Parent Contact with Staff Outside of School Hours

Parent Contact with Staff Outside of School Hours
(Aligned with INTO Guidance & Good Professional Practice)

1. Purpose

In line with INTO guidance on staff wellbeing, professional boundaries and the right to disconnect, this protocol aims to:

- Promote respectful and effective home–school communication
- Protect staff wellbeing and work–life balance
- Ensure consistency, clarity and professionalism across the school community.

2. General Principle

Consistent with INTO advice, staff are not required nor expected to engage in school-related communication outside of school hours. Communication between parents and staff should:

- Take place during the school day
- Be conducted through agreed, official channels
- Respect professional boundaries.

3. Approved Communication Channels

In line with INTO guidance on professional conduct, parents should contact the school via:

- The school office (074 91 46206)
- Official school email accounts (secretary@stmarysnscastlefinn.com & principal@stmarysnscastlefinn.com)
- Aladdin (Approved school communication platform)
- Written notes (where appropriate)
- Pre-arranged meetings.
  *We encourage all sensitive and/or complex matters to be addressed through scheduled meetings rather than written communication.

The use of personal contact details is not appropriate for school business

Staff should not engage in school-related communication via:

- Personal mobile phones
- Private email addresses
- Social media platforms
- Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger, texts).

4. School Hours & Right to Disconnect

In keeping with INTO's emphasis on staff wellbeing:

- Staff may respond to parent communication during school hours only i.e. 9am – 3pm.
- Messages received outside school hours may be addressed on the next school day.
- There is no obligation on staff to:
  Respond in the evenings or at weekends
  Engage during school holidays
  Provide immediate responses.

This supports the right to disconnect, as recognised by INTO and national workplace guidance.

5. Social Media & Professional Boundaries
In line with INTO advice:
- Staff should maintain a clear separation between personal and professional online presence
- School-related communication via social media or messaging apps should be politely declined
- Parents should be redirected to official school channels.

6. Urgent Matters
Parents with urgent concerns should contact the school principal by email (principal@stmarysnscastlefinn.com).
Staff should not be contacted directly outside school hours.
In exceptional circumstances, contact may be initiated only by school management.

7. Staff Guidance & Support
Staff are encouraged to:
- Maintain clear professional boundaries
- Use standard, non-engaging responses such as:
  "Thank you for your message. I will address this during school hours."
- Avoid prolonged or informal exchanges outside agreed times
- Any concerns regarding:
  Repeated contact
  Inappropriate tone
  Boundary breaches
  should be referred to the Principal, in line with INTO advice.

8. Parent Expectations
Parents are expected to:
- Respect agreed communication procedures
- Allow reasonable time for responses i.e. up to two working days
- Use respectful and appropriate language
- Recognise the importance of staff wellbeing.

9. Management Responsibilities
The Board of Management and school leadership will:
- Support staff in implementing this protocol
- Address breaches of communication boundaries
- Ensure consistency with INTO guidance and school policy
- Review the protocol periodically.

10. Review
This protocol will be reviewed regularly in consultation with staff and updated in line with:
- INTO guidance
- Department of Education circulars
- School needs

Signature of Chairperson: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

Date: _____