

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School



Parent/Guardian Teaching and Non Teaching Staff Home & School Communication Policy



Updated September 2022

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Parent/Guardian and Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff Home & School Communication Policy

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School is part of the local community and is very appreciative of the support it receives from the various stakeholders in the school. Participation by Parent/Guardians and others from the community have a direct impact on the educational value of the school and is greatly appreciated by both governors and staff. Links between home and school are actively promoted. In recognising that the education of our children is a partnership between the home and school, the Board of Governors, Principal, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff seek to allow Parents/Guardians a clear right of access at all reasonable times to their child's class teacher and the Principal. The Principal, as the day to day manager of the school, will seek to ensure that all such contacts are conducted in a manner which will promote the educational interests of the pupil and allow for the safety of all the children and staff. It should be noted that teachers have preparation time every morning and after school and have directed time duties at these times.

As parental attitudes to school and the teacher can directly influence the child it is important that all exchanges between school and home should be informed by a mutual respect for each others knowledge and concern for the pupil's welfare. Pupils have much to gain from the shared interest of Parents/Guardians and Teaching and Non-Teaching staff. Each has an in-depth knowledge of the child in different settings and contexts and the sharing of this information in a positive way should help the pupil to feel valued and to achieve his/her full potential. **It is vital that pupils feel secure in the working relationship between home and school.** We believe that it is very important that the relationship between parent/guardians and their child's class teacher and school principal is a positive experience. Although there may be rare occasions when school and home may disagree about an incident that has occurred in school, a spirit of mutual respect with calm and mature co-operation should enable any potential miscommunication issues to be dealt with in a satisfactory manner. We would encourage the "modelling" of appropriate behaviour.

The means of expressing this working relationship are diverse but Parents/Guardians will appreciate that some guidelines are necessary as each member of Teacher or Non-Teaching staff has responsibility for a large group of children. All exchanges between Parents/Guardians and school staff should be conducted in a co-operative and respectful manner and Parents/Guardians are asked to adhere to the school's guidelines when seeking contact with their child's class teacher.

The contact between parents/guardians and teacher may take the form of:

❖ Seesaw

Teachers will only reply to Seesaw messages and mark work during the working day. We do not expect school staff to respond to emails or phone calls outside of school working hours or their working hours (if they work part-time), or during school holidays; however, members of school staff may choose to do so on certain occasions. Please be mindful that teachers are busy teaching and may only have opportunity to reply in the afternoon and that items posted late in the evening may not be responded to until the following day. Please note that messages of high priority should be delivered by either calling the office - 02890458040 – or be e mailing info@hardingmemorial.belfast.ni.sch.uk

Any sensitive issues regarding your child should be communicated via phone or e mail and should not be communicated via Seesaw. All exchanges between parents/guardians and school staff should be conducted in a cooperative and respectful manner and parents/guardians are asked to adhere to the school's guidelines when seeking contact with their child's class teacher. Please note that members of

School Staff will not respond to messages that are deemed inappropriate and these will be forwarded to the School Senior Management Team for review of further action. **Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive, or threatening will be treated in-line with our Parent Code of Conduct (See Appendix 1)**

❖ **Written Information**

This communication may involve routine housekeeping procedures including news sheets and information letters from school and notes from parents e.g. dental appointments, illness etc. (In an emergency parent/guardians should contact the school secretary)

❖ **Special Events**

Parents will be invited to the school to attend such activities as seasonal services, concerts and open days.

❖ **Curriculum Meetings**

These meetings are held in the first month of the academic year and are held "On-Line" in the late afternoon/evening via Zoom to allow for maximum parent/guardian participation.

❖ **Formal Parent/Teacher Interviews**

Formal parent/teacher interviews to discuss each pupil's academic progress will take place twice a year. The first meeting will be held in October/November and the second meeting will be held in February/March. Transfer to secondary school procedure meetings for Primary 7 parents will be held in January/February. These meetings will be facilitated using School Cloud On-Line Communication

❖ **Other Meetings**

Teachers may make informal contact with a Parent/Guardian at suitable occasions in order to provide immediate clarification about a specific incident (possibly at home pickup time).

Formal Appointment

If the school is concerned about a pupil's performance, behaviour or progress, an appointment will be arranged with the Parents/Guardian.

How Do I Make Contact With School ?

- If a Parent/Guardian has a concern regarding their child this should be brought to the Class Teacher first. For the smooth operation of the school if a parent requires an extended conversation about an incident/event, an appointment should be made with the class teacher either through the school secretary or by letter. The issues should be clarified to enable the Class Teacher to make appropriate preparation.
- If the issue is not resolved a meeting with the principal may be arranged. If it is necessary to discuss something with a Teacher, then a note should be written or a phone call made to arrange a mutually convenient time. Class Teachers may be available at the beginning and end of the school day to speak briefly to parents – but please note that every Teacher has Curriculum commitments both before and at the end of the normal school day.
- The School Board of Governors reserves the right to contact the Education Authority (Belfast Region) in order to put in place arrangements for addressing the most serious situations where the approach of a parent/guardian might amount to **harassment of Teaching & Non-Teaching staff in the workplace.**
- **The Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Board of Governors is fully supportive of the Teacher Negotiation Committee (TNC) 2011/2 policy statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers**

- The TNC 2011/2 document is available to view using the web link below.
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/policy-statement-on-tackling-violence-against-teachers-tnc2011-2.pdf>
- TNC 2011/2 clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Employing Authority, the Board of Governors, the Principal and teachers when dealing with issues of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers in schools
- The aim of this TNC 2011/2 policy statement, which has been agreed by the employers and teachers' side of the teachers' salaries and conditions of service committee, is to affirm that violence and abusive behaviour against teachers is totally unacceptable.
- The Board of Governors has statutory obligations to provide a safe working environment and safe working practices for all their staff. The Board of Governors will not accept or condone violence or abusive behaviour against staff and acknowledges that no member of school staff **should work in fear of violence or abuse.**
- **Definition of Work Related Violence** - The Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland's definition of work related violence is **"any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work."**
- **The Board of Governors of Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School will not accept or condone violence or abusive behaviour against staff and acknowledges that no teacher should work in fear of violence or abuse**
- Online abuse or cyber harassment is the use of information and communications technologies by an individual or group to cause harm to another person. Such behaviour often involves uninvited, intimidating, offensive comments or replies, images or other content used to attack, intimidate, threaten or upset an individual personally. Virtual mobbing occurs when a number of individuals use social media or messaging to make negative or derogatory comments about another individual to cause harm or distress. The volume of messages posted may, by itself, provide evidence of a campaign of harassment. Where the approach of a Parent/Guardian or the actions of a group of Parent/Guardians might be reasonably regarded as amounting to "bullying and harassment" of school staff in person or on the phone or On-Line Via Social Media this will not be tolerated.
- As is stated in the Parent Code of Conduct (Appendix 1): *Social media is being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Headteachers, staff and in some cases other parents/ carers/students. The Board of Governors of Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School consider the use of social media websites used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children, young people or the whole school community.*
- Such harassment of School Staff may constitute a criminal offence. It is extremely seriously by the School Board of Governors who have a duty to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. Cyber bullying or online harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Protection from Harassment, (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and may also be subject to legal action under the law on defamation. The Board of Governors reserves the right to make further contact with the Education Authority (Legal Section) about these and any other issues that may be perceived as amounting to Bullying and Harassment of School Staff as highlighted in TNC Document 2011/2= Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers

❖ Pastoral Care

We regard the welfare of all the pupils at Harding Memorial as the responsibility of all staff – teaching and non teaching. The school encourages a caring commitment from all adults who come into contact with pupils. The welfare and happiness of the child is central to the ethos of Harding Memorial. Parents are seen as a vital part of pastoral care and are encouraged to liaise closely with the school regarding all aspects of their child's welfare. Our child protection policy outlines the procedures to be followed if a child's safety is in jeopardy. **The Designated Teacher for child protection is Mr Cumper and the Deputy Designated Teacher is Mrs Baird.** Any concerns related to a child's safety should be reported to either Mr Cumper or Mrs Baird.

Under no circumstances should children be approached by an adult, other than School Staff or their Parents or Guardian, while in school relating to any incident which has occurred in school

❖ Promotion of Pupils' Attendance and Good Behaviour

We adopt a positive attitude to discipline at Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School, expecting pupils to behave in a responsible manner by showing consideration, courtesy and respect for other people at all times. This high standard of behaviour is expected inside school as well as on the way to and from school. The positive support of parents is essential in maintaining good discipline and co-operation is sought in relation to pupil attendance, punctuality, school homework, school uniform and attitude towards learning. All school staff are committed to the positive aspects of discipline by giving praise where it is due. School staff will always try to be fair, consistent and sensible if breaches of our positive behaviour policy occur.

✓ As Parent/Guardians you can assist in our Home / School partnership by:

- Encouraging your child/children to take care of School Property e.g School Library Books etc and keep them out of reach of younger children and pets.
- Writing down any messages you wish to send into school.
- Reminding your child to give your note to the class teacher.
- Looking in the schoolbag to ensure notes are received.
- Sending 'break' or packed lunch in a separate container.

✓ How Do I Make Contact With School ?

If it is necessary to discuss something with a teacher, then a note should be written or a phone call made to arrange a mutually convenient time. Class teachers may be available at the beginning and end of the school day to speak briefly to parents, but it should be noted that Teachers have curriculum commitments both prior and after the School starting and stopping bells

✓ How Will School Make Contact With Parents ?

If something is going to happen in school, which affects pupils, then parents will be informed. Please check schoolbags daily for information notes. If the school has a concern relating to a particular child, the class teacher will contact the parent either by writing a note in the child's homework diary, or by telephone. The Principal may also make direct contact with parents.

