

PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATION (Informed by Circular Letter 24/91)

1 PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Partnership for parents in education is a stated policy aim of the Government. Through the Programme for Economic and Social Progress the Government and the Social Partners have formally recognised the promotion of parental involvement in the education of their children as an essential strategy of educational policy and practice. This policy is concerned with ensuring that partnership for parents is positively pursued in Scoil Choca Naofa.

2 SCHOOL/FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

When schools work together with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. Research shows that parental participation in schooling improves student learning. Such participation of parents and families is critical not only in the very beginning of the educational process, but throughout a child's entire academic career.

Scoil Choca recognises that parents are the prime educators and as such have a right to be assured that the child's needs are being met by the school. It follows that parents should be given as much information as possible on all aspects of the child's progress and development. Parents, as a body, are also entitled to know whether the school and the education system are meeting children's needs.

Respect for the professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibility of the Principal, Patron and Board of Management is always an important consideration.

3 PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

The Board of management actively promotes all means of effective co-operation between the school and the Parents' Association, whose primary role is:

- To develop partnership between school and home; and
- To support and encourage individual parents to become more involved in the education of their children.

It is in the best interests of the school that positive and effective communication exists between the Parents' representatives on the Board and the Parents' Association. To this end, parent representatives should be ex-officio members of the Parents' Association Committee.

4. DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

In keeping with the principals of partnership in education our school is democratically run and parents are invited to become involved in many ways and at many levels.

- the management board is democratically elected and the involvement of all parents is sought and encouraged.
- parents are encouraged annually to form a Parents' Association where they will be actively involved in policy making – RSE, Discipline, Parents' Association Constitution, Healthy Lunches, Health and Safety, etc; they will also be involved in discussions about school finances – voluntary contributions (levy), fundraising activities, etc.
- 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 class level.

5. BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Children benefit from greater diversity in the classroom.

- Children profit from more one-to-one attention.
- 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.
- Parents can 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 family'.
- Parental skills can contribute to the smooth running and development of the school.
- Parental involvement provides the opportunity of making lifelong friends.

6. 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 PTA
- ☒Parents can consult 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.
- Parents can work in conjunction with the teachers in a planned and coordinated way. For example, they could help with library and shared reading book exchange, assist at art times, work with the children at various curricular activities and lend a welcome hand in many other areas which can be identified with the teacher.
- Ongoing 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 teacher.
- Parents can help with swimming, tours and trips, organising the school library, art and P.E. resource, and may also like to make costumes for school concerts.
- Parents are currently involved in many extra-curricular activities such as chess, yoga, football, music and art and 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.

5. NATIONAL PARENTS' COUNCIL

The Parents' Association are affiliated to the National Parents' Council, Primary Tier. Such affiliation affords parents the opportunity and the mechanism for having a voice in decision making on primary educational issues at a national level. The National Parents' Council provides representation for parents, as partners in education, on various Government-appointed educational bodies. Through its representative function, the Council is making a distinctive and valuable contribution to central planning and policy development in education.

Appendix

Guidelines for Getting Involved

- Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of the teacher by prior arrangement 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.
- 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 that you wish to reclaim 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 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 if he/she feels it is falling short of its original aims and objectives.
- 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 centered and democratic. Consequently, respect for all the partners in education – children, teachers and parents – must be upheld at all times.
- Parents may be asked to sign an agreement to abide by the school policy on Parental Involvement in the school.