

# **CASTLEKNOCK COLLEGE**

## *Building Parent-College Partnerships*



## **Introduction**

### **Structure for Involvement**

1. General Communications
2. Journal
3. School Reports
4. Teacher Appointments/Meetings
5. Parent Teachers Meetings
6. Core Groups
  - 6.1.1. **Role of the Group**
  - 6.1.2. **Composition**
  - 6.1.3. **Role of the Members**
    - 6.1.3.1. Parents
    - 6.1.3.2. Parent Liaison Teacher
  - 6.1.4. **Sample Core Group Activities**
    - 6.1.4.1. Meetings
    - 6.1.4.2. Events
    - 6.1.4.3. Activities
  - 6.1.5. **Frequently Asked Questions**
7. Parents Representative Association
  - 7.1.1. **Role of the Group**
  - 7.1.2. **Composition**
  - 7.1.3. **Role of the Members**
    - 7.1.3.1. Core Group Nominees
    - 7.1.3.2. The Headmaster
    - 7.1.3.3. Board of Management Parent Representative (BoMPR)
  - 7.1.4. **Sample PRA Activities**
    - 7.1.4.1. Meetings
    - 7.1.4.2. Events
    - 7.1.4.3. Activities
  - 7.1.5. **Frequently Asked Questions**
8. Board of Management

## **Conclusion**

**Appendix One**                      A Sample Core Group Agenda

**Appendix Two**                     Common Issues

**Appendix Three**                  FAQ's

**Appendix Four**                  Sample PRA Agenda Items

## Introduction

The evidence is that when schools and parents work together to support learning, everyone benefits.

- Students do better in school and in life.
- Parents become more involved.
- Teacher morale improves.
- Schools get better.
- Communities grow stronger.

In Castleknock College the aspiration is to have a partnership approach with parents to develop students through a balanced participation in religious, intellectual, cultural and sporting activities.

## Structure for Involvement

There are many opportunities for interaction between parents and the college including:

1. General Communications
2. Journal
3. School Reports
4. Appointments/Meetings with Teachers
5. Parent Teachers Meetings
6. Core Groups
7. Parents Representative Association
8. Board of Management

This document is primarily concerned with the Core Groups & Parents Representative Association, but will comment briefly on the other possibilities for Parent-College partnership.

### 1. General Communications

The College regularly communicates with the parents, keeping them updated on activities, policies and developments.

Examples are:

- Direct personal contact/phone,
- Letters
- Knock Alert Text Messaging,
- College emails,
- College Website
- Presentations/Social Events

Parents can register for email updates on the college website at [www.castleknockcollege.ie](http://www.castleknockcollege.ie), where there is also general information and news. The Knock Alert text messages can be registered at the college front office.

## **2. Journal**

At any stage the Parent/College can interact with brief messages through the use of the College journal

## **3. School Reports**

Each student will receive 2-4 written reports through the year from the college. These reports contain the students' exam marks and individual comments from the teachers.

There is also scope for feedback from the Year Head and regarding matters such as Conduct, Attendance, Punctuality, Uniform Sport and Other Activity participation.

## **4. Appointments/Meetings with Teachers**

If it is considered necessary, a Teacher or Parent can request to meet each other to discuss any matters of concern. If they cannot resolve the matter, they may choose to seek further assistance through the Year Head.

If progress is not being achieved they may after consideration, then choose to seek the assistance of the Deputy Headmaster and the Headmaster.

## **5. Parent Teachers Meetings**

Each year the college arranges a Parent /Teacher meeting for each year.

The Teachers make themselves available individually on the same day and parents can choose who they wish to go to.

This provides the opportunity to meet and directly discuss the development of the student with the subject teachers.

The Year Head also attends and is available to meet parents.

## 6. Core Groups

### 6.1. Role of the Group

- To be an effective and supportive 2 way communication process from the College to the parents and vice versa,
- To provide a delegate to represent the year on the Parents Representative Association
- To be a forum to volunteer and assist in the running of College events/activities
- To facilitate Parents within their year to interact, network and share information

### 6.2. Composition

The Core Group is ideally composed of:

- A school representative appointed by the Headmaster (Parent Liaison Teacher PLT)
- 8-10 parents, including a parent representative from each class in the year.
- The Headmaster or Deputy will attend at least one meeting of each Core Group during the year

In the 1st Year, parents are requested to volunteer for the Core Group through their initial interactions with the college. The PLT/PRA convenes the initial meeting and volunteers are asked to agree among themselves who will serve on the Core Group and in what roles, e.g. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, representative for PRA.

