

# **SPRINGFIELD CONVENT SCHOOL**

## **PARENT/SCHOOL CHARTER**

**An optimal educational experience for our children requires an interactive partnership among parents, educators and children. Both educators and parents hope that every school day is filled with learning, joy and grace. In acknowledgement of the collaborative relationship between parents and educators, the School recognizes these fundamental principles of communication which is for the good of the children and for the good of the school.**

### **Principles of Communication**

- Mutually respectful approach
- Ongoing and effective communication
- Resolution to gather information/data from appropriate sources prior to forming an opinion and making a judgement.
- Recognition of the power of words and avoidance of harmful speech
- Effective listening, acknowledging the legitimacy of differing opinions
- Clearly defined lines of responsibility
- An agreed-upon process for solving problems
- Recognition of specific roles in the process
- Mutual trust that the process is just and fair
- Well defined, clear boundaries
- Shared commitment to work together toward a solution

In an effort to realize these principles in our daily interactions as a school community, we set out hereunder

1. the roles of the School Board, School Management and PTA
2. the commitment of Parents, Educators and Learners

## **ROLES**

### **The Board**

The Board focuses on the following areas critical to the success of any independent school:

1. The appointment and support of the Headmistress, to whom it delegates authority to manage the school.
2. The development of institutional policy in order to guide the Headmistress in running the school.
3. The management of and accountability for the school finances.
4. Management, in conjunction with the Headmistress, of a strategic plan for the school.

In the conduct of its official business, the Board acts only as a whole. Individual Board Members, including the Board Chair, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board acting as a whole.

It is not the task of the Board to intervene in the daily running of the school or in its operational sphere such as appointing, evaluating or dismissing staff. This is the responsibility of School Management.

### **School Management**

This body, which is led by the Headmistress (in the capacity as the CEO), consists of the senior management including Principals, Deputies and Heads of Departments.

The Management Committee is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school including such issues as curriculum development, the extramural programme, appointments and evaluation of staff, maintenance etc.

The Headmistress and Management Team should seek to keep parents informed of decisions and changes. This is usually accomplished by e-mail, in newsletters and at parents' meetings as well as other forms of communication.

It is incumbent on parents to inform themselves of such meetings and the frequency of written communications in order to remain informed.

### **The Parents Association (PTA)**

This body consists of volunteer parents and staff.

This body provides a wide range of important services on a volunteer basis including fundraising, fostering good fellowship within the school community, arranging functions and catering.

The PTA's constitution makes clear its procedures and role as a service organization. This constitution clearly states the association's mission to support the decisions and policies of the Board and Management.

The PTA neither participates in policymaking by the school, nor functions as a lobbying group, although the Headmistress may use it as a sounding board from time to time.

The finances of the PTA should be supervised by the school and should be part of the school's annual audit process.

The Headmistress should be closely involved in ensuring that the election procedures are properly managed. Co-operation and teamwork between the Headmistress and the PTA are crucial to the health of the school community.

It is appropriate that the PTA advertise its activities, events and achievements within the boundaries and capacity of the PTA. However, the association should play no role in the school's effort to communicate about itself within the broader scope of marketing and public relations.

### **COMMITMENT**

#### **Management and staff of the School are committed to :**

- The Vision Statement for Dominican Schools
- Upholding and Promoting the Catholic Ethos
- Instilling into each individual learner a sound spiritual and moral attitude, based on the values of love, justice, compassion, respect,

- care, acceptance and tolerance, in accordance with the Dominican Vision Statement and our Christian ethos.
- Developing a curriculum of excellence within which the uniqueness of each learner will be recognised.
  - Setting the highest standards of work and behaviour for all learners.
  - Protecting the dignity of all who are a part of our school community.
  - Creating a loving and caring environment for the learners.
  - Fostering strong communication with parents as the basis for close co-operation.
  - Conducting themselves in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct of the South African Council for Educators and in Terms of the Conditions of Employment
  - Bringing their concerns to the attention of the school's parents and learners.
  - Listening to parents and learners, through the approved channels, and understanding any concerns raised.
  - Providing the appropriate time and place for full and confidential discussion.
  - Establishing reasonable expectations for solving any issues or problems.
  - Establishing a written action plan for any proposed or agreed solution.
  - Reporting and reviewing the action plan.
  - Providing an opportunity for a parent or learner to work towards a solution.
  - Recognising that:
    - Parents have a depth of experience with the learner.
    - Parental and educator perspectives may justifiably differ.
    - Parents have multiple time commitments.

**Parents/Guardians are committed to:**

- Helping and encouraging children to develop strong spiritual and moral values.
- Taking an active and supportive interest in the School's aspirations.
- Taking an active interest in children's work and progress and in this regard attending parents' meetings.
- Supporting the ethos, values, authority and discipline of the school.
- Ensuring children abide by the School rules.

- Reading and committing themselves to the relevant policy documents that pertain to them and their children at this school.
- Bringing their concerns to the attention of the educators through the approved channels.
- Listening to educators.
- Holding discussions with educators at a time and place that permits full and confidential exploration of issues:
  - Concerns will be discussed with the educator concerned.
  - The issue/problem will be articulated clearly and fully.
  - Educators will be afforded the opportunity to work towards a solution, which will require sufficient time.
- Recognising that:
  - – Educators are trained professionals.
  - – Educators’ perspectives may differ from parents’.
  - – Educators have multiple time commitments.

**Learners are committed to:**

- Supporting and abiding by the School’s Code of Conduct.
- Behaving and acting in a manner which reflects the values of the School.
- Respecting and being courteous and co-operative with educators, other School staff, other learners and visitors, at all times.
- Attending school regularly, and on time.
- Aiming to achieve their highest standard in all areas of School life.
- Completing all homework and assignments with pride and to their highest level of competence.
- Wearing the correct school uniform and appearing smart at all times.
- Respecting the feelings and property of other people, both in School and in the community.
- Caring for the buildings, furniture, equipment and grounds of the School.

## **GENERAL**

Whilst parents may not agree with every decision made by the school, in most cases, the parent and school will find enough common ground to continue a mutually respectful relationship. In the extreme case, however, an impasse may be so severe that the parent cannot remain a constructive member of the school community. In such cases, both the parent and the school should consider whether another school would be a better match for the family.

Parents best support a school climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns timeously, openly and constructively to the staff member closest to the problem. Efforts by parents to lobby other parents will be viewed by the school as counterproductive. In any event, if a concern is legitimate, the school will address it with the same vigour whether it is raised by one or a multitude of parents.

The absence of a specific guideline in this Charter does not relieve an individual of her or his responsibility to behave in what would be considered a fair and reasonable manner in all situations related to the school.