**Parents as Partners in Education**

**Introduction**  The staff and Board of Management of St Colman’s N.S. are committed in assisting the school community in providing the optimum learning experience for all our pupils. This policy was identified as necessary in outlining roles and responsibilities and also to inform parents as to how best they can support the school and its pupils. We very much acknowledge the role of parents as partners in education and as the primary educators of their children and encourage them to be actively involved in the life of the school. Communication between school and home should be open and positive. We endeavour to create an open and welcoming atmosphere in our school. This policy outlines strategies adopted by the school to promote positive home-school relations.

**Rationale:** “Partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate.”- Gillian Pugh **It was deemed necessary to devise a policy on parental involvement at this time because of the following reasons:**

\*Benefits to pupil learning \*Promotion of partnership \*In response to legislation Education Act, 1998; Education Welfare Act, 2000 \*School Self Evaluation (Looking at Our School) \*To celebrate and build on the existing good practice in our school

**Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School:**  The mission of this school is to enable every child to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually, aesthetically and physically to his/her full potential in a friendly, safe, and comfortable environment. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

**Aims:** By introducing this policy the school community hopes \*To build a school community 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

\*To develop open and positive home/school communication \*To develop strategies to promote the role of the parent as partners in the education of their children 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 a class level.

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

**Guidelines / Ways to become involved**  Parents are invited to become involved in the school in many ways and at many levels, for example:

\* Serving on school bodies (Board of Management, Parent Association) \*Fundraising \*Policy development e.g. Code of Behaviour; Relationships and Sexuality Education; Parent; Homework; Healthy Lunch Policy \*In the school/classroom during particular activities e.g. sporting activities, charity events, religious ceremonies. \*Book Rental \*Organising Social Events/Talks

**Parents’ Committee** We have an active and supportive Parents’ Committee in our school. Our School Principal attends meetings to ensure effective communication between staff and parents is encouraged. Officers are elected and these officers remain in contact with the school Principal regarding issues of pertinent nature. A secretary, Chairperson and Treasurer are elected. The Parents’ Committee organise and fundraise for items that will benefit the children in the school e.g. Book Rental, buses for swimming, subsidise gymnastics, improvements to the school ie tarmacadam, any other occasions/issues not directly funded by the Department.

The Parents’ Committee also support the school by producing regular News Letters in consultation with the school principal, Facebook, getting involved in religious ceremonies, sporting activities, health and safety issues, organising informative talks

**Board of Management** Our BOM is constituted of eight members, two of whom are Parent Representatives. These are elected following the Procedures and Guideline s for Boards of Management.

**Policy Consultation**  Parents are invited to take part in the review of policies in the school. Please note that parental consultation regarding policies where appropriate is conducted through various measures. Parents are made aware of draft policies on our school web site and a hard copy is also available for perusal in school. On occasion parents may be invited to form a subcommittee in the formulation/revision of certain policies e.g. RSE., Healthy Eating, Anti bullying. Copies of relevant policies are e-mailed to the Parents Council to review. The chairperson brings any comments/suggestions to the attention of the principal.

**Curriculum Plans** Parents are advised at formal Parent/Teacher meetings and informal meetings throughout the school year of ways in which they can support their child’s learning. Hints, tips and advice are provided to parents as to how best they can support their child’s learning. Our web site also offers the latest advice and support to parents from organizations such as National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Parents of children attending Learning Support and our Resource Teacher (SEN) are invited to meet the teacher formally and informally to consult in the devising of Individual Education Profiles and Leaning Profiles (IEPs/IPLPs) (at least twice each year)

**Communication**

**Parent Teacher Meetings** We realise the importance of early and honest communication with parents and parents are invited to attend formal parent teacher meetings in the first term (November) to discuss their child’s progress academically and socially. The support teachers in the school are also available to meet parents on that day. (an alternative day is sometimes organised) This is in accordance with Circular 14/04. To meet the needs of parents who are unavailable to attend on the selected dates an arrangement is in place to organize a meeting on a day that suits all parties involved. Informal meetings are held as frequently as needed and parents are encouraged to (a) write a note in the homework journal if they wish to meet the teacher or (b) arrange to make an appointment with the school secretary

**Homework Journals** These provide an effective means of daily communication between parent and teacher from 1st Class to 6th. A homework folder is used in the Infant Classes. On occasion, in conjunction with our Code of Behaviour a Daily Report Card is used to communicate with parents regarding positive and negative aspects of certain children’s behaviour at school. This is part of an Individual Behaviour Plan that will have been drawn up in consultation with parents.

