Home School Community Liaison Policy

Mary Queen of Angels N.S.

Gurteen Road,

Ballyfermot,

Dublin 10.



**Introductory Statement**

Parents, teachers and the Home School Liaison Coordinator of Mary Queen of Angels N.S were involved in the original formulation of the HSCL policy. This review was completed in September 2020.

**Rationale**

The rationale behind this policy is to review and improve the formal Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Policy in place across both schools. This policy is in acknowledgement of the partnership that exists between the both schools, parents and the wider community. It enables us to define and clarify the roles of all parties within this partnership.

**Objectives**

The goals of the HSCL scheme are supported by the twelve basic principles of HSCL.

These principles place an emphasis on the partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of parents and teachers in order to foster a spirit of inclusion for all:

* Focus on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely children’s parents and their teachers.
* Focus on the identification and meeting of needs.
* Unification and integration of the scheme at both primary and post-primary levels.
* Thrust that is preventative rather than curative.

**Attributes of the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator**

*“Among the salient characteristics of partnership are a shared sense of purpose; goal definition; communication; structures that are human and caring; task orientation; solidarity; joint accountability; empowerment; and transformation. These qualities, working in sequence or in tandem, can initiate change and growth, leading to an empowerment of groups and communities. This in turn facilitates transformation, which is the central tenet of partnership.”* - Concepta Conaty – The Home School Community Liaison Scheme in Ireland “From Vision to Best Practice”.

As per Circular 0016/2019, HSCL Coordinators shall:

* Have a commitment to supporting parents to enable children to develop to their full potential.
* Have a commitment to parents developing their potential as the primary educators of their children.
* Have the ability and willingness to forge positive professional relationships with parents, pupils, Principal(s), staff and relevant stakeholders, in order to make a positive difference to a child’s experience of school.
* Remain up to date with evidence-based research on what works, in a given context, to help children attend, participate in learning and be retained in the system.
* Have the ability to understand the needs of, and difficulties faced by marginalised families and communities and be able to put plans in place to respond to those needs.
* Have the ability to work in an interagency and inter-disciplinary way.
* Have the ability to monitor the impact of the interventions put in place to support parents and children and to demonstrate improved outcomes.
* Have the ability to lead and build staff capacity.

**Job Description/Role of the HSCL Coordinator**

As per circular 0016/2019, the HSCL Coordinator shall:

* Encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents and teachers to enhance the education of children.
* Spend a minimum of one third of their time on visiting the homes of pupils in order to:
* Build bonds of trust between home and school.
* Encourage parents to become involved in their child’s education.
* Bring information about the school and about services available in the community.
* Seek out potential parent leaders, who are willing to participate in the HSCL Scheme's activities and to be a resource to other parents.
* Monitor the effectiveness of interventions, which have been put in place.
* Work with staff to develop an understanding of educational disadvantage and promote innovative approaches and methodologies to address it.
* Actively develop and promote parental involvement as an integral part of the school development/DEIS planning process and in their work, to support the development, implementation and review of the Action Plan for Improvement.
* Establish structures to identify the needs of parents.
* Work with parents to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and also to the wider school community.
* Support the establishment and further development of links between early years’ settings, parents, families, schools and communities to support children across the education continuum
* Support measures to improve attendance, participation and retention of Travellers, Roma and other pupils at particular risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving.
* Work collaboratively with the Tusla EWS and the School Completion Programme (SCP) to address issues which impinge on the school attendance, participation and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.
* Liaise with parents of pupils being considered for extra supports through SCP so that
* these parents understand the supports being offered, why they are being offered and to ensure that parental consent is given.
* Support successful transitions from early childhood care and education to primary, primary to post primary and post primary to further and higher education. HSCL will play a key role in engaging with other key actors to support transitions and ensure pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are fully supported.
* Facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents.
* Participate in, contribute to and support integrated services policy and practice of the Tusla EWS.
* Formally engage with adult and family literacy services and establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents in their child’s learning in school and in the home in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting, shared reading etc.
* Facilitate the training of parents as community leaders and as a support to other parents.
* Establish and maintain links with other schools and engage with Local Community Development Committees and Children and Young People Services Committees structures to build on existing structures and expertise, avoid duplication of provision and make linkages to help pupils and parents engage in community activities.
* Facilitate partnership with teachers, parents, pupils and community agencies in formulating school policies.
* Establish/maintain/participate in the Local Education Committee which seeks to respond to school-related issues at community level, that impinge on learning, and to seek to address these issues, by working collaboratively with parents, pupils, voluntary and statutory agencies.
* Where appropriate, schools can initiate or engage in a ‘Meitheal’, the practice model for Tusla Family Support Service, in order to access additional support for children and families through collaboration with community agencies.
* Plan, monitor and evaluate HSCL interventions and programmes through:

a. Together with the school Principal, producing an annual HSCL plan with specified targets

b. Together with the school Principal, producing a weekly HSCL timetable

c. Recording all significant contact with families and prioritising home visitation

d. Completing a HSCL Return Form in relation to (a) Expenditure and (b) Objectives, Targets, Activities and Outcomes under HSCL Scheme.

