

METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS POLICY

1. Rationale

The Board of Governors, Principal and staff of Methodist College recognise that the partnership between the home and school is one of the most important influences on the education and personal development of our pupils. All parents and guardians are valued as part of the College community and we aim to achieve close co-operation with all families in order to maintain high standards of work and behaviour and to encourage parental participation in the life of the College.

2. Aims

Through the involvement of parents and guardians our aims are:

- to establish a partnership between home and school in order to enhance the learning experience of all pupils;
- to encourage parents and guardians to be involved in their child's learning;
- to ensure important information is shared;
- to enable issues to be addressed effectively;
- to make sure that families feel welcome and valued;
- to facilitate the use of all adults' skills to enrich learning opportunities, including extra curricular activities, when appropriate.

3. Strategies to Involve Parents and Guardians

The College takes a proactive approach in the development of this partnership. We reach out to parents by:

- 1 involving them at every appropriate opportunity in the life of the College
- 2 keeping them well informed
- 3 establishing regular contact
- 4 inviting them into school
- 5 responding promptly and courteously to issues raised by them
- 6 ensuring that all school literature is as informative, accessible and attractive as possible.

The College maintains an 'open door' approach so that parents/guardians are able to communicate with subject teachers and pastoral staff on a regular basis and vice versa, both formally and informally. In order to develop effective working relationships with parents and guardians, the College has the following arrangements:

- 3.1 School policies, information about the curriculum and forthcoming events, pupils' achievements and induction information are available on the school website, www.methody.org or on request from the College's Reception (90205205).

- 3.2 Before the academic year begins, parents/guardians receive information which includes pastoral and child protection information, details of uniform regulations, attendance and absence arrangements for pupils and the general standards of behaviour for pupils. (Details of the Code of Conduct for Pupils are on our website and in the pupils' Homework Diaries.)
- 3.3 In September Tutors write to the parent/guardian of each pupil in their Tutor Group, introducing themselves and their role and outlining how contact can be made with staff.
- 3.4 Parents/guardians can make an appointment to speak to pastoral staff, subject teachers or other member of staff when necessary. Appointments to see teaching staff can be made through the school office, and can be set up at a mutually convenient time in most instances. Parents/guardians are asked not to come into school to meet a member of staff without a prior appointment, except in the event of an emergency.
- 3.5 There are opportunities for parents/guardians to have a formal discussion with their child's subject teachers during annual parents/guardians consultation meetings for each year group. The relevant date(s) are sent in advance via pupil post.
- 3.6 There is an Induction Evening in June for pupils who will be joining Form 1 the following September. A guide for Form 1 Parents/Guardians is distributed at this event. In addition, in the autumn term of Form 1, parents/guardians are invited to an evening meeting about the learning and teaching strategies being used with their child in the classroom and internet safety.
- 3.7 An Information Evening is held to inform parents/guardians of Form 2, 3 and 5 about Personal Development sessions which will be delivered to their child by outside agencies.
- 3.8 Careers Information Evenings are organised for Form 3 and Form 5 parents/guardians to support decision making about subject choice at GCSE and A-level respectively. Individual interviews, involving the pupil, parent/guardian and member of staff, are held to select subjects. An additional information evening is organised by the Careers Department early in the autumn term of U6 in preparation for pupils' applications to higher education.
- 3.9 Pupils in Forms 1 - 4 receive two reports each year:
 - a "short" report indicating general progress, effort and attainment in December/January
 - a full report including detailed teachers' comments that cover areas of strength and areas for improvement at the end of the summer term

Pupils in Form 5 - U6 receive one full report in January including detailed teachers' comments that includes areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Heads of Form and Heads of Section also send out information specific to their Year Group, when appropriate, on a variety of matters.

- 3.10 Homework Diaries are used by Forms 1-5 to record homework and coursework requirements and may also be used as an informal method of communication between subject teacher/form staff and parents/guardians.
- 3.11 *Methody Matters* newsletters are produced twice a year and a *College Magazine* annually.
- 3.12 A school calendar is sent to each family at the start of each academic year providing dates of key events. This is supplemented by periodic information on forward dates issued by the Heads of Section via pupil post.
- 3.13 Families are invited to events, activities and celebrations that are organised by the College or the Parents' Support Group. These occasions provide opportunities to celebrate success, talk to other parents/guardians and fund raise for College projects and initiatives.
- 3.14 Parents are valued contributors to the College's Careers Programme e.g. undertaking mock interviews, providing work shadowing placements and helping during collapsed timetable events.
- 3.15 Parents offer valued support when they respond to invitations to accompany school groups on sporting and educational visits. Background checks are carried out on any parent/guardian who volunteers to help out in school on a regular basis or on trips, sporting activities etc. All volunteers are made aware of the College's Child Protection Policy and are reminded of the confidential nature of their work in school. Parents who transport children to sporting fixtures in private vehicles have to check their own insurance in this regard. The College does not accept any responsibility for such arrangements.
- 3.16 The Parent Governors, elected by other parents/guardians, serve on the Board of Governors and help with strategic planning.
- 3.17 Parents/guardians are consulted about the School Development Plan and participate in the evaluation and review of policies.
- 3.18 The Parents' Support Group and other parents/guardians, either as individual or as groups, make valuable contributions by raising funds for the benefit of all pupils in the school and also by holding events to enable parents/guardians to meet each other.

4. Review of Policy

The Involvement of Parents and Guardians Policy is reviewed every three years by the Vice Principal (Pastoral) through consultation with pupils, parents and guardians and staff and a draft policy is submitted to the Board of Governors for consideration.