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Home School Community Liaison Policy

Introduction

This policy reflects and supports the mission statement of Scoil Nano Nagle which states:

The ethos of our school is based on gospel values and we aim to provide a happy, secure friendly, learning environment, where children, parents, teachers, ancillary staff and Board of Management work in partnership.

Each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for his/her uniqueness and is supported to reach his/her full potential.

This is a working document. It seeks to place our Home School Community Liaison policy in the context of the overall national scheme and guidelines as outlined in the “Information booklet for DEIS (DELIVERING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOLS) schools participating in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme” (2016).

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Home-School-Community-Liaison-HSCL-Scheme/Information-Booklet-for-DEIS-schools-participating-in-the-Home-School-Community-Liaison-Scheme.pdf>

It will be reviewed with all the partners in education on a regular basis.

Rationale

The overarching objective of HSCL (HOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIAISON) is to improve the education outcomes for targeted children through supporting the salient adult(s) in the child’s life. The main thrust of HSCL should be preventative, rather than curative and one of the key principals underpinning the scheme is the identification of needs to inform the basis of activities in the scheme (From Vision to Best Practice) https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/des_hscl.pdf

Identifying the Needs of Families

In accordance with Guidelines for Identifying HSCL Target List document March 2018)

The primary concern of the work of HSCL coordinators is to promote attendance, participation and retention of children/ young people. In compiling the HSCL target list, many factors may be taken into consideration. This work should not be done in isolation, but as part of consultation with school principal(s), SCP (School Completion Programme), EWO (EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER) and other relevant services. Families may only be

included on the HSCL target list if one or more factors listed below is present **AND** these factors are impacting on their child's attendance, participation and retention.

There may also be occasions where a brief intervention by the HSCL coordinator is required to support a family who may not ordinarily be on the HSCL Target List, for example in a critical incident. In such cases, HSCL intervention will be informed by relevant school policies (e.g. Critical Incident Policy) and in consultation with the school principal(s), SCP, EWO and other relevant services.

Families who must be on the HSCL Support list

- Any child who is in receipt of SCP intervention
- Any child where a referral has been made to EWS and/ or is an open case with EWS
- Any child who is involved with Tusla Social Work and/ or in care

Additional Risk Factors to Consider

- Families experiencing economic stress
- Families who are socially isolated
- Families experiencing/ at risk of homelessness
- Families from an ethnic minority
- Families experiencing domestic violence
- Families where English is an additional language
- Single-parent families
- Families with a history of early school leaving
- Children who have repeated a year in school
- Families with multiple outside agencies involved
- Families with substance misuse
- Children with attendance/ punctuality issues
- Families with a mental health concern
- