St Anthony's Special School

Communication Policy

Version no	Revision date	Reason	Approved by	Approved on
1	2026-2027	New Policy	BOM	10/11/2026

Introductory Statement

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 and aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning so that the child's education can be effective. This policy was developed by the Board of Management and staff of St Anthony's Special school, and in consultation with the Parents Association. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff communication including formal and informal parent/staff meetings.

St Anthony's Special school staff and Board of Management believe that:

- Good communication between home and school is important because with positive and active partnership the child gets the best that the education system can offer.

- Teachers can do a better job where they are supported by and working closely with parents. We know from research that children do better, behave better and are happier at school where parents and teachers work closely together and when parents are able to give their children support at home.

St Anthony's Special school staff and Board of Management are committed to:

- Developing close effective links with parents

- Participating in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the central and fundamental role of parents as Primary Educators of their children

- Maintaining the ethos, values and distinctive character of St Anthony's Special School

- Supporting and facilitating the Parents Association.

- Encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents in school policy and decision making

Structures in place to facilitate open communication and consultation with parents:

- Pre admissions meetings for all new students and a transition plan for visits to school

- September-Welcome back to school, school management and teachers send home information to introduce themselves outline briefly the curriculum, class rules, expected outings and time-table

- Daily Communication-Teachers send home the communication book/homework diary/notebook with updates and homework. Parents can in turn relay messages and appointments

- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November where the student support plan, progress and test results are discussed

- Occasionally: Emails/messages sent from class teachers to parents, through Aladdin system.

- Occasionally: Emails/messages sent from parents to class teachers, via the office email or the teachers work email or Aladdin.

- Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays, decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones and other school concerns

- School report for each pupil at the end of each school year (shared via Aladdin).

- Noticeboard Aladdin for general reminders

- Class blogs or other online platforms e.g. Facebook and Website

- Parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. The PA receives policies in draft form and provides feedback. The document once ratified by the Board is made available to all parents via the school website

- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g. Christmas Mass, School leavers mass, Green schools flag assembly, Fundraising events, Holy Communions and Confirmations

- The Aladdin Connect app that we have had set up this year. We encourage all parents to utilise this app. Through this app contact details can be updated, consent can be sought, absences can be explained, school reports can be viewed, payments can be made and other useful applications.

- Procedures for parents to initiate communication with the school can be found in our parent complaint procedures policy

- If parents wish to drop in lunch boxes, sports gear during class time etc, this can be done through the secretary's office so that learning is not disrupted.

- St Anthony's Special School has a website www.stanthonysmayo.ie and a Facebook page. Parents are encouraged to visit these sites regularly to keep up to date on school matters, comment and contribute to posts and share information to help publicise the school and the achievements of our children. The school name or pictures of any of our students should not be used on online or on social media by members of the public including parents without express written permission from the principal or Board of Management. St Anthony's Special School will request removal of any online or social media sites that are not approved by the school.

Communication between staff.

- Teacher meetings take place every Monday morning (10 min)
- Croke Park meetings and In School Management team meetings once a month.
- We have a half day full staff meeting once a term, 3 times a year.
- The Board of management meet on average 6 times a year.
- Staff operate a WhatsApp group which is used for sharing general school updates, social news and events.
- Communication is considered to be a strength among the staff and the informal communication before, during and after school is an integral part of the collegial and professional school atmosphere.
- Communication between School/Board/PA – Parents association has a WhatsApp group where they discuss new policies and Fundraising. They meet on average once a term.

Email communication between School and PA is generally limited to:

- Principal/Staff Representative to Chairperson
- Treasurer to Treasurer
- With some necessary contact made between one member of the PA and the school secretary (including photos for website etc).
- On occasion, by agreement, there may be links with the Deputy Principal if a certain area falls under his/her remit Communication with outside agencies

St Anthony's Special school have links with state agencies. These include:

- NEPS
- NCSE

- Oide
- SENO
- HSE
- Tusla
- EWO
- CDNT
    - NCCA
    - Western Care
    - Enable Ireland
    - Middletown ASD

St Anthony's Special School also aims to make links with the community through:

Communication through the school office Through the Aladdin Connect system, emails can be sent by teachers directly to parents. All incoming emails are communicated through the office (office@stanthonysmayo.ie). The class teacher does not respond from their personal email to these. Communication by email-response time Response times to emails from the school secretary can vary depending on the demands in the office at any given time. It is considered reasonable that 3-5 school days are allowed for a response (with the exception of holiday periods during which email is only checked intermittently). Response times to emails to the Principal can also vary greatly depending on the demands at any given time. Priority must be given to the pupils, staff and overall running of the school. A response time of 5-7 school days is considered to be reasonable. Teachers are in class during the day and will not have time to access emails. They may be engaged in planning, meetings or personal matters after school hours and so again 3-5 school days is considered to be a reasonable response time. There may be occasions where a parent is trying to contact the

school by phone and/or email and are not receiving a response. Office hours are limited and the secretary is not always at the desk. We ask for patience during these times. (Refer to Dignity in the Workplace policy)

Respectful Communication and Appropriate Conduct

St Anthony's Special School values positive, respectful and constructive communication between parents/guardians, staff, the Board of Management and all members of the school community. We recognise that parents and staff may sometimes have concerns or differing views. These should be raised calmly and respectfully, with the shared aim of supporting the pupil's wellbeing, learning and development.

All communication with the school, whether in person, by telephone, by email, through Aladdin or by any other written or online means, must be respectful and appropriate. **The school does not accept verbal abuse, threatening, intimidating or aggressive behaviour, abusive or hostile written communication, or nasty, insulting or offensive emails or messages directed at staff or any member of the school community.**

Concerns and complaints should be communicated through the appropriate school channels and in accordance with the school's relevant procedures, including the **Parent Complaints Procedure**. Staff are expected to respond professionally and respectfully and, in turn, are entitled to be treated with courtesy and respect.

Where communication becomes abusive, threatening or otherwise inappropriate, the school may set clear boundaries for further communication and take appropriate steps in line with school policies and relevant procedures. This may include ending a meeting or telephone call if the behaviour continues, directing communication through the Principal or another designated representative or consideration to include and /or the BOM. Any action taken will be proportionate and will have regard to the safety

and welfare of pupils and staff and the need to address concerns appropriately.

The school is committed to maintaining an open-door approach to genuine concerns and feedback. Respectful communication allows issues to be addressed fairly and constructively and helps maintain the positive partnership between home and school that is so important to our pupils.

Parent/Teacher Meetings The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and home
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals and to discuss the child's educational strengths and needs
- To discuss the Student Support Plan and individual learning targets
- To inform the parents of test results
- To help children realise that home and school are working together.
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- To get general feedback from the parents regarding the school
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
    - Include Communication from Subject teachers in the Post Primary part of the school

-In some Senior classes the student can accompany the parents to the Parent-Teacher meetings

Organisation of parent teacher meetings Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes, usually in the first term towards the end of November. If a parent wishes to arrange an additional meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by contacting the school office.

Parent/ Teacher meetings may take place preferably face-to-face in classrooms or through on-line platforms or phone call when necessary. Each meeting is allocated a 15-minute time slot.

If a longer meeting is required these should be scheduled for another day. In order to facilitate the operation of the school and the needs of children and other parents, it is important that meetings should be kept to the allocated time. Times of meetings are agreed beforehand and should be adhered to so that all parents are seen on time in so far as is possible.

In the case of separated/ divorced parents, school can facilitate requests made by parents to meet their child's teacher individually for parent/teacher meetings.

School Reports

St Anthony's Special School produces formal reports for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school annually in the third term using report card templates as required by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie). The reports are issued by email/ through the Aladdin app (from June 2027) in the week prior to school closing for the summer break to allow parents time to ask for clarification with the school teacher on anything contained in their child's report.

The report will cover:

- The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- The child's learning dispositions

- The child's social and personal development
- Ways in which parents can support their child's learning
- Test scores : in end of year report where applicable

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for BoMs and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time. It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders. In this respect, all staff should be aware of DES Circular 40/97 which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular can be found attached to the school's Health and Safety policy. (Refer to **Staff Relations-Dignity in the Workplace policy**)

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson of BOM: ....Teresa Ward..... Date: 10/11/2026

Principal : ..... Date: 10/11/2026