In later years, the parent representatives tend to remain constant, which helps parents develop recognition of who is a member of the Core Group and where to channel feedback they may wish to give, however good practice suggests these positions are re-affirmed at the start of each school year.

If there is a fall off in members from year to year, or new parents wish to join, the volunteers agree it among themselves.

### 6.3. Role of the Members

#### 6.3.1. Parents

- To provide feedback representing the parent body at large for their year.
- To volunteer and assist where possible in agreed activities to benefit the college

### 6.3.2. Parent Liaison Teacher

- The PLT is a pivotal person in the successful operation of the Core Groups.
- The PLT acts as an information and guidance resource to Core Group parents and college alike. The PLT will advise parents on matters of importance on behalf of the college or teachers and where they may require parental assistance.
- Also the PLT will channel feedback or requests for action to the appropriate area in the college. As well as briefing the Headmaster, this might be an individual teacher, a Year Head, a co-ordinator, all staff at a staff meeting or the Deputy Headmaster.
- The PLT keeps all parties updated on agreed actions and escalate them as necessary.

## 6.4. Sample Core Group Activities

The primary activities of a Core Group can be categorised as Meetings, Events and Activities.

### 6.4.1. Meetings

The most common activity for the Core Groups is the normal meeting. These are hosted in the college at a time and date most suited to the volunteers and the PLT.

- Core Groups typically meet for ordinary meetings between four and eight times a year.
- The meetings provide a forum for the exchange of feedback as outlined in the Role of the Core Group above.
- Appropriate minutes and actions are taken, which allow the tracking of progress from one meeting to the next.
- A sample agenda is outlined in Appendix 1
- Typical issues that arise as matters of concern are outlined in Appendix 2 and some of these are referenced in the Frequently Asked Questions section.

### 6.4.2. Events

Organising specific events is not very common for the Core Group; however on occasions they may decide there is benefit in undertaking an event for example:

- Parent Social event to complement College activities for the Year e.g.:
- Parent Talk on 'Raising Teenagers' followed by opportunity to interact over Tea & Coffee
- Planned Coffee morning for parents before/after a Saturday rugby match

### 6.4.3. Activities

Again, organising specific activities is not very common for the Core Group; however on occasions they may decide there is benefit in undertaking an activity for example:

#### Parent Communications

- A sample communication could be a letter to all parents in the Year advising them of the Core Group members along with their contact details and inviting them to keep in touch with any feedback.

#### Parent Survey

- A further example of an activity could include a Parent survey that would provide a possibility to: give feedback, be inclusive and should be well balanced, providing emphasis on the opportunity for positive feedback.

### 6.5. Frequently Asked Questions

As one would expect, there are a variety of topics that arise across many Core Groups and in many Years. Very often it may be the first time the topic has arisen for that particular Core Group, but it may also have been comprehensively addressed previously in another forum. These include topics such as:

- Presentations/Talks e.g. study skills, setting home environment, drugs, STDs etc
- Academic Performance/Standards e.g. junior and leaving cert feedback, class exam feedback, classroom issues, teaching issues, free periods, problem subjects
- Communications e.g. type and level of communications, use of technology
- Trips
- School Bus
- Uniform e.g. school and sports
- Food: lunch, canteen etc
- Sports/Rugby
- Transition year
- Religious ethos of the College
- Careers advice; particularly 5th & 6th years, appropriate method, use of College Union etc
- Year specific, e.g. development of union day etc

To assist in the efficiency of meetings, there is a set of Frequently Asked Questions in Appendix 3, along with a brief summary of previous discussions on these matters. These summaries may always be expanded or if the suggested process outlined is not working, it might be brought to the attention of the PLT and/or the PRA.

