

Home School Community Liaison Policy

Introduction

This policy was developed to give guidance to the staff, parents and local community on the role of the Home School and Community Liaison Teacher.

Rational

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (**HSCL**) is targeted at students who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of economic or social disadvantage. This policy was developed to inform staff and parents about the roles and duties.

What is a HSCL?

The HSCL Coordinator (a teacher from your children's school) works in partnership with parents, teachers and local community organisations to support positive educational outcomes for pupils/students.

The HSCL Coordinator also works closely with the other two strands of TESS, Educational Welfare Officers (EWO) and personnel from the School Completion Programme to improve educational outcomes for children. As part of their work, the HSCL Coordinator will meet parents during home visits, at courses for parents in the school and at other school and community events.

Goals

- To maximize active participation of students in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure.
- To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the students.
- To raise awareness in parents / guardians of their own capacities to enhance their children's education process and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
- To enhance the students' participation, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to third level education and their life long attitude to learning.
- To develop a caring, open environment where information and guidance are provided and shared among the whole school community.

Policy Content

The Home School Community Liaison Policy includes

1. Introduction
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Principles
4. The work of Home School Community Liaison scheme
5. Success Criteria
6. Links to other Policies
7. Ratification and Communication
8. Implementation and Review

1. Introduction

Through the Home School Community Liaison scheme it is hoped that children will engage fully in all aspects of education. They will attend regularly and remain in school.

This is achieved through developing partnerships between school and home, parents/guardians and teachers.

The scheme focuses directly on the relevant adults in the students' educational lives and seeks indirect benefits for the students themselves; that is, to develop parents / guardians as educators.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator

1. To encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents / guardians and teachers in the education of their children
2. To establish structures to identify the needs of parents / guardians.
3. To work with parents / guardians to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and also to the wider school community.
4. To visit the homes of students in order to:
 - a. Build bonds of trust between home and school
 - b. Encourage parents / guardians to become involved in their child's education.
 - c. Bring information about the school and about services available in the community.
5. To seek out potential parent/guardian leaders, who are willing to participate in the HSCL scheme's activities and to be a resource to other parents/guardians.
6. To monitor the effectiveness of interventions, which have been put in place.
7. To facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents/guardians.
8. To work with the Educational Welfare Service and the School Completion Programme (SCP) in a unified way, to address issues, which affect attendance, participation and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.
9. To establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents/guardians in their child's learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting, etc.
10. To liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
11. To plan, monitor and evaluate HSCL interventions and programs.

The Role of Principal / Deputy Principal

- To encourage parents / guardians and staff to participate and support all activities and ideas in developing a whole school approach to the Home School Community Liaison scheme.
- To support the HSCL coordinator in the activities of the HSCL scheme.

The Role of the Class Teacher/SET

- The class teacher works with your child every day. The class teacher communicates with parents/guardians on their child's progress and recommends ways to improve learning. During lockdown parents have access to the teacher's work email to contact them about children's progress and online learning.
- The class teacher will liaise with the HSCL/Principal where there are concerns about attendance and participation.

3. Principles

The principles of the Home School Community Liaison policy are:

- The partnership of parents/guardians and teachers collaborating in the education and welfare of their students
- The scheme is unified and integrated at both primary and secondary levels
- The approach of the Home School Community Liaison scheme is preventative rather than curative
- The focus of the Home School Community Liaison scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours affect the lives of children, namely, parents /guardians and teacher

- The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having those needs met
- The Home School Community Liaison scheme develops teacher and school staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and the whole-school approach
- The Home School Community Liaison scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence
- Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families
- Networking with and promoting the co-ordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies increases effectiveness, obviates duplication and leads to an integrated delivery of service to marginalized children and their families

4. The work of Home School Community Liaison scheme

Note: The HSCL teacher will have a work phone. This phone allows parents to contact the HSCL during the school day.

Meetings with class teachers are arranged by contacting the school office.

The HSCL teacher will have a fully charged mobile with them during all home visits. This enables the teacher to be able to contact the school at all times. It also allows the HSCL to contact the school office at all times.

