



St Patrick's GNS, Hollypark

Roll Number: 19259W

Communications Policy

Version Control

Version 1.0	2014
Version 2.0	2018
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Version 4.0	2024 (includes updated Parental Complaints Procedure)

Ratified on: 22nd February 2024

Signed: *Arthur Hutchinson*

Arthur Hutchinson, Chairperson, BOM

At the time of drawing up this policy, all details and the enclosed information are correct. It is possible that between now and the review date, changes may have to be made to the provisions, policies and procedures of the school. This may be due to external changes required by the Department of Education, the school patron or other agencies. Mandatory policies will be available on the school website and up to date information will be posted regularly.

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Introductory Statement and Rationale

This policy was first developed by the staff of St. Patrick's Girls National School, the Board of Management and the Parents' Association in the school year 2014 - 2015. It was last reviewed in 2021. This version (version 4.0) reflects the changes in school communications due to the development of the school's electronic communication systems.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Patrick's GNS, Hollypark. The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

We value open, positive communication with our parents. You, as parents are the primary educators of your children and are valuable members of our whole school community.

We seek always to maintain a positive and welcoming atmosphere. However, for all staff members in our school the priority is teaching and learning for each and every pupil. Class teacher contact time with her pupils is paramount. Every minute of teaching time lost has a direct impact on the learning of all our pupils.

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

Your daughter's happiness and wellbeing are a priority for all staff members in St. Patrick's GNS, Hollypark.

This policy is informed by the following established school policies:

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Code of Behaviour
- Culture of Respect
- Data Protection Privacy Statement
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy

Internal School Communications

- Teacher-children communication in the classroom, the yard and around the school
- Child to child communication on a formal (as part of planned classwork) or informal basis (e.g. at play, during reception time in the morning etc.)
- Principal's formal and informal communication with members of staff on an individual basis or in groups and regular contact with absent members of staff
- Teacher-teacher meetings. Teachers carry out informal meetings on a daily basis, before school, during school and after school.
- Regular staff meetings – including circulation of Agenda, Minutes and Points from the Principal
- Frequent and regular Senior Management Team (SMT) Meetings
- Frequent and regular In-School Management Team (ISM) meetings
- Frequent sub-committee meetings and feedback
- Use of intercom and daily announcements
- Internal and external communication via Aladdin and Teams
- Staff feedback and input via forms/surveys on Aladdin and Teams
- Staffroom and other noticeboards
- Staffroom Calendar/Diary on which the different classes' planned events are recorded
- Assemblies & class talks
- Classroom visits from the Principal, other teachers and the school secretary
- Teachers' co-planning, shared teaching, relieving teachers in the same class grouping to provide opportunities for meetings and discussions.
- Access to all school policies and plans on One Drive
- Events organised by Staff Social Committee

Pupil Voice

The pupil voice is central to all teaching and learning in our school. Our pupils' leadership skills are developed through assuming various responsibilities including engagement on:

- Student Council
- Green Schools Committee
- Creative Arts Team
- Active Flag Team
- Numeracy & STEM Team
- Language Team
- Wellbeing Team
- SESE Team
- Debating Teams
- Sports Teams Captains
- School Choir Leaders
- Pupils regularly take the lead in whole school assemblies
- Pupils model best behaviour for younger pupils through Buddy systems, peer reading and other such learning opportunities

Home-School Communications

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their child/children
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff of the school
- Support the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of ensuring that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character
- Become actively involved in the Parent Association (see below)

Hollypark Parent Association

The Education Act, 1998 clearly outlines the role of the parent association in primary schools

- The Parent Association works in collaboration with the principal, staff and the board of management to build effective, positive partnership of home and school. Educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve higher levels when parents and teachers work together.
- The Parent Association is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or parent. The Parental Complaints Procedure is the mechanism for this. (Appendix A)

In Hollypark GNS our PA:

- Represents parents at school events
- Invites speakers to address the parents on issues which are topical or relevant.
- Organises school fundraising: Cake Sales, fairs, sponsored walks, Christmas cards, calendars etc
- Hosts the Junior Infant Welcome Morning
- Hosts the First Holy Communion Reception
- Organises second hand uniform sale
- Collates and produces the 6th Class Graduation Year Book

