***Parents as Partners Policy***

**Introduction**

This policy was developed by the staff of Crinkill NS in consultation with the Board of Management and the Parents’ Association. While the word "parent" is used in this document, this also includes the guardian or legal custodian of a pupil, as appropriate.

**Rationale**

The Irish constitution, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Primary School Curriculum identify parents as the primary educators of the child. There is a wealth of research to show that when authentic partnership exists between school and parents the teaching and learning in the school is hugely enhanced. Some of the benefits of parental involvement highlighted in this literature include:

* improved parent–teacher relationships, teacher morale and school climate
* improved school attendance, attitudes, behaviour and mental health of children
* increased parental confidence, satisfaction and interest in their child’s education.

We define parental involvement “as engaged participation by parents in a consistent, organised and meaningful way in the consultation, planning, implementation and evaluation of school programmes and activities that assist their child’s educational progress.”

Crinkill NS welcomes parents as partners in education. We acknowledge the role of parents as not only the primary educators but also the most important influence in their child’s life. We are therefore committed to establishing and maintaining an effective and purposeful working relationship between the school and home.

We recognise the need to establish a true partnership with parents based on trust and respect. This partnership is envisaged as a positive working relationship, characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to listen and learn in the best interests of pupils’ development and progress. This policy outlines strategies adopted by the school to promote positive home-school relations.

**Rationale**

This policy was developed

* to assist our school community in providing the optimum learning experiences for its pupils
* to explore how best parents might support the school and its pupils
* to outline roles and responsibilities
* to promote and develop home/school partnership in a range of ways
* to identify areas for further development
* to celebrate and build on the existing good practice in our school
* in the context of ongoing School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and School Improvement Planning (SIP)
* with reference to DES Circular 24/91
* with reference to the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

**2. Vision and Aims**

**2.1 School Ethos & Parents as Partners**

In the Crinkill NS community, school personnel and family members strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other and this approach is central to our school ethos.

Crinkill NS aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral, emotional and spiritual. We aim to provide each child with an academic education to the highest standard within a safe, happy and supportive environment and we endeavour to equip each child with the skills and positive self-esteem to empower them to contribute to their community and become lifelong learners. We recognise parents as the primary educators of their children and we aim therefore to espouse a partnership approach to education. We believe that a positive working relationship with parents/guardians is fundamental to the achievement of these aims.

**Aims**

In developing this policy the school aims to

* Affirm and support the role of the parents as the "primary and natural educators" of their children.
* Foster and promote a positive relationship between parents and teachers in their respective roles as educators.
* Enhance and widen our children’s education through the involvement of parents and the community when possible.
* Ensure Crinkill NS is a culturally appropriate environment that values parents and carers and is sensitive to family needs
* Create a climate where parents are encouraged to actively participate in decision making concerning their child while positively affirming the professional role of staff.
* Build on the school community’s commitment to supporting all its pupils - Develop open and positive home/school communication - Ensure an open and welcoming atmosphere for parents as well as children - Review and develop procedures for the sharing of information on pupil progress and attainment - Develop strategies to promote the role of parents as partners in our school - Enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents
* State the current channels of communication between school and parents

**3. School/family contact**

**3.1 Ongoing school/family contact**

Parents are welcome in our school and are encouraged to keep in regular contact with Class Teachers and Learning Support/Resource Teachers. It is agreed that early communication often prevents a later difficulty arising and is in the best interests of the children. Parents are encouraged to contact the school to arrange an appointment with Class Teachers, Learning Support/Resource Teachers or the Principal if they have any queries or concerns.

Various means of communicating with parents are employed by the school to circulate school and community information.

* Text-a-Parent and e-mail

Through its database, the school can readily contact parents by phone and text. It also has a facility to send group texts and e-mails to all parents or to sub-groups (eg parents of a particular class or extra-curricular activity).

* Homework Journal

Pupils from 1st – 6th Class have a Homework Journal. Parents are required to sign the journal each evening, having reviewed their child’s homework on that day. This resource is also used by parents and teachers for non-confidential routine contact.

