

Home School Community Liaison Policy

Introduction

It is our belief in Le Chéile school that best practice education revolves around partnership between home, school and community. We believe that parents, teachers and children working together create a formula for success. The close co-operation between school and parent is essential for a positive working environment.

Parents are the primary educators of children, therefore we at Le Chéile school make a conscious effort to involve parents as much as possible, so as to maximise effective learning, good student behaviour and also help the children attain their full potential.

Rational.

This policy statement has been formulated following consultation between parents, principal and teachers. The policy is an acknowledgement of their mutual role and commitment to furthering the partnership links between them, in order to promote positive learning experiences for the pupils.

Basic Principles.

The Home School Community Liaison scheme is based on the principle of partnership. This partnership should be a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision making and accountability.

This is expressed in twelve principles which form the basic structure of the scheme.

1. The scheme seeks to develop partnership and collaboration of the complimentary skills of parents and teachers.

This is encouraged in the school through:

- Parents are encouraged by the HSCL co ordinator to attend parent teacher meetings.
- Relevant information is filtered by the co ordinator between home and school and visa versa.
- Parents and teachers come together to work on policy formation
- Parents and teachers work together on the local committee, green schools committee and various projects.
- Parent Association.
- Parent members of the Board of Management.

2. The scheme is integrated and unified at both primary and post primary level.

- The co ordinator works closely with her colleagues in the post primary schools and also with the other primary schools in the area.
- The co- ordinator and other local co- ordinators meet weekly.
- Resources are pooled where possible e.g. organising courses for parents.
- Transfer supports are in place for parents and pupils making transfers to other schools.

3. The trust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative.

- Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.
- Home visits are more frequent with families thought to be at risk.
- Parents are encouraged to keep in contact with class teachers, learning support teachers and principal and are welcomed in a friendly manner to the school.

4. The focus of the scheme is on the significant adults in the child's life i.e., Guardians, Parents and teachers.

- The co ordinator liaises with parents mainly through home visits. Informal contact takes place in the parents' room, school yard and at classes and courses.
- Contact with the teachers is by means of
 - Classroom visits.
 - An HSCL area on the staff notice board.
 - An HSCL input at staff meetings.
 - Staff attend coffee mornings in the parents' room when organised.
 - Photographic records of parents' room activities are displayed .

5. The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having these met.

- Needs are identified through informal contact, observation and or questionnaire. These needs divide into four main categories:
 - Leisure – a non threatening starting point for marginalised parents.
 - Curricular – these enable parents to become closer to their children's learning.
 - Self Development - Parents support and become a resource to their child, to co- ordinator and teachers. Eg. Maths for Fun, Literacy packs, concerts.These areas give parents skills that further enhance their own self esteem, thus having a more positive effect on their children's learning.

6. The scheme develops teacher and staff attitudes to partnership and the whole school approach.

- Parents and teachers working together on varied projects eg. Maths for Fun.
- Parents and teachers working together on policy making.

7. The scheme promotes the fostering of self help and independence.

- The opportunity to participate in the Incredible Years parenting programme.
- Through involvement in scheme activities, self esteem is enhanced, new skills are acquired, thus enabling them to take a more active and responsible role in their children's education.
- Parents are referred to community agencies where they can access supports.

8. Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.

- The co ordinator will endeavour to visit all families.
- In Sept /Oct the main focus of visits will be to parents of Junior Infants.

It is through these visits that barriers are broken down and trust and confidence begin.

9. Networking with and promoting the co ordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies in the community, as a step towards the integrated delivery of service to marginalized families.

- The co-ordinator liaises with groups such as VEC, BES, ALSS, PAUL Partnership, Schools Completion Programme, Barnardos, MICE and community groups such as Family Resource Centre, and Community Development Project.

10. Home School Community Liaison is a full time undertaking.

11. The HSCL co ordinator is an agent of change.

Achievement of Aims

The scheme has five major aims:

1. To maximise active participation of the children in the schools of the scheme, in the learning process, in particular those at risk of failure.
2. To promote active co operation between home, school and relevant agencies, in promoting the educational interests of the children.

3. To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
4. To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life long learning.
5. To disseminate the outcomes of the scheme through out the school system generally.

Activities in the school to promote these aims include:

Adult education courses.

Parent association.

Parent –teacher meetings.

Class meetings.

Induction /welcome mornings for new pupils and their parents.

Promotion of literacy eg. Modelling of storytelling technique, Storysacks, Literacy packs.

Participation in Schools Completion Programme.

Transfer support for pupils moving to post primary.

Networking with local agencies.

Involvement of parents in policy formation.

Parents participation in programmes such as Sing out with String,. Maths for Fun, Incredible Years, Family Reading, Write a Book.

Home Visits.

HSCL cluster meetings.

Inputs on HSCL at staff meetings and BOM meetings.

Informal get-to-gethers e.g. fund raising coffee mornings.