Hollypark PA Communication Systems:

- PA Committee meets every month
- PA chair meets regularly with School Senior Management
- PA communicates with general parent body via email, the school website and PA Class Whatsapp (Appendix B)

General Home School Communications

- Principal's Weekly Newsletter published on school website www.hollyparkgns.ie
- Regular communications to parents/guardians via Aladdin, email, texts and school website www.hollyparkgns.ie (Ref: Acceptable Usage Policy)
- Regular updates on Twitter @hollyparkgns
- Workshops and webinars are organised by the school team for parents/guardians throughout the school year
- Parents are welcomed into the school throughout the school year to school events; eg; Sports Day, school Masses, sacraments, school concerts etc
- The Board of Management holds regular meetings (minimum 5 per year) at which the Principal's Report and Child Safeguarding Oversight Report is always presented
- The Board of Management attends the Parent Association AGM
- Parental Consents and Permissions Forms are completed via Aladdin and updated annually by parents/guardians
- Other Parental Permissions for events during the year are processed via Aladdin
- Attendance/absence notes/Return to School Declaration Forms are completed by parents/guardians via Aladdin

Information for Parents

- A Welcome Information Day for parents of incoming Junior Infants is held in the third term of the year preceding enrolment.
- A Welcome Pack for parents of new pupils is distributed
- Information Powerpoints outlining curricular content and expectations are presented to parents at class level in the first term

Class/Pupil Handover

- The staff team is very aware that September is an important transitional time for our pupils. There is always a formal and comprehensive handover between outgoing and incoming class teachers.
- Parents will always be informed when there is a change of staff mid-year and there will always be a formal and comprehensive handover to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of learning.

Homework

- Details of daily or weekly homework is communicated via the Homework Journal or Aladdin
- The Homework Journal is an appropriate means of home - school communication – early collection/ appointments /length of time spent on homework/missing uniform, tracksuit etc

Annual School Reports

- School Reports Cards are issued to all parents/guardians via Aladdin at the end of each school year
- To support the smooth transitioning of our pupils to secondary school, 6th Class Educational Passports (School Report, 'My Child's Profile' (completed by parents) and 'My Profile' (completed by pupil) are posted directly to the relevant secondary school.

Formal Parent Teacher Meetings

- The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:
 - ≈ To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
 - ≈ To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
 - ≈ To help children realise that home and school are working together
 - ≈ To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
 - ≈ To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
 - ≈ To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
 - ≈ To identify ways in which parents can support their children
 - ≈ To collaborate on decisions about the child's education
- Support Team PT Meetings take place in October
- Formal Parent/teacher meetings for all other pupils in 1st to 6th Classes take place in November
- Review of support Plans take place in February
- Formal Parent Teacher Meetings for Junior and Senior Infants take place early in the second term
- Transition Plans and end of year review for Support Plans takes place in June
- PT Meetings will be initiated by the school staff who will use the Aladdin PT Scheduler to set up dates and times in consultation with parents.
- Children are not permitted to attend the formal Parent Teacher meeting.
- Ten minutes is allocated for each of these meetings.
- It is considered best practice for both parents to attend at the same time

Informal Parent/Staff Meetings

It is vital that the school is immediately informed by you in writing, if family events/situations arise that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect her education.

Teaching time begins at 8:30am (J1-2nd) /8.40am (3rd-6th) each day. However, in the case of an emergency please do not hesitate to contact the office directly – 01 2893293.

Parents/guardians who wish to have a meeting with a teacher or the Principal are asked to make an appointment through the office (01 2893293/hollyparkgns@gmail.com). Parents are respectfully reminded **that the teacher is the initial and primary point of contact.**

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by staff. Parents and staff should be aware that both parents/legal guardians have access to all home-school communications unless the school team has been informed otherwise.

The school encourages communication between parents and staff. However, meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are not facilitated on a number of grounds:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
- It can impact on the self-esteem of a child when her parent is talking to the teacher/SNA at a classroom door.

Occasionally a parent may need to speak to a staff member urgently and sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. In this event, please contact the school secretary.