Home Visitation:

- Home visitation is at the heart of the HSCL scheme's focus on partnership. The ultimate purpose is to maximize the student's involvement and their retention in the education system.
- Through home visits the coordinator endeavours to extend the welcoming and friendly face of the school in the context and circumstances of daily life.
- The HSCL coordinator aims to be friendly and non-judgemental in his/her approach while carrying out home visits.
- It is important for the coordinator to show a willingness to listen and to stay as long as is necessary.
- During the visits, the HSCL coordinator gives information and establishes a rapport with the parents.
- The HSCL coordinator aims to help parents express their fears around approaching school, and seeks to break down negative attitudes among parents / guardians towards school and education.
- Referrals for home visits will come from the principal, teachers, pastoral care teams and parents / guardians.
- Teachers who express concerns and would like a home visit to a particular family, may refer to the HSCL coordinator.
- Home visits will not be made in the case of issues directly relating to student discipline or where the personal safety of the HSCL is deemed to be at risk.

Home Visits during the Covid-19 Pandemic

- Home visits during the current pandemic should be in keeping with the TUSLA Guidelines for HSCL during the pandemic. Home visits will be made when they are seen as essential. Non-essential visits can take place remotely.

- Where an essential visit is required, ample notice and agreed confirmation of the visit should be arrived at with the parent/guardian
- Where an essential visit is required, and it is not possible to contact the parent, the HSCL Coordinator may conduct, upon agreement with the principal, a doorstep visit.
- Hygiene and safety should be in keeping with the Guidelines.

Classes/ Courses:

- The HSCL may conduct regular surveys to assess parents' interest in courses.
- Parental needs are identified through contact with parents.
- Parents / guardians can frequently identify both direct and indirect needs concerning their children's education.
- These courses will allow parents / guardians to improve their life skills, to foster their self-confidence and should also develop the parent's/ guardian's awareness of their capacities as educators.
- Scheme activities, which meet the parent's / guardian's needs include:
 1. Personal development courses such as parenting courses, assertiveness courses, etc.
 2. Leisure activities
 3. Educational courses such as Spoken English for foreign national parents
 4. Parent support Groups
- Once the needs have been identified, it is the coordinators' role to organise a specific course.
- In organising the course, the coordinator will have a number of issues to consider, i.e.: time, venue, availability of a tutor, funding, resources needed and suitability of the course for the parents.
- Essential duties of the coordinator include: setting up the venue, organising refreshments, purchasing resources, inviting and contacting parents by text, phone call or letter and role of course facilitator where appropriate.
- Designing Posters and advertising courses.
- Networking with local community agencies.
 - All courses should be discussed with the principal who will communicate the information to the BOM.

Cluster Meetings:

- The HSCL scheme may arrange local and family cluster meetings
- These meetings help coordinators to share information regarding shared families, share resources, organise common courses for parents and to prepare transfer programs.
- The local cluster schools are: St Edward's N.S., Sligo; Mercy Primary School, Sligo; St Attracta's N.S., Ballaghaderreen and Ballinode College, Sligo.

Other Duties:

- Regular communication with the principal and school staff.
- Working with the principal/staff on the DEIS Plan to promote literacy/numeracy/attendance and family involvement.
- Keeping records of improvement in attendance and participation
- Development of links with feeder primary schools.
- Liaising with SCP Project workers.
- Participation in Information meeting for in-coming parents / guardians each year.
- Assisting and supporting Parents at Parent-Teacher meetings and following up non-attendees.
- Drawing on expertise of the local community to provide training for our parents / guardians and co-operating with them to maximise the effectiveness of services available.
- Maintaining and updating the HSCL section of school website.

5. Success Criteria

The success of the HSCL work can be assessed through a number of ways:

- Feedback from teachers / parents / guardians and the local community.
- Feedback for the DES Inspectorate and TUSLA.
- Greater involvement of marginalised parents / guardians in the education of their children.
- Improved communication between home and school,
- A more positive attitude towards the school from those at risk families,
- Improved attendance of at risk students.

6. Links to other Policies

- Anti-bullying
- Child Safeguarding
- Code of Behaviour
- SEN
- Admission Policy
- GDPR
- Covid Response Plan
- Attendance Policy
- Homework Policy
- Remote Learning/Zoom Calls

7. Ratification and Communication:

The policy was presented to the BOM for discussion and approval.

The policy will be available for parents to view on our school website.

8. Implementation and Review:

The HSCL policy will be promoted throughout the school, and its implementation and effectiveness should be reviewed every two years or as required.

Signed: Sr Mary Richardson (Chairperson, Board of Management)

References

- The Home, School, community Liaison Scheme in Ireland. From Vision to Best Practice. Department of Education and Science. Written by HSCL Coordinators 2005-2006.
- DES Circular 0058/2013: Home, School, Community Liaison Scheme.2. The scheme is integrated and unified at both primary and post primary level.
- TESS: HSCL Guidelines for Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic
- TESS Guidelines for use of the HSCL Grant