and help to keep it operating on a day-to-day basis.


 ***The Book Pool*** – over the last year, with the introduction of a new literacy programmes, the school has purchased quite a number of new textbooks. A number of parents have assisted Ms. O’ Neill (Assistant Principal) with the covering of these books.


 ***Lunchtime Parents*** – for over thirty years parents have volunteered to come to the classroom for the half hour at lunchtime. Here they assist with putting on and taking off coats, gloves scarves etc, with the opening of lunchboxes, drinks etc, with encouraging children to eat healthy foods first and encouraging the children themselves, to tidy up. (NOTE: Members of the Teaching Staff are always on Supervision Duty)

 ***The Green Schools Project*** – we have an active Green School’s committee made up of parents, teachers, pupils, and the caretaker. The parent body take an active interest in all Green School activities and support the school and their own children at many different levels

 ***Open Day*** – each year we have an Open Day, organised by a Special Duties Teacher, at which the Parents’ Association has a stand which is visited by any visitor seeking a “parent’s view” on the school. The Parents’ Association also provides tea, coffee, and minerals for those attending the Open Day.

 ***Infants First Day at School*** – on the first morning that the Junior Infants start school the Parents’ Association provides tea, coffee, a sympathetic ear, and general support for all parents!

 ***First Holy Communion Team*** – each year parents of First Communicants are encouraged to become involved in the “Do This in Memory” programme which is organised by the parish and supported by the school. On the days of First Holy Communions, parents of the First Class children are invited by the Parents’ Association to organise a Tea/Coffee reception for the families of children in Second Class who are making First Holy Communion.

 ***Fundraising*** – The Parents’ Association with the support of the parent body is very active in organising arrange of fundraising activities such as “Bags to School”

collections, Bingo Nights, and a Summer Fair. The Parents Association provide invaluable assistance in supporting our annual “Arts Awareness Fundraiser”.

✚ **St. Vincent de Paul Food Christmas Food Collection** – thanks to the wonderful support and generosity of the parents this appeal has gone from strength to strength.

✚ **Educational Outings** – such outings would not be possible without the support provided by parents in accompanying classes to all venues.

✚ **The School Book Fair** – in November the school organises Book Week, a highlight of which is the Book Fair. This event could not be run without the assistance of parents.

✚ **The Christmas Concert** – every two years we have Christmas Concerts, which are run over two nights. The parent body provides assistance in so many ways for this major school event – seeking raffle prizes, providing security at entrances, exits and in the school grounds, helping with stage props and make-up, the sale of raffle tickets, counting money and providing a light supper after the performances each night.

✚ **CAPER** (Children and Parents Enjoying Reading) – all parents are invited to take part in the **CAPER** project, which is run in all classes for a period of weeks each year. This type of participation by parents/guardians at home, complements the work being done by the teacher in the classroom.

✚ **I.C.T.** (Information & Computer Technology) – from time to time parents offer their expertise to the school or individual class teachers by way of setting up newly acquired equipment, trouble shooting, advising on hardware and software etc

✚ **I.E.P.s** (Individual Education Plans) – in keeping with our Learning Support Policy, parents of children attending either the Learning Support Teacher or the Resource Teacher are involved in the drawing up of the Individual Education Plan for their child.

✚ **Parent/Teacher Meetings** – we have an “open door policy” in the Junior School, in that parents are encouraged to come and speak to us as soon as possible should they have a concern or a query, however, we do request that parents wishing to meet the class teacher, the Principal, the Learning Support Teacher or the Resource Teacher make an appointment so that they can be afforded ample time to address their concerns and so as to ensure that the children are adequately supervised during the visit. Formal Parent/Teacher meetings are scheduled each year in the second term.

✚ **Written Reports** - each June parents receive a written school report on their child’s progress during the academic year, which is coming to a close.

✚ **Curricular Support** - Parents with a particular talent, ability, skill or expertise contribute in many different ways to enriching the learning experience. Examples of this are:

**S.P.H.E.**

- Mother and baby talks
- Visit for the Lollipop Lady
- Visit from the school secretary
- Visit from the caretaker

### **S.E.S.E.**

- talks form Grandparents
- Cookery Classes

### **P.E.**

- Basketball skills
- GAA skills

### **Visual Arts**

- Parent artists demonstrate and share their skills

### **Music**

- instrumental performances by parents

## ***Guidelines for Parents Who Become Involved***

- A member of the teaching staff will always be present when external personnel visit classrooms; at no time will pupils be alone in the company of visitors to the school
- 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 our children are our primary concern. A child's personal history and academic achievements are strictly confidential. Any doubts about issues of confidentiality must be discussed with the teacher
- Respect for the teachers in their professional capacity is essential
- Discipline remains the responsibility of the teacher
- The teacher will supervise all work
- 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 toddlers and younger children cannot be accommodated during a classroom activity
- The highest standard of behaviour and language is expected
- Punctuality and consistency are crucial
- No fees are payable. Any expenses to be reclaimed must be sanctioned in advance by the teacher, and must be accompanied by receipts
- In the case of an ongoing project that takes place over a number of weeks, the parent/s 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 teacher has the final say in the event that he/she feels it is falling short of its original aims and objectives
- The school ethos must be upheld at all times. It is important to keep in mind that the school "has a Catholic ethos inclusive of pupils of different persuasions whose religious outlook is respected" and that "we espouse a partnership approach", consequently, respect for all the partners in education - children, teachers and parents - must be upheld at all times.

## ***Appreciation***

A number of times each year we thank the parent body for their co-operation and support. This is done by way of letters home, individual “thank you “ notes to certain parents, a public “thank you” at the end of certain events, and personal words of appreciation from individual staff members.

During the month of June, the teaching staff host a “***Parents Thank You Evening***” to which those who have contributed during the year are invited as a sign of our appreciation.

## **Monitoring / Evaluation / Review**

This policy document will be reviewed occasionally and as deemed necessary. The views and opinions of the partners in education are welcome at all times.

The Board of Management of St. Attracta’s Junior School ratified this policy on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015