Phone calls to the School

- It is expected that all phone communication between home and school is respectful and positive
- If you wish to make an appointment to speak to a member of staff please phone the school office at 01 2893293 (Monday to Friday 8:30am-3:30pm)
- When ringing the school office please give your name and your daughter's name to the school secretary so that she can best facilitate your enquiry.
- You will be asked to indicate the general nature of your concern.
- Class contact time is paramount. However, the teacher will endeavour to respond to your call at the earliest possible opportunity.
- A parent/guardian who has an issue of concern, should **at all times** bring the issue to the attention of the class teacher first.
- Parents will not have access to staff private phone numbers or private emails.

Written Communications to the School

It is expected that all written communication between home and school is respectful and positive.

- The **Homework Journal** and/or the teacher's school email should be used for daily communication between home and school – eg: medical appointments/early collection/missing uniform etc
- **Aladdin** may be used for reporting absences
- General inquiries to the school should be made to the school email: hollyparkgns@gmail.com (Monday to Friday 8:30am - 3:30pm)
- Email communications to the school should be scheduled Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.
- Staff undertake to respond in a timely manner.

In the case of an emergency or urgent message parents should contact the school office directly by phone 01 2893293.

Written Communication to School during periods of Remote Learning

- Remote Learning will be delivered via Teams/Seesaw/Aladdin.
- Parents and teachers may communicate via Teacher email. We respectfully request that all email communications be scheduled Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.
- General inquiries to the school should be made to the school email: hollyparkgns@gmail.com
- Staff undertake to respond in a timely manner.

Other Communications to the School

Forgotten lunch boxes, sports gear etc. can be handed in at the secretary's office as it is important to keep class disruptions to a minimum.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays. Since the inception of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 schools are obliged to report absences in excess of 20 days to Tusla.

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address/parents' email as given on the original Admissions Form, unless otherwise requested by parents.

Information on the child's Admissions Form is stored securely and regularly reviewed to ensure that all details, in particular the list of emergency telephone numbers are up to date.

Communications with External & Other Agencies

NEPS

- Engage with psychologist to identify pupils for support/assessment.
- Liaison between NEPS and parents to establish direct and indirect involvement as required.
- Facilitate team meetings to feedback results/recommendations etc to parents and staff.

SENO

- Link between the school team and the NCSE team
- Ongoing communication regarding school resources - staffing, resource hours, SNA access, cohorts etc
- Guidance regarding the application process for further resources as needed
- Collaboration regarding school placement for pupils as required
- Regular communication regarding CPD events

Hollypark BNS

- Shared school community
- Shared events
- Shared campus – resources, pitch, security, access etc
- Policies especially Admissions Policy

Lycée Francaise d'Irlande

- Hollypark GNS teacher based in LFI
- LFI teacher: French lessons for 5th & 6th Classes
- Liaison re First Penance & First Communion
- Access to campus
- Shared yard space

Secondary Schools

- Parents Information Evenings
- 6th Class Transitions/School Reports
- Access to resources in local secondary schools – pitches/halls etc

Other schools

- Coláiste Eoin/Iosagán – Banna Ceoil SnaG
- St Augustine's Special School – Banna Ceoil - SnaG
- CRC School Clontarf – Shared interest in music/drama
- National Children's Choir – affiliation involving rehearsing/performing with other primary schools

Community Garda

- Road safety and local traffic issues

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- Fire Safety (Hallowe'en)
 - Cyber safety

Traffic Warden

- Road safety
- Cycle/scooter safety

DLRCoCo

- Local traffic calming measures
- Road Safety
- Safe Cycling
- Grants relevant to school development
- Local development issues

Procedure for Resolving Issues of Concern

Parents are reminded that the staff of St Patrick's GNS, Hollypark are always prepared to listen and it is in the best interests of pupils to resolve difficulties at an early stage.

A parent/guardian who has an issue of concern, should **at all times** bring the issue to the attention of the class teacher **first**. All meetings can be arranged through the school secretary or through a note in the Homework Journal or through an email to the school office hollyparkgns@gmail.com or directly to the teacher's email. You will be asked to indicate the nature of your concern when arranging the meeting.

When ringing the school office please give your name and your daughter's name to the school secretary so that she can best facilitate your enquiry.

