

Stanhope Secondary School



Home School Community Liaison Policy

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Rational

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme is an integral part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative in Stanhope Secondary School and is a targeted intervention aimed at addressing educational disadvantage within the school.

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 lifelong 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. Implementation and Review

1. Introduction

The Home School Community Liaison scheme seeks to promote partnership between the home and the school, parents / guardians and teachers. The purpose of this partnership is to enhance the students' learning opportunities and to promote their retention within the educational system. This purpose is pursued by identifying and responding to parent / guardian needs and by creating a greater awareness in teachers of the complimentary role that parents play in their children's education. The Home School Community Liaison scheme seeks to promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in the education of young people. 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 (HSCCL) Coordinator

- To encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents / guardians and teachers in the education of their children
- To establish structures to identify the needs of parents / guardians.
- To work with parents / guardians to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and also to the wider school community.
- To visit the homes of students in order to:
 - Build bonds of trust between home and school
 - Encourage parents / guardians to become involved in their child's education.
 - Bring information about the school and about services available in the community.
- To seek out potential parent / guardian leaders, who are willing to participate in the HSCCL scheme's activities and to be a resource to other parents / guardians.
- To monitor the effectiveness of interventions, which have been put in place.
- To facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents / guardians.
- 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.
- 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.
- To liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
- To plan, monitor and evaluate HSCCL 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 HSCCL coordinator in the activities of the HSCCL scheme.

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

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.

Classes/ Courses:

- A Survey is conducted regularly to assess parents interest in courses.
- 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:
 - Personal development courses such as parenting courses, assertiveness courses, etc.
 - Leisure activities
 - Educational courses such as Spoken English for Non-national parents
 - 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.

Cluster Meetings:

- The HSCL scheme arranges 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 Stanhope Primary, St Gabriel's NS, St Peter's NS, St Mary's NS, Georges Hill NS, Mount Carmel Secondary School and St Paul's Secondary School.

Other Duties:

- Regular communication with the principal and school staff.
- 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 notice boards and social media pages.

5. Success Criteria

Success indicators will be:

- Teacher / parent / guardian / community feedback,
- 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.

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: _____

Principal, Secretary Board of Management

Dated: _____

Review date: _____

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.