**Notes/Forms**

Standardised forms are used to assist parents in providing the school with required information eg absence from school, permission slips for swimming, participation in specific activities etc

**Welcome Letter** The Principal sends out a ‘Welcome letter’ at the start of the school year. The letter also contains blanket consent forms regarding trips/outings/Internet Use etc. It also contains a copy of the school calendar and a copy of the School Rules which parents sign to show their acceptance of the school rules. Parents are also reminded of the importance of school attendance and punctuality in this

letter.

**School Calendar**

A calendar of school dates and a calendar of events is sent out to each family in September for the school year

**Induction Meeting for new parents** An induction meeting is held each year in early June for the parents of the incoming Junior Infant Class. Parents are invited to this meeting by letter. Parents receive an induction booklet at this meeting. School policies and information is discussed. This meeting provides a forum to allay any fears they may have regarding their child’s learning and happiness. Parents are made aware that St. Colman’s N.S. encourages and fosters good communication between all the partners in education. Parents’ questions are invited and answered at this meeting. Members of the existing Parents Committee also speak briefly at this meeting, explaining the function of the Parents Committee and inviting all new parents to consider getting involved. The newly enrolled Infants are also invited to attend on an afternoon, to visit their classroom for the coming new school year and meet their teacher. This helps to allay any fears they may have. New parents also meet other new parents which is important for the both parent and child.

**End of Year Report Cards**  Parents/Guardians receive an End of Year Report Card in early June every year. This Report Card outlines each pupil’s progress for the year including his or her performance on Standardised Tests (1st to 6th). An NCCA explanatory letter is also included with the Report Card to explain test scores. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to meet with the class teacher to discuss any concerns they may have regarding the report. (Parents are encouraged **not** to book holidays during term time-see Attendance Policy)

**Web Site** It is used to disseminate information and school news. It is updated regularly. All relevant policies are also available on the Web Site

**School Blog**

The school blog is used to celebrate happenings and achievements in each class to disseminate information and school news.

**Text a Parent and Email** The school has established a database of mobile phone numbers for parents on the textaparent.ie website. This facilitates the sending of text messages to all parents or specific groups of parents. Email addresses for all those on the Parents' Association have been compiled and can be sent emails as a group.

**Twitter** Parents from children in various classes receive a daily tweet with updates on things the children have done, sometimes including photographs

**Face Book**  A member of the Parent’s Council established a school face book page in 2013. The administrator filters all information through the page and highlights school events and updates as they arise. This resource is a very successful medium for information flow between parents**.**

**School Events** The school hosts many events during the year to encourage the participation of parents/guardians in school life. Examples of these include Book Fair, Christmas Concert., Coffee Morning, Carol Singing, Parents are also encouraged to participate in the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Communion and Confirmation. Occasionally the school will organise guest speakers on matters of relevance e.g. Healthy Eating, Internet Safety, Triple P etc.

**Liaising with other agencies** A number of external agencies and professionals work directly and indirectly with the school,from time to time. Such agencies include \*Department of Education and Skills (DES) \*National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) \*National Council for Special Education (NCSE) \*Educational Welfare Services-(TULSA) Parents are made aware of the role of the Education Welfare Officer in communicating with parents whose children have missed more than 20 school days, in relation to placement of pupils in other schools. \*The Health Service Executive (HSE) \*Educational Psychologist \*Special Educational Needs Officer \*Nurses and Doctors from the HSE \*Occupational Therapist

**Complaints Procedure**

The Education Act 1998 provides a legal framework for the delivery of education to the children in our school, which is legally owned by the Trustees and managed by the Board of Management. The Board is the employer of all staff in the school.

At St. Colman’s N.S., if a parent has a concern or complaint about a member of staff, it should be brought to the attention of the teacher or other staff member first. If not resolved, it should then be referred to the principal. A complaint against the principal should be brought to him/her initially. All staff are expected to deal with concerns as soon as they are raised in order to avoid issues escalating to a more serious level. Any complaint against the school or individual member of staff must be addressed through the agreed school procedures. This involves a staged process(see Grievance Procedure ) that must be strictly adhered to.

**Success Criteria:** \*Benefit to Pupil Learning \*Parental Involvement is increased in school activities \*Feedback from parents/staff

**Reviewed:** Responsibility for Review: All members of staff, Parents’ Committee, B.O.M.

**Ratification and Communication:**

Policy ratified by B.O.M

**Signed**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson Board of Management

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_