If your concern is in relation to special education needs or provision, the class teacher is the first point of contact. If deemed necessary, the support teacher will also attend the initial meeting. If the issue remains unresolved the SENCO (Ms Marnell, Deputy Principal), may attend the follow up appointment to attempt to resolve it.

If the issue remains unresolved it may be necessary to bring it to the attention of the Principal. All meetings with the Principal can be organised through the school secretary. On occasion the Principal may request the presence of another staff member at the meeting.

If the matter remains unresolved, the parent/guardian has further recourse available to them through the Parental Complaints Procedure see below.

The Parent Association is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or parent. **The Revised Parental Complaints Procedure**, set out below, is the mechanism for this.

Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders, that is staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, adults in the school community also have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí must be called
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy

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- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.

We value your cooperation and sincerely appreciate your on-going support and interest in your child's learning.

Review

This policy will be subject to regular review and update.

APPENDIX A

Parental Complaints Procedure

Revised Parental Complaints Procedure



Note:

- A copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school. This procedure comes into effect on the 1st of January 2024.
- Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the school patron.

Purpose/Objective

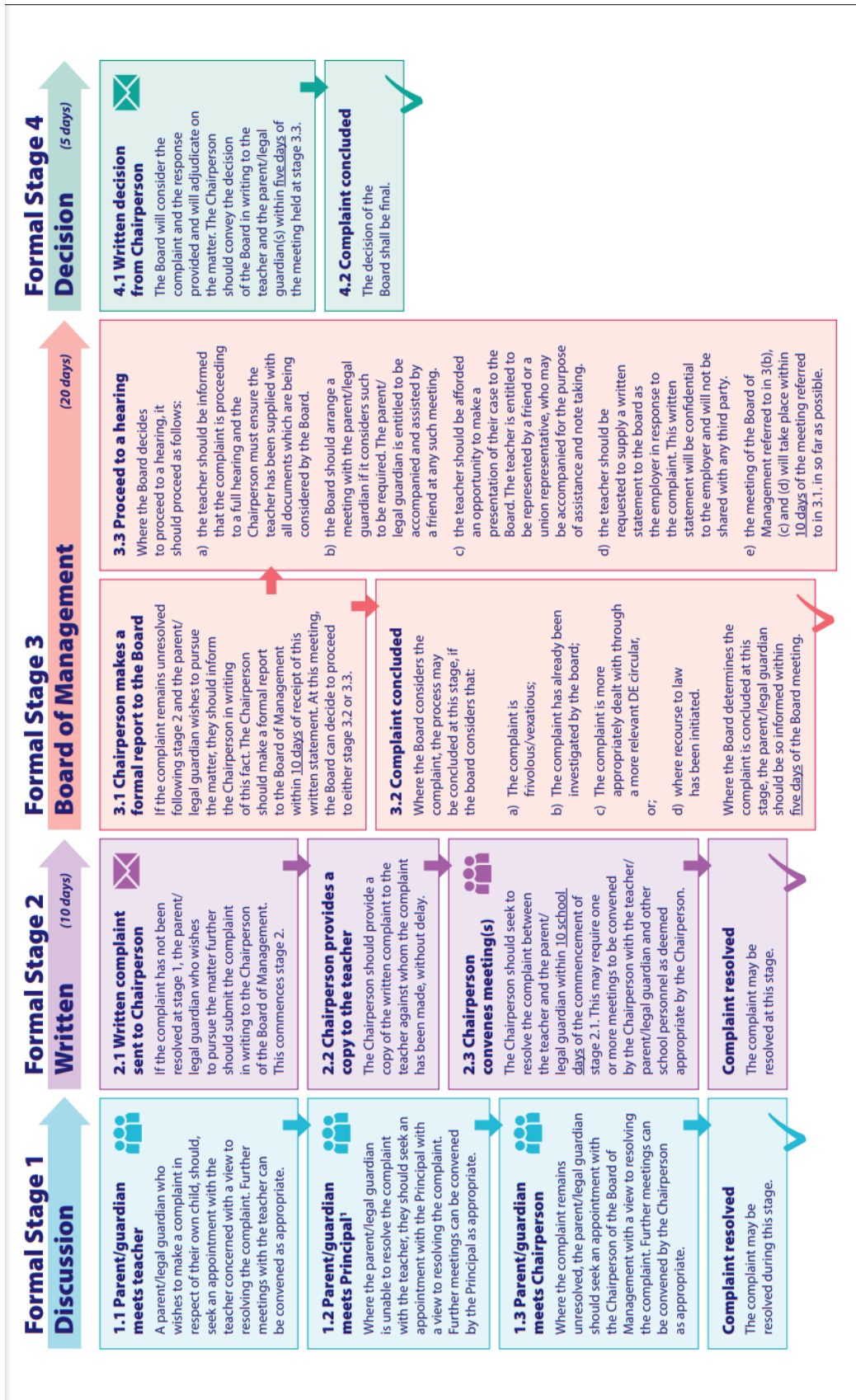
The parental complaints procedure was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the management bodies of primary schools, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023. It is designed to provide an open and clearly defined process to facilitate parents/legal guardians in raising concerns about their own child/children in an agreed, fair and transparent manner.

