T: +353 89 616 6049
E: office@libermannschool.ie
W: www.libermannschool.ie

Libermann Spiritan School
Templeville Road
Dublin 6W
D6W NW94
Ireland

Roll number: 20563J

Believe, Belong, Become.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION POLICY
for
Parents/Guardians and Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

This policy was developed through consultation with the school staff, parents/guardians and Board of Management of Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue (LSST). The family and home are central to the educational development of the child, and it is essential that effective communication regularly occurs so that both parents/guardians and the school staff can work in partnership to ensure that each child's educational progress and that their health and well-being is maintained.

Building parent/guardian partnerships with communication should be more than just optional and it is a key responsibility for school and teachers to develop in the operation of any school, at any stage of education. The best way to do this is to prioritise two-way communication. Two- way communication is correspondence that goes back and forth between the sender and receiver. Both listen to each other and share their thoughts or questions. Teachers should engage with parents/guardians in genuine two-way communication.

RATIONALE

The need for this policy arises from:

- The LSST Dignity at Work Charter
- Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2018
- DES Circular 56/2011 Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- DES Circular 14/04 Arrangements for Parent/Teacher Meetings

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL

The school promotes positive home/school contacts and endeavors to enhance the self-esteem of everyone within the school community. This policy contributes towards these ideals.

In addition, the staff of LSST recognises through their experience of working with parents/guardians of children with Additional Educational Needs (AENs), that the child's education is more effective when the school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other.

Therefore, by incorporating policy, procedures, and practice in relation to communication between home and school, this document aims to encourage all the stakeholders to work together for the benefit of the child and their learning.

AIMS

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts and feelings between individuals or groups through verbal, nonverbal, written or digital means. It involves both sending and receiving messages effectively, ensuring understanding and clarity between the parties involved. Research has consistently shown that strong communication between home and school play a vital role in enhancing student's learning outcomes. When parents/guardians and educators collaborate effectively, sharing insights about a student's progress, needs and behaviour, it fosters a supportive learning environment. This partnership leads to improved academic performance, better student

engagement and a greater sense of accountability, ultimately benefiting the student's overall development.

The aim of this policy is to inform school practices in relation to home/school communication for the following reasons:

- To provide the LSST community with the policy, procedures and practices that will provide structure and guidance to parents/guardians and staff in relation to home/school communication so that positive collaboration can take place to enhance each child's educational attainment and thereby foster fruitful and trusting relationships between the school and parents/guardians.

- To minimise the opportunity for conflict through affording parents an opportunity to firstly, liaise with the teacher.

- To address the concerns of school staff in relation to their safety, health and well-being in the workplace and their right to dignity at work.

This policy does not cover:

(1) Complaints – these will be dealt with separately via the Parental Complaints Policy.

(2) Matters of professional competence, which come under the remit of the Department of Education.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school that are based on trust and respect.

- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school.

- Collaborate meaningfully with the school in developing the full potential of their children.

- Engage openly with the class teacher and the school about their child's educational progress in line with their child's developmental ability and their diagnosis of Additional Educational Needs (AENs)

- Behave in an honest manner and ensure truthfulness in all dealings with school staff.

- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values, and distinctive character.

- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them.

- Keep informed of school developments.
- Respond to written communications sent by the school promptly, if required.
- Prioritise and attend school meetings when arranged for their child's education.
- Attend whole school events as they arise.
- Behave actively in supporting the work of the school by becoming involved school events and fund-raising activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

LSST understands the benefits of using social media; however, if misused, the school community can be negatively affected, such as by damaging the school's reputation or the reputation of members of the school community.

Social media can be useful for the following:

- Reminders to each other about school events - e.g. school outings etc.
- Lost property notices
- Relevant community notices - e.g. family events in the local area that may be of interest.
    - Fundraising
    - Circulating positive information about the school

School-related WhatsApp groups are not an official means of communication by, or for, the school and therefore, they do not have approval of the Board of Management. Such groups are run by parents/administrator for parents, and they do not replace or substitute communication by or with the school for relevant matters. Neither should postings made be relied upon as an accurate representation of school matters.