- ✓ **Our professional interest as teachers is identical to yours as parents - that is to give each child the best opportunities we can provide. We are trying to create an environment where children will behave sensibly, act reasonably and thus learn constructively and harmoniously.**
- ✓ **Your child will benefit from your active support throughout his / her time at school. If you have any queries or worries concerning your child's education, please do not hesitate to contact the school at your earliest possible convenience.**



Everyone employed in Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School has been vetted (checked by the police) and all school staff are trained in how to identify abuse including what must be done if they or someone else is worried about a child.

The teachers who have responsibility for dealing with child protection in a school are known as **Designated Teachers for Child Protection**.

➤ **Mr Cumper is the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Mrs Baird is the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.**

Our school child protection policy will explain the actions that you or the school must take if either of you are worried or concerned about a child. This will include how concerns are recorded and how they might be reported to Social Services or the police. School staff will listen to and work closely with parents to make sure their child feels safe and protected in the school environment. As a parent you are the most important person in keeping your child safe. As a parent you should:

- Feel confident about raising any concerns with the school principal that you may have in relation to your child – both educational and pastoral.
- Be aware of our school's anti bullying, positive behaviour and child protection policies.
- Inform the school if your child has any medical conditions.
- Make the school aware of any court orders relating to your protection or your child's protection.
- Inform the school if there is any change in your child's circumstances for example: change of address, change of name or change of parental responsibility.
- Under no circumstances should school staff be contacted at home or approached outside school concerning matters to do with school.
- Only Parents or Legal Guardians have the right to request an interview with School Teaching Staff concerning a child.

Appendix 1 – Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct

At Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School we believe it is important to work in partnership with Parent/ Guardians/Carers to support their Child/Children's learning. Our aim is to:

- ✓ Create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all our Pupils, Staff and Parent/Guardians
- ✓ Model appropriate behaviour for our Pupils at all times
- ✓ Listen to concerns and issues and seek to address these appropriately

To help us do this, we set clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our School community. This includes School Staff (through the Staff Code of Conduct) and Pupils (through our Anti Bullying/Positive Behaviour Policy). We expect Parents/Guardians and visitors to set a good example to Pupils at all times, showing them how to get along with all members of the school and the wider community. This Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct aims to help the school work together with Parent/Guardians/Carers by setting guidelines on appropriate behaviour. We use the term Parent/Guardians/Carers to refer to:

- ✓ Anyone with parental responsibility for a child at Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School
- ✓ Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents or child-minders)

We expect Parent/Guardians/Carers and other Visitors to Harding Memorial to:

- Respect the ethos, vision and values of our school
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our pupils
- Treat all members of the school community with respect – setting a good example with speech and behaviour
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues
- Correct their own child's behaviour (or those in their care), particularly in public, where it could lead to conflict, aggression or unsafe conduct
- Approach the appropriate member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern (please refer to Home & School Communication guidance)

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment, the school has created a set of guidelines that is reflected in this document: Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School will not tolerate:

- ✓ Swearing, abusive, offensive and/or insulting language as part of verbal (including voicemail/phone calls) or written e-mails or any other electronic communication e.g Seesaw
- ✓ Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of any part of the school or its grounds (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches) will not be tolerated
- ✓ Offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the students/parent/staff, at the school on social media websites.
- ✓ Displaying a temper, or shouting at members of staff, students or other parents.
- ✓ The use of physical aggression towards another adult, child or young person. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises.
- ✓ Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the alleged actions of this child towards their own child.
- ✓ Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences.

Social Media

Social media is being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Headteachers, staff and in some cases other parents/ carers/students. The Board of Governors of Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School consider the use of social media websites used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children, young people or the whole school community. The Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Board of Governors is fully supportive of the Teacher Negotiation Committee (TNC) 2011/2 policy statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers The TNC 2011/2 document is available to view using the web link <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/policy-statement-on-tackling-violence-against-teachers-tnc2011-2.pdf>

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Such harassment of School Staff may constitute a criminal offence. It is extremely seriously by the School Board of Governors who have a duty to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. Cyber bullying or online harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Protection from Harassment, (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and may also be subject to legal action under the law on defamation. The Board of Governors reserves the right to make further contact with the Education Authority (Legal Section) about these and any other issues that may be perceived as amounting to Bullying and Harassment of School Staff as highlighted in TNC Document 2011/2= Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the Class Teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. There is a Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Complaints Policy and Procedure in place which should be used to raise any concerns or issues through the appropriate channels

In the event that any Parent/Guardian/ carer of a child/children being educated at Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on a social network site, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any Parent/Guardian/Carer removes such comments immediately. In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.

If the school suspects, or becomes aware, that a parent has breached the Code of Conduct and judge that such actions may amount to an accusation of Bullying and Harassment being made by the “victim” of comments made on Social Media , the school will gather information from those involved and may arrange a Formal Meeting with the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors in School to speak to the Parent/Guardian about the alleged incident.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the school may then:

- ❖ Send a warning letter to the Parent/Guardian
- ❖ Contact the appropriate authorities and seek advice from the Education Authority' legal section regarding further action

The school will always attempt to respond to any “Social Media” incident in a proportional way. The final decision for how to respond will be determined by the Board of Governors after seeking advice from the relevant outside agencies e.g Education Authority, Teacher Trade Unions etc