## **7. Parents Representative Association**

### **7.1. Role of the Group**

- To facilitate the interaction of Core Groups across the college & to allow them to share and benefit from their experiences
- To provide the college with a cohesive parent feedback from across all years
- To be an effective and supportive 2 way communication process from the College to the parents and vice versa
- Based on the 2 way communication, co-ordinate/organise beneficial activities through the PRA /Core Groups, particularly those common across all years

### **7.2. Composition**

The PRA is ideally composed of:

- The Headmaster, or Deputy Headmaster if he is unavailable
- 6-12 Core Group Nominees, including 2 representatives from each year.
- A Parent representative from the Board of Management

One or two parents are requested to volunteer from each Core Group. The PRA convenes their own meetings and the volunteers from the Core Groups are asked to agree who will serve in what roles, e.g. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. The recommended term of office for these roles is for a term of two years, which may be re-appointed for a maximum of two terms.

Similar to Core Groups, the parent representatives tend to remain constant; this helps parents develop recognition of who is a member of the PRA and where to channel feedback they may wish to give.

If there is a fall off in representatives from the Core Groups on the PRA from year to year, or if new parents wish to join the PRA, the Core Groups should agree the revised Core Group volunteers among themselves.

### **7.3. Role of the Members**

#### **7.3.1. Core Group Nominees**

- Parents represent the feedback of their Core Group
- Parents assist in the co-ordination of agreed activities to benefit the college

#### **7.3.2. The Headmaster**

- The active participation of the Headmaster in the PRA will prove a vital resource to the College and the Parents
- The Headmaster is provided with concise and pertinent feedback from parents throughout the college and responds as appropriate

- The Headmaster updates the PRA on developments in the college and where appropriate, any relevant day to day matters in the running of the college
- The Headmaster can request parental assistance as required.
- The Headmaster will decide if and how to handle PRA requests and channel feedback or requests for action back to the appropriate area in the college. This might be the administrative office, an individual teacher, a Year Head, a co-ordinator or a staff meeting.
- The Headmaster keeps all parties updated on agreed actions and escalates them as necessary.

### 7.3.3. Board of Management Parent Representative (BoMMPR)

- The BoMMPR is provided with concise and pertinent feedback from parents regarding the management of the college and should respond as appropriate
- The Board of Management updates the PRA through minutes
- The BoMMPR keeps all parties updated on agreed actions.

## 7.4. Sample PRA Activities

The primary activities of the PRA can be categorised as Meetings, Events and Activities.

### 7.4.1. Meetings

The most common activity for the PRA is the normal meeting. These are hosted in the college at a time and date most suited to the PRA members.

- The PRA typically meet for ordinary meetings between four and eight times a year.
- The meetings provide a forum for the exchange of feedback as outlined in the Role of the PRA above.
- Appropriate minutes and actions are taken, which allow the tracking of progress from one meeting to the next.
- A sample agenda is outlined in Appendix 4
- Typical issues that arise as matters of concern are similar to those mentioned in the Core Groups and outlined in Appendix 2. Some of these are referenced in the Frequently Asked Questions section in Appendix 3.

### 7.4.2. Events

The PRA may on occasions organise specific events. Particularly where a number of Core Groups raise similar issues; it may be better to tackle it at PRA level, possibly with delegates from Core Groups on a sub-committee basis, for example:

- Parent/Student Educational events to complement College activities e.g.:
- Six-year calendars of Talks/Presentations on topics regularly requested by parents e.g. study skills, setting home environment, drugs, STDs etc.
- Planned Coffee morning for parents before/after a Saturday rugby match

### 7.4.3. Activities

The PRA can contribute to the college in a variety of activities as outlined in the examples below:

#### Committee Representation

- The PRA should assist in organising parental nominees (not necessarily PRA/Core Group volunteers - but appropriately qualified parents) to College committees as required e.g. committees on Uniform review, diet/food review, rugby/sport etc.

Preparation of 'Position/Input Papers' on issues that may be of beneficial feedback to the College e.g.:

- Union Day - what format would parents like
- School Trips - frequency/style/budget of trips that parents would prefer

#### Organising Board of Management Election

- Every three years the PRA is required to organise the election of two parents to the Board of Management

### 7.5. Frequently Asked Questions

As in the Core Groups, there are a number of topics that are often presented, but may have been addressed in a previous situation. The frequently asked questions in appendix 3 may give some insight to these issues.

## 8. Board of Management

The Board of Management oversees the running of the college and is composed of Four Persons nominated by the Trustees (Vincentian Order), two elected parents and two teachers.

The parents of the College, in an election run by the PRA, elect the two parents for a three-year term of office. They are charged with representing the parents in the management of the school.