The school has established methods of communication with parents including See-Saw, Aladin, letter, text and email. The school also communicates informally with parents on a regular basis and parents can, at any time, telephone and/or email no matter how small the query. **We would ask therefore that parents seek relevant information from the established official school channels.**

We would also request that School-related WhatsApp groups are not used for general casual chat or comment and that **in no instance should comment be made regarding any student, parent, teacher or any school policy, activity, or event. Neither should photos or live streaming be posted.** The ramifications of such posts can be detrimental to positive relations between parents/guardians, and/or between parents/guardians and the school in terms of morale and trust. They can also be damaging to the school's reputation. Therefore, the LSST Board of Management takes any such postings very seriously.

Please remember that the posts in any group chat/discussion are opinions of the individuals, not the group as a whole and not that of the school.

The school retains the right to request any damaging material to be removed from social media websites.

The school also requests that parents/guardians will not attempt to 'friend' or 'follow' any staff member on social media.

Parents/Guardians are requested not to post any of your child's personal information regarding school reports, diagnosis or making any comments on your child's progress in school.

To safeguard our students, the Board of Management requests that parents do not publish any photos or videos of school-related activities. Parents/Guardians are also advised that, as is their right, not all parents have provided consent for their child's image to be shared on social media.

Finally, we would respectfully suggest that going forward, parents should be invited to be members of school-related WhatsApp groups rather than being placed in a group and having to "opt out" - which can seem unintentionally negative/ critical.

We do hope that this communication will be taken in the spirit in which it is intended - that is to promote a positive community spirit and to foster positive school relationships.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with parents/guardians:

- Transition visits/meeting for new parents/guardians and students.

- Student Support Plan Parent Input Form (completed each year prior to first SSP meeting).

- Parents receive information about their child's Student Support Plan (SSP) at three stages during the school year, i.e.

(1) SSP meeting (Term 1)
(2) SSP review meeting (Term 2)
(3) End of Year Parent/Teacher Meeting when Parents also receive their child's Evaluated SSP and End of Year Pupil Report. (Term 3)

- Informal communication throughout the school year through the school's method of home/school communication.

- All parents/guardians are consulted in the development of school policies via the Parent's Council and via Aladdin.

- Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents/guardians in written format.

- Written communication to keep parents/guardians up to date with school events, holidays, and school concerns.

- If a parent/guardian wishes to have any additional school meeting for a specific reason, he/she can contact the School Office in advance by email or telephone to arrange a suitable date/time. Unfortunately, as the school day is very busy, it is not possible to hold meetings without prior notice. Parents/guardians are also requested to advise in advance as to the purpose of the meeting.

ROLE OF THE PARENT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Two parent representatives, a father representative and a mother representative, are elected by the whole parent body to sit on the Board of Management.

The names of parent representatives, along with the other Board members will be posted on the school website.

If a parent wishes to raise an issue with the school, the parent complaints procedure is the only process through which a parent(s)/guardian(s) can seek resolution.

Through the parents' complaints procedure, an issue must in the first instance, be addressed at school level with either the Class teacher or Principal. If the matter is unresolved, it can be progressed to the Chairperson and if it remains unresolved, it can finally be brought forward by the Chairperson for the attention of the Board.

The Board as a group, have a responsibility to address any issue raised by parents/guardians. Therefore, parent representatives have no more responsibility in this than any other member of the board.

IN-SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR PARENT/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Forms of Communication.
In person Communication/One-to-one Communication:
This is one of the most effective ways to communicate with either parents/guardians or teachers. Whenever we engage with face-to-face communication, we are using in-person communication. This is not usually necessary on a very regular basis, but for a student with Additional Educational Needs this should happen more frequently (informal communications)

Technology Based Communication
Technology- based communication is a reasonably 'new frontier' in many ways because its constantly changing and encompasses so many outlets. Whether using the phone or a parent/teacher communication App, you are using technology-based communication. You can utilise tech through emails, texts and video call or meetings. Any technology-based communication should be used on a weekly basis at a minimum and at additional times or as a daily log. (see Reporting Educational Provisions and Progress to Parents below). See-saw is the chosen tech communication app of LSST and is used by all teachers. Aladdin is used for official whole school communications.

Written Communication
Compared to technology-based communication, written communication may feel a little 'old school' But a note for parents can help them feel in-the-know. It adds a personal touch for communication and often provides families with a physical reminder for upcoming event.

REPORTING EDUCATIONAL PROVISION AND PROGRESS TO PARENTS

Circular 56/2011 Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been adopted by the Board of Management. References to parent/school communication are:

Parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents/guardians to support their children in this way by sharing meaningful information with parents/guardians about the progress that children are achieving in the education system. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that staff use, such as formal assessment tasks and outcomes, documented progress on objectives and milestones reached in their short and long-term planning, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, and examples of students' work. In turn, parents/guardians will often be able to enrich staff's knowledge of their child's progress through providing further information about their child's learning at home.

PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

Three formal parent/teacher meetings are arranged for each child across each school year. These meetings comprise three individual parent/teacher meetings, i.e.

- Student Support Plan Meeting (Term 1)
- Student Support Plan Review Meeting (Term 2)
- End of Year Parent/Teacher Meeting (Term 3)

In the interests of best practice, this provision for formal home/school communication exceeds the Department of Education and Skills requirements for parent/teacher meetings, whereby schools must hold one formal parent/teacher meeting per academic year, (DES Circular 14/04).

An outline of each of these meetings is as follows:

STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN (SSP) MEETINGS (INCORPORATING THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION & CARE PLANS)

The purpose of the SSP meetings are:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents/guardians
- To inform parents/guardians of their child's progress in school
- To help teachers/parents/guardians get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To meet demands for accountability
- To share with the parent the challenges the child may have in school
- To review with the parent/guardian the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent/guardian perspective
- To learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing
- To identify areas of tension and disagreement
- To identify ways in which parents/guardians can help their children

- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- To inform parents/guardians of assessment results in accordance with school policy.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL POINTS IN RELATION TO PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS:

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address or parent/guardian email, as given on the enrolment form or parent consent form, unless otherwise requested by parents/guardians.

In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.

Regrettably, due to the large number of these meetings and their lengthy duration, it is only possible to reschedule dates/times in exceptional circumstances.

OUTLINE OF FORMAT OF INDIVIDUAL PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

- **Student Support Plan Meeting (Term 1)**

Following a period of assessment (usually in September/early October), teachers devise a Student Support Plan (SSP) for each pupil. Following the completion of assessment, parents/guardians are invited during the first term to attend a meeting to discuss their child's SSP. Each SSP meeting is scheduled to last for 60 mins and parents/guardians will meet with class teacher accompanied by an SNA from the class (where possible) and the principal/deputy principal where appropriate/necessary.

- **Student Support Plan Meeting (Term 2)**

In addition to this first SSP meeting, an SSP review meeting is held in April. Parents/guardians are also invited to attend this meeting to discuss their child's progress to date in relation to their educational targets. This meeting is scheduled to last 30 minutes and is also held with school staff drawn from the school principal, deputy principal, class teacher and special needs assistant(s).

- **End of Year Parent/Teacher Meeting (Term 3)**

The end of year parent/teacher meeting takes place in June and lasts approximately 15-20 minutes and is scheduled to take place either before or after the school day. During this final meeting, the class teacher provides a summary of the year, and the parent receives a hardcopy of their child's evaluated SSP, including the End of Year Pupil Report.

Parents/guardians are notified by the school when booking slots for the above meetings are available. Time slots for these meetings are available over a few weeks to build in flexibility for parents to be available to attend. Parents/guardians are notified in advance to contact the school office to book a suitable time slot.

- **Additional Meetings**

In addition to these formal meetings, if a parent/guardian wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by requesting an appointment. Parents/guardians are requested to provide the purpose for the meeting in advance so that staff can ensure that they are adequately prepared.

- **Informal Parent/School Meetings**

LSST encourages communication between parents/guardians and staff. However, meetings with the class staff at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are discouraged on the following grounds:

1. Staff cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
2. It is difficult to be discreet when staff and other children are standing close by

Occasions occur where a parent/guardian needs to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The school 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/guardians wish to drop in lunch boxes, etc., this can be done through the school office at the main entrance and not directly to the classroom as it is important to keep class interruptions to a minimum.

SCHOOL REPORT

LSST aims to help parents/guardians to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information gained from assessment tests.