* Notes/forms

Standardised forms are used to assist parents in providing the school with required information e.g. absence from school, contact information, permissions slips etc.

* School Website
* Homework Journal

The school website is used to celebrate activities and achievements and to disseminate information and school news. It features the latest news and gives notice of upcoming school events. Many school policies are available on the school website. There are also links to useful websites for parents. The content of the website is reviewed regularly.

* Social media

Teachers and parents in the school embrace social media tools and endeavour to find informal ways to communicate on an ongoing basis;

* Twitter

The school has its own Twitter account

https://twitter.com/crinkillns

This features news and events and is moderated by school staff.

* Notice Boards

Notice boards in the school corridors and assembly hall are regularly updated with information relating to school events (e.g. Camogie, Santry sports) for parents’ perusal.

* Newsletters

The Principal coordinates a termly newsletter which provides general school information and news. Newsletters are sent home with the pupils as well as being uploaded to the school's website.

**Curriculum**

Parents are advised of ways in which they can support their child’s learning at general and individual Parent/Teacher meetings throughout the school year. The school’s website also offers guidance, advice and support to parents and suggests organisations such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for specialised information.

**Special Educational Needs**

Home-school communication is vital in dealing with all special needs issues. Throughout the school year, Learning Support and Resource Teachers include systematic Parent/Teacher meetings in the planning and monitoring of these pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Parents are consulted in relation to the planning and implementation programme for pupils' Learning or Resource Teaching Support. They have an active role in devising an IEP in consultation with their child's Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher who has responsibility for developing the plan and overseeing its implementation. Ongoing consultation helps greatly in supporting the aim to reach each child’s specific learning targets.

**External Agencies and Professionals**

A number of external agencies and professionals work directly and indirectly with the school, from time to time. Officers and other professionals within these agencies that may have contact with parents include:

* Educational Psychologist

Children within the school may be referred by the Principal to the NEPS’ Education Psychologist for assessment, following consultation with parents.

* Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

Following a diagnosis of a low-incidence disability, applications may be made to the NCSE for appropriate individual in-school support. Such applications are administered by the SENO assigned to the school.

* Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer, under the auspices of TUSLA, the statutory Educational Welfare Service, communicates with parents whose children have missed more than 20 school days in a school year, or other such matters of welfare concern.

* Nurses /Doctors/Dentists

Nurses and other personnel from the HSE visit the school to administer national programmes such as vision tests, and to administer vaccinations. All such interventions must have parental consent.

**Induction arrangements for Junior Infant parents**

The Principal meets each set of parents individually, by appointment, before their child starts school. This allows her to get to know the parents and it affords the parents an opportunity to discuss their child in some detail, to ask any particular questions which they may have and to get a sense of the school’s ethos and priorities.

In September, an evening meeting is arranged for the parents of all in-coming pupils. All relevant procedures, practices, safety matters, certain policies such as the Code of Behaviour, Child Protection and Anti-bullying are explained in detail. Parents are given ample opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues of concern. A comprehensive tour of the school building and playgrounds, takes place, in the interests of familiarising new parents in particular, with the school.

The meetings are attended by the Principal and the Junior Infant Class Teachers. Parents receive an Induction Pack that includes general up-to-date information. The Parents Association arranges refreshments after the meeting and this provides an opportunity for parents to mingle, renew acquaintances and make new contacts.

There is also an open day for new Junior Infants held each June where the children get to meet their new teachers and see their classrooms. 7

**Parent/Teacher meetings**

Parents are invited to attend formal parent-teacher meetings in the first term to discuss their child’s progress academically and socially. The support teachers in the school are also available to meet parents on that day. 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 organise a meeting on a day that suits all parties involved. Meetings for parents of Senior Infants – 6th Class pupils are usually held in the second half of Term 1 (November), while those for Junior Infants are scheduled for Term 2.

Informal meetings are held as frequently as needed and parents are encouraged to write a note in the homework journal if they wish to meet the teacher.