**Aims**

Using Circular 0016/2019 to inform the HSCL policy, the following aims have been agreed:

*1. To ensure that all children participate fully in school and get the optimum benefit from it.*

This will be achieved by:

* Encouraging all parents to participate and attend curricular related courses run by HSCL coordinators.
* Facilitating effective communication between parents and teachers/principals on a regular basis.
* Encouraging parents to refer children to outside agencies that will support the educational, social and emotional development of the child.
* Liaising on a daily basis with teachers and principals.
* Liaising with parents regarding their child’s progress.
* HSCL input at staff meetings.
* Attending Care Team meetings.
* Attending attendance meetings with EWO.
* Liaising regularly with School Completion Programme and the Education Welfare Service.
* Meeting with parents through home visits and school meetings.
* Encouraging parents to participate within the class settings through organised activities (e.g. Maths for Fun, Reading for Fun)

*2. To promote active cooperation between home, school and the community for the benefit of the family.*

This will be achieved by:

* HSCL coordinator attending community agency meetings in order to be informed as to what is available in the wider community.
* Visiting parents to offer support/promote active cooperation.
* Linking parents with the services in their community.
* Facilitating parents and teachers working together (by organising activities as listed above).
* Compiling/distributing information leaflets for parents.
* Holding information meetings for parents.
* Providing, managing and monitoring a parents’ room.
* Organising parents to help with fundraising activities run by the school and with school-related events.

*3. To raise awareness in parents of how crucial a role they play in their child’s education.*

This will be achieved by:

* Conversations with parents on home visits/in parents’ room.
* Personal development courses for parents.
* Literacy and numeracy courses for parents.
* Organisation of activities which allow parents to participate in their child’s education within the school.
* Organisation of discussion groups on particular topics as they arise throughout the school year.
* Parents’ involvement will be encouraged by:
* Building rapport with incoming parents during the first term by hosting information meetings.
* Conducting home visits.
* Having an open door policy, as far as possible.
* Profiling on school campus.
* Making HSCL contact available to all parents.
* Correspondence in newsletters.
* Making HSCL presence felt cross-campus.
* Sending regular notes and texts to keep parents up to date with HSCL activities.
* Offering opportunities for parents to give ideas on how they think they can become involved.
* Consulting with other teachers.
* Re-enforcing the importance of parents’ role as the primary educator of their child.

*4. To keep children in the education system from primary through the third level education.*

This will be achieved by:

* Liaising with parents to inform them of in-school supports that are available that may enhance their child’s enjoyment of school (homework club, after-school sport/art club, therapies etc.)
* Liaising with SCP and other primary schools (St. Louise’s N.S) to organise and facilitate transfer programmes for 1st class boys.
* Liaising with SCP and secondary schools to organise and facilitate transfer programmes for 6th class boys.
* Liaising with other schools regarding students transferring mid-year.
* Liaising with other HSCL coordinators regarding shared families in the local schools.
* Liaising with other HSCL coordinators regarding children transferring to new schools.
* Providing support for parents whose children are experiencing academic and/pr social/behavioural difficulties.
* Meeting regularly with HSCL Coordinators from other schools as a family and local cluster.

*5. To develop in parents, teachers and children a positive attitude to life-long learning.*

This will be achieved by:

* Providing opportunities for life-long learning in schools.
* Parents participating in courses which will model to children life-long learning in action.
* Promoting life-long learning outside the school (e.g. Kylemore College, Adult Education Centre, Ballyfermot Library)

*6. To raise awareness in the school and in the wider community of the benefits of parental involvement in education.*

This will be achieved by:

* Encouraging a welcoming atmosphere in the school.
* Encouraging a healthy relationship between teachers and parents.
* Promotion of parental involvement via initiatives run as a family cluster.
* Sharing information with principals, teachers and parents.
* Sending texts home to keep parents up to date with HSCL activities.
* Updating posters on the school campus abut courses which promote parental involvement in school and education.

**Role and Responsibilties**

The allocation and retention of HSCL posts to DEIS schools is contingent on schools complying with the contents of Circular 0016/2019. In this regard, schools are reminded that in order to participate in DEIS they completed and signed an Acceptance Form which stated that:

* The school will take all necessary steps to use resources that may be allocated under DEIS in accordance with the key provisions, requirements and aims of the school’s DEIS Action Plan.
* The school also undertakes to abide by any further conditions that the Department of Education and Skills may put in place from time to time with regard to DEIS or any other measures under the schools’ DEIS Action Plan.

**Trustees and B.O.M**

* Provision of Parents’ Room
* Overall management of school
* Sanction of all policies
* Give office to HSCL scheme

**Staff**

* Acceptance and support of HSCL scheme/parental involvement in the scheme
* Encouragement of various activities organised to involve parents in the life of the school (reminding children to remind parents about upcoming activities, discussing opportunities for parents to get involved with the parents themselves)
* Adopting an attitude to parents that encourages open communication
* Help in the formation of policy
* Implementation of policy

**Parents**

* Help in the formation of policy
* Support of policy
* Participation in the activities organised within the HSCL scheme or otherwise within the school which allow for parental involvement
* Promote the HSCL scheme among other parents

**Students**

* Scheme in operation for the benefit of the children
* Participation in the activities organised within the HSCL scheme within the school that allow for student/parental involvement

**School Completion Programme**

* Open communication between SCP and HSCL coordinator/other relevant staff members around parents/families who could benefit from the services offered through SCP and HSCL scheme

**Community**

* Promote the HSCL scheme
* Support families and children in the school community
* Communication with HSCL coordinator/ other relevant staff members around families engaged with community support
* Provide funding when deemed appropriate (e.g. Ballyfermot Partnership)
* Work in an integrated way with SCP and EWS.

**Implementation**

This policy was reviewed by Nessa O’Sullivan during the 2020-2021 school year. This policy will be supported, developed and implemented in collaboration with the principal and all staff members.

**Ratification and Communication**

This Home School Community Liaison Policy was reviewed and revised in September 2020 and ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_