

The Constitution of the Parent Association of Newbawn National School

The Purpose of the Parent Association

The purpose of the parent association is to provide a structure through which the parents/guardians of children attending Newbawn N.S. can work together for the best possible education for their children. The parent association will work with the principal, staff and board of management to build effective partnership of home and school.

The Aim of the Parent Association

The aim of the parent association is to enable parents to play their part in ensuring the best possible education for their children, through the association's programme of activities. The parent association will promote the interests of the students, in co-operation with the board, principal, teachers and students, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998. (Appendix A)

The Work of the Parent Association

The parent association will undertake a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents and which will support pupils, parents and school staff. In planning its activities, the parent association will consult with the school principal. The parent association may advise the principal on any matters relating to the school in accordance with the Education Act, 1998, 26 (2)(a) (Appendix A)

The Membership of the Parent Association

All parents or legal guardians of children attending Newbawn N.S. will be deemed to be members of the parent association.

The Committee of the Parent Association

The members of the parent association will elect a number of members who will have responsibility for managing the activities of the parent association. This team will serve as the committee of the parent association. The specific roles of officers on the committee and committee members are outlined in Appendix B.

The Work of the Committee of the Parent Association

The committee is the team that will manage the tasks of the association on behalf of the parent body (the members).

The aims of the Parent Association Committee are:

1. Represent the views of parents
2. Liaison between parents, teachers, the School Principal and the School Management
3. To provide a forum for parents to meet, and to exchange ideas of mutual interest, such as promoting children's learning in the home, homework policy, educational policy, the curriculum.
4. Organise events/activities for the school / children
5. Raising funds for specific items for the school / children's activities

The committee will draw up a plan for the activities of the association, in consultation with parents and in accordance with their wishes. The committee will be responsible for seeing that activities are run in an efficient and effective way. The committee will

consult with the school principal when planning the programme of activities for a particular year. The committee will arrange with the principal a system for ongoing communication. At the annual general meeting (AGM) the committee will report to the parent body (the members) about its work. The committee will manage and account for any funds collected by the parent association.

Membership of the Committee

The members of the committee will be elected each year at the AGM of the parent association. The committee should have at least 6 elected members comprising of the following: Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and general committee members. Each member will be elected for one year. Members may go forward for election for a further year, providing they have a child in the school.

Committee Meetings

Committee meetings are called by the chairperson when required. A quorum for any meeting shall be 50% of committee members' +1 member. If a quorum is not reached, the meeting shall be re-convened and all members informed of the new date and venue. At all meetings, each member will have one vote only. Voting at all meetings shall be by show of hands and a simple majority will form a binding decision for all committee members. Decisions will be recorded in the meeting minutes. Meeting minutes shall be proposed and seconded at the following committee meeting.

If a committee member is not present at a committee meeting, the onus is on them to contact the secretary to gain an overview of the meeting and the date of the next meeting.

Finance

The parent association will finance its activities through fund raising specifically for the work of the parent association. A treasurer will be appointed at the AGM from among the committee members and will be responsible for keeping the accounts of the parent association finances. The treasurer will give a statement of income and expenditure at each committee meeting. A written statement of income and expenditure will be given at the AGM. Any member of the Parent Association may see the treasurer's records at any other time during the year, by request. The parent association will keep a post office account in its name.

Fund raising for the School

Fund raising for the school by the parent association will be done with the prior consultation with the Principal. The parent association committee will agree with the Principal as to the specific school projects for which funds are to be raised by the parent association.

Membership of National Parents Council Primary

The parent association will affiliate to National Parents Council Primary annually in September.

Changing the Constitution

Changes to the constitution can be made at the AGM. Proposals/motions to change the constitution must be submitted in writing to the parent association committee.

The parent association committee will then circulate these motions to all parents before the AGM. All parents of children in the school, present at the meeting, are eligible to vote on the proposals at the AGM.

The AGM

The following items shall appear on the AGM agenda:

- Minutes of the previous AGM
- Chair's report
- Treasurer's report (financial report)
- Election of Officers and Committee Members
- Any changes to the constitution

Forum For Parents to Meet

The committee will organise at least one opportunity per year for all parents to meet, and to exchange ideas on issues of mutual interest, such as promoting children's learning in the home, homework policy, educational policy, the curriculum, etc. This will be separate from the AGM. There will be an open invitation to the School Principal, and to members of the Board of Management to attend such meetings.

Appendix A: Section 26 of the Education Act, 1998

Parents' Association.

26.

(1) The parents of students of a recognised school may establish, and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school.

(2) A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of a school and for that purpose may—

(a) advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the principal or board, as the case may be, shall have regard to any such advice, and

(b) adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents, in consultation with the Principal, in the operation of the school.

(3) The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of students in that school and the community and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to parents who wish to establish a parents' association and to a parents' association when it is established.

(4)

(a) A parents' association shall, following consultation with its members, make rules governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs.

(b) Where a parents' association is affiliated to a national association of parents, the rules referred to in paragraph (a) shall be in accordance with guidelines issued by that national association of parents with the concurrence of the Minister.