Parents who have concerns in relation to their child’s progress or experience at school are advised to raise the matter with their child’s teacher in the first instance. If they are not satisfied with the response received from the class teacher, they may request to meet with the school principal by contacting the school secretary.

**End-of-Year Reports**

Parents receive an End-of-Year Report on their child in June every year. This report outlines each pupil’s progress for the year, including their performance on standardised tests (1st – 6th Class), as outlined in the school's Assessment Policy. An explanatory letter from the NCCA is also included with the report to explain the test scores. Reports are posted prior to the end of the school year in order to facilitate parents who may have a query or require clarification regarding the report.

**Special Events**

The school hosts many events during the year to encourage the participation of parents in school life. Examples of the events to which parents are warmly welcomed include the annual carol service, Christmas performances and concerts, the science fair, Grandparents day, sale of work, sports day, active week, art exhibitions, musical recitals, school garden, graduation mass and celebration etc.

Parents are also encouraged to participate in the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Communion and Confirmation. 8

Parents accompany teachers with all classes on school tours and outings.

**Parental roles within the school community**

As well as parents’ role in relation to their own child(ren)s’, meaningful involvement by parents/guardians is a crucial element in the success of our school as a vibrant and effective learning community. The following structures have been put in place to facilitate parental involvement in the general life of our school:

* + Board of Management (BOM)
  + Parents’ Association
  + Policy development
  + Guest speakers
  + Special events

**Board of Management (BOM)**

The school is administered by the Board of Management. Its members represent the Patron, school Staff, Parents and the Local Community. The Board meets a number of times per term and reports regularly to the Parents' Association (ref Education Act and Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, DES, 2007).

The Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure stipulates that parents’ nominees on the Board of Management, along with all other members, should

* + uphold and support the ethos, culture and traditions of the school
  + be aware of his/her collective and individual responsibilities
  + have a specific role/function in the management of the school
  + support new members in understanding the functions of the Board, and the relationship between the Board and the pupils, teachers, staff, Patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

The two parent nominees on the current Board of Management were elected in accordance with the Procedures and Guidelines for Boards of Management.

**Parents’ Association**

Crinkill NS is very fortunate to have a very positive, enthusiastic and active Parents’ Association. The Parents’ Association is affiliated with the National Parents Council (NPC) Primary and works with the principal, staff and representatives from the Board of Management to build an effective partnership between home and school (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Parent Association Constitution). The principal, staff and Board of Management of Crinkill NS are fully encouraging of the Parents’ Association in the school. We welcome and listen to their input on school matters and help them in fundraising activities.

The Crinkill NS Parents’ Association enables parents to play a meaningful role in supporting the aims and objectives of the school and ensures parents are consulted in the development of relevant school policies and plans. It also serves to identify and make available the skills and talents of individual parents that may be valuable to the school.

Parents form a committee at the Parents’ Association Annual General Meeting. At the first meeting each school year, the Executive positions are filled by election of the committee. The Parents’ Association made up of the committee and representing parents, meet on a monthly basis. Ad hoc sub-committees may take responsibility for specific events and often co-opt others to help, thereby sharing the workload. Events coordinated by the Parents’ Association include the annual Sports Day, Confirmation and Communion parties, Grandparents’ Day party and the coffee morning for the parents of Junior Infant Classes.

**Policy Development/Consultation**

In tandem with School Self-Evaluation, school policies require constant development review and revision. Parental input in this process is appreciated. Parental consultation regarding policies where appropriate is conducted through various methods including during Parent Association meetings. Parents are made aware of policies on our school website and a hard copy is also available for perusal in school.

**Success criteria**

* + Benefit to Pupil Learning
  + Parental Involvement is increased in school activities
  + Feedback from parents/staff

**Ratification and Review**

This policy was communicated to the Parents’ Association and to the Board and comments invited.

It was agreed and ratified at a meeting of the Board of Management on **2nd December, 2014.**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Chairperson Date**