The elected representatives can receive relevant feedback by attending the PRA meetings.

## Conclusion

While the opportunities to facilitate and foster Parent-College partnerships in support of the boys' development are outlined above, none of these are suggested to replace the primary means of supporting students' by direct constructive interaction with the boys themselves.

## Appendix One

### Sample Core Group Agenda

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Parent Liaison Teacher Update from College
- Update from PRA meeting
- Parent feedback on Parent - Teacher Meeting
- Parent requests/clarifications regarding forthcoming College Trip
- Communications - Any gaps?
- Parent Assistance recruitment for Book Sale
- Check consensus on an academic issue and feedback to PLT for action
- AOB

## Appendix Two

### Common Issues

- Talks;
  - study skills,
  - setting home environment,
  - drugs,
  - STDs etc
- Academic Performance/Standards
  - junior and leaving cert feedback,
  - class exam feedback,
  - classroom issues,
  - teaching issues,
  - free periods,
  - problem subjects
- Communications;
  - type and level of communications,
  - use of technology
- Trips
- School bus
- Uniform; school and sports, deal with every 3 years?
- Food; lunch, canteen etc
- Sports/Rugby
- Transition year
- Religious ethos of the College
- Careers advice; particularly 5th & 6th years, appropriate method, use of College Union etc
- Year specific, e.g. development of union day etc

## Appendix Three

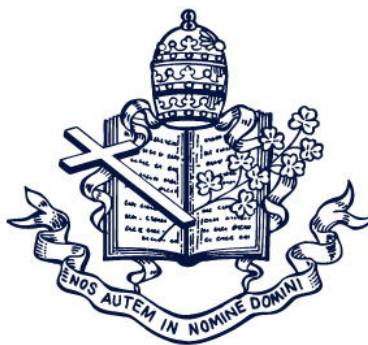
### FAQ's

<p>A parent/(s) is dissatisfied with a teacher</p>	<p>The preferred means of dealing with this issue is by means of escalation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Parent should discuss the issue with the Teacher involved and ensure there is clarity around the problem. The parent/teacher should then agree a plan to address the issue</li> <li>2. If the Parent is unhappy with the outcome, the matter should be escalated to the Headmaster, who will contribute to a solution</li> <li>3. Should a resolution still not be forthcoming, the matter may be escalated to the Board of Management (in accordance with agreed ASTI/Joint Managerial Board complaints procedure) who will consider the matter and contribute to a solution</li> </ol>
<p>When will our students be offered a school Trip?</p>	<p>Taking a group of college students on any trip is a serious and significant undertaking for any teacher. It is not a requirement that teachers bring boys on school trips. We are fortunate that the college has a strong record of teachers volunteering to organise trips. If a teacher is contemplating an overseas trip, a full plan must be produced and approved by the Board of Management, as it not only needs assessing, but it also impacts the smooth running of the college if teachers are going to be absent. The Headmaster will attempt to have proposed trips identified and confirmed as early as possible in each year.</p>
<p>Who monitors the food in the Ref?</p>	<p>The college has appointed a sub-committee to look at food policy and how to improve the eating habits of the students. Committee members include staff, food suppliers and parents. Parents with relevant experience are sought e.g. Nutritionists. Qualified volunteers are welcome. Any feedback can be given through the Core Groups.</p>
<p>Who manages the choice and quality of the school uniform?</p>	<p>The college appoints a sub-committee to look at uniforms every couple of years. Committee members include staff and parents with a feedback channel from the Students Council. Parents with relevant experience are sought. Any feedback can be given through the Core Groups.</p>
<p>Problems on the School Buses</p>	<p>The school buses are private contracts between the parents and the bus companies. Any issues should be dealt in the first instance directly with the bus company. If there is an ongoing common problem, the school may assist in brokering the issue as they also use the bus companies for school trips. Any feedback can be given through the Core Groups.</p>

## Appendix Four

### Sample PRA Agenda Items

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Headmaster Report
- Update from Board of Management
- Update from Core Groups
- Sub Committee Reports
- Board of Management Election
- School Trips Policy - Parent Proposal
- Leaving Cert Results Analysis
- Communications - Any gaps?
- Parent Assistance recruitment for Transition Year Mock Interviews
- Check consensus on a common Core Group issue and feedback to Headmaster for input/action
- AOB



# **CASTLEKNOCK COLLEGE**