This document was gained from:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/sec0026.html>

Appendix B: The roles of officers on the committee and committee members

The Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson of the Parent Association committee is to;

- Lead and guide the committee in planning and delivering on their activities. This should involve:
 - Chairing meetings
 - Helping the committee to have a clear vision and clear goals
 - Keeping the work of the Parent Association to agreed targets
 - Ensuring all members are respected, listened to and are encouraged to have their say
 - Facilitating people to work well together ensuring that the work of the committee is shared
 - Reviewing the work of the committee
- Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their roles within the committee
- Delegate the work of the committee to ensure all work is not the responsibility of one or two people
- Work closely with the Secretary to plan the agendas and meetings
- Ensure that the minutes are signed, dated and kept safely
- Encourage the committee members to be prepared for the meetings
- Ensure meetings start and finish at the agreed times
- Make sure that, as each item is finished, the group is clear about what has been decided
- Ensure that all decisions are taken democratically and with respect for everyone's opinions
- Check on responsibilities taken on by members of the committee and make sure they have been clearly understood and allocated
- Summarise all decisions at the end of the meeting

- Ensure that at the end of term of office all relevant documentation is passed on to the incoming Chairperson

The Secretary

The role of the Secretary of the Parent Association committee is to;

- Take minutes at each meeting
- File all correspondence and minutes safely
 - Minutes should be brief and should be a record of decisions made and actions to be taken; they may also record a brief outline of issues discussed
- Agree the agenda for committee meetings with the Chairperson. It is important that all committee members have a right to have items included on the agenda, therefore they must be given adequate time to pass these items on to the Secretary
- Make sure all committee members have the agenda prior to the meetings so they can be adequately prepared
- Make sure all committee members receive a copy of the minutes of meetings, including committee member who had been unable to attend
- Appropriately administer incoming and outgoing correspondence
- Ensure the minutes are approved at each meeting. It is important at committee meetings that the minutes are agreed by those that attended to be a true and accurate record of what happened. Once this has been agreed by the committee the Chairperson should sign the minutes for the committee's records. This process is especially useful if there is any confusion in the future regarding any decisions made.
- Assist the Chairperson with clarification of decisions made at meetings
- Ensure that the end of term of office all relevant documentation is passed on to the incoming Secretary

The Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer of the Parent Association committee is to:

- Lodge and record all financial transactions
- Manage and maintain books/records of income and expenditure
- Give monthly reports on the Parent Association finances to the Parent Association committee
- Issue receipts for all financial transactions

- Ensure that the committee has the necessary information to understand the Parent Association's financial needs
- Advise on how the resources can best be used to fulfil the aims and work plan of the committee
- Liaise with a bank or other financial institutions on behalf of the Parent Association

Committee members

It is important as a committee member to act effectively as an individual but it is also essential to work collectively as part of the committee team. The responsibilities of all committee members are outlined below.

Communication and confidentiality

The committee should communicate openly with parents in the school. Occasionally matters may arise that should be kept confidential, it is very important that this confidentiality is explicitly stated to committee members and is respected.

Prepare well

Read the minutes and any other information sent out before the meeting. Be clear about the purpose of the meeting. Prepare any points that you are going to raise.

Participate fully

Listen carefully and think about what is being said. Feel free to speak when you have something to contribute. Make your point at the appropriate time.

Be aware of feelings

It is important to be aware of people's feelings, this will help everyone hear and understand better.

Listen to other views

Be reasonable and open to changing your mind – one of the purposes of the meeting is to exchange information and ideas, to learn from each other and to listen to other views on issues.

Support others to participate

Build on what others have said. Draw in someone who is left out or hasn't yet contributed. It is important that people feel valued and by having one person speaking at a time it ensures that everyone is listened to and that people have a clear understanding of what is happening at the meeting. Committee members should be aware of the different traditions which exist, within the committee and be respectful and inclusive of all members.

Communicate honestly and openly

It is important that people should give their opinions at the meeting and that these are appropriate and relate to the agenda items. This can be difficult at times, but it is more constructive than making comments outside the meeting, which can sometimes happen if views are not properly aired.

Support the Chairperson

Be supportive of the Chairperson. Give constructive feedback. Give ideas on ways to proceed. Remember it is important that the committee works as a team.

Be reliable

If you agree to take on a task be sure to carry it out. Then be ready to report back at the next meeting.

New Members

Take time at the start of the year to help newcomers to feel welcome and get actively involved.

Remember it is hard for new people to join an already established group.

If you are a newcomer don't be afraid to ask, you won't be expected to know everything.

Ways to make new members feel welcome:

- All committee members should introduce themselves
- Existing members should pair up with someone new
- Take time to hear why people have become involved
- Organise a social occasion to help people to get to know each other
- Use straightforward language in meetings and explain for example acronyms and jargon being used
- As historical items arise on the agenda give a brief background on the item for new members
- Answer any questions newcomers may have regarding the aims and work of the Parent Association