An End of Year Report is being developed for each curriculum cycle to take account of the skills and content of each curriculum. Each template will provide for reporting in the following key areas:

Primary Cycle:

(1) The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
(2) The child's engagement in learning and how they relate to the learning process
(3) The child's social and personal development
(4) Ways in which parents/guardians can support their child's learning

Junior Cycle:

(1) Priority Learning Units
(2) Short Courses
(3) Well-Being
(4) Other Areas of Learning

Senior Cycle:

(1) English
(2) Mathematics
(3) Careers & Work Experience
(4) Personal, Health & Social Education
(5) Sports & Fitness
(6) Transition to Adulthood

INFORMAL PARENT/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Daily Log/Communication Journal/See Saw App

Research on parental attitudes to inclusive schooling suggest that a communication book facilitates exchanges of information between home and school setting. A home-school log can be a useful form of communication. Using this type of daily communication is an ideal way to give parents/guardians a way to keep track of their child's progress. It also provides opportunities for parents/guardians to discuss the school day with their child, and to pre-teach vocabulary or prepare their child at home for any upcoming learning or activities. In the same way, teachers can be made aware of the child's activities at home, prompting discussion with the child during the school day.

TELEPHONE CONTACT

The school may, on occasion need to contact parents by telephone, e.g. if a child is unwell and/or excessively distressed for a period of time. **Parents/guardians are requested to ensure that they are contactable by telephone at all times during the school day.**

It is not acceptable for the school to be unable to make contact with parents/guardians, particularly when their child is unwell and/or distressed. This is particularly important in the case of an ill child for whom it is planned will transfer to respite care at the end of the school day or when a child is due to travel home by bus.

In such cases, in the first instance, the school secretary only will telephone parents/guardians. If necessary, the school principal or deputy principal will also be available to telephone parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians are advised that teachers are not available to make or receive regular telephone calls as during the school day they are required to remain in their classrooms teaching and supervising their classes. If a parent/guardian wishes to pass information to their child's teacher, they may do so by telephoning the school office and leaving a message.

ONLINE CONTACT

All written informal online communication between school and parents will be by email and through the 'See Saw' platform. The 'See Saw' platform has been rolled out by teachers for home/school communication relating to each student's schoolwork.

Parents/guardians and teachers will exchange information by email only in relation to important information regarding attendance, care needs and student well-being. This is so that a record exists of these communications and to ensure no important information is lost.

The school will endeavour to reply promptly to parent/guardian's emails. However, as the school is a busy environment, for practical reasons, the school will commit to responding within 2 working days.

The school will only respond to emails when the school is open. Aladin for Schools is also used for whole school Parent/Guardian notifications.

SHARING OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education.

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of students, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by staff and will only be restricted to one parent in the instance that the school is in receipt of a court order stating same.

All personal information is kept confidentially and held in line with the LSST Data Protection Policy.

REPORTING OF BEHAVIOUR/ACCIDENTS/MEDICAL INCIDENTS TO PARENTS

The reporting to parents of incidents involving a child will follow the procedures contained in the LSST Code of Behaviour and Safety, Health and Welfare Policies.

In the case of a non-emergency, the child's class teacher will contact the parents/guardians by telephone or informally, through the home/school communication method of communication. Following this, the parent/guardian may wish to contact the school the next school day for further discussion. Should further clarification regarding an incident be required, then parents/guardians can request a face-to-face meeting with the class teacher and/or the deputy principal/school principal.

If parents/guardians wish to request such a meeting, then they are welcome to contact the School Office to arrange a suitable date/time. School staff will endeavour to discuss the incident with parents/guardians in a professional manner and parents/guardians are requested to participate in such meetings in a respectful manner that is conducive to maintaining a positive working relationship with the school in the future for the benefit of their child.

Parents/guardians are also asked to remain mindful that the intentions of school staff always place the best interests of each child at the forefront and our practice reflects our child-centred ethos. Further discussion of our positive approach to behaviour management may be referred to in the LSST Code of Relationships & Behaviour.

PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

In addition to communication relating to students' learning and well-being, the initiatives outlined below are ways in which parents/guardians and schoolwork together collaboratively.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSULTATION

Parents/guardians will be consulted on areas of school development that require input from them as stakeholders.

In line with the school's ethos of an inclusive school 'Believe, Belong, Become', parents/guardians will also be consulted on areas of school development to ensure that the parents'/guardian's voice is considered alongside that of other stakeholders. The importance of parental voice and working collaboratively with the school with the student being central top all decisions.

LINKAGE WITH OTHER POLICIES

- Digital Media, Acceptable Use & E-Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- LSST Dignity at Work Charter

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be reviewed as deemed necessary by the Board of Management and also in the event of any future DES circulars or legislation.

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY

- This policy was sanctioned by the Board of Management on 15/01/2025.
- It is available to all parents and is available on request, from the school office and on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: 15/01/2025 Date: 15/01/2025

Due for Review: January 2027

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LSST