It is recognised that parents/legal guardians are the primary educators in a child's life and as such from time-to-time concerns may arise which they may need to engage with the school. It is expected that engagement will be timely, courteous and resolution focused to ensure that the important relationship between the parent and school can be preserved and respected. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively.

Procedural Points

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns will be dealt with either informally or formally at the earlier stages of the procedure. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution at the earlier stages, the procedure does allow for the escalation of the matter to the Board of Management. This procedure sets out, in four stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed. It is expected the parties will follow each stage in sequence.

- Where the term written correspondence is used, this refers specifically to a letter or email correspondence from a parent/legal guardian(s).
- Only complaints about a teacher which are written and signed by a parent/legal guardian, and which relate to their own child, will be investigated.
- Where a complaint raised by a parent/legal guardian is deemed by the employer/board of management to relate to the following, this procedure will not apply;
 - matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
 - frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
 - complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.
- In all circumstances, any form of written correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be supplied to the Chairperson of the board of management **only**. Any deviation from this could be deemed prejudicial and as acting outside the scope of this agreement.
- **Days in this procedure refer specifically to school days.** A school day is a day on which the school is in operation. Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure.
- Group/collective complaints are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process.
- The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any stage.
- Issues should be raised in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child that issues are raised to achieve early resolution at the earliest possible stage with the teacher, ideally while the pupil is in that teacher's class.



Appendix B

PA Class Whatsapp Guidelines (ref: Acceptable Usage Policy)

1. The Class WhatsApp group is set up by the PA Class Reps, with the Class Rep as administrator. Class Reps may communicate school-related issues with parents. The group administrator, will have the right to restrict admission, remove or ban anyone from the group without any notification. Please do not use the group to discuss non-school related issues.
2. **Group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group but are obliged to report to the School Principal.**
3. Inappropriate posts include - posting promotions, using inappropriate language, collating data from polls for establishing group consensus, personal attacks or insulting messages, bullying of any member or staff member, voicing grievances with the school or with individual members of the group.
4. Whatsapp groups are not a forum for communicating grievances. If a parent wishes to address a concern they must follow the steps clearly outlined in the School Complaints Procedure (Communications Policy). For individual concerns, please raise these directly with the parent concerned, teacher or, where necessary, the Principal.
5. Under no circumstances should the group be used to post private or confidential messages or express personal opinions or gossip. Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members and may not be representative of the whole group.
6. If your message is not relevant to the majority of group members, please reply by way of a personal message. In the event of too many messages being posted that are only relevant to a minority of group members the group administrator may request the conversation be continued outside the group.
7. Please respect the time you post. Early in the morning, late at night and during school holidays are discouraged where possible.
8. It is important that your child takes responsibility for their learning including homework; the Class Whatsapp Group is not the appropriate forum to discuss or share homework.
9. For after-school or extra-curricular activities queries, please contact the teacher/organiser of the classes.
10. By accepting a request to join the group, participants agree to these group rules. Please note, by accepting the request to join, you are sharing your phone number with other parents within your child's class. Once you join, you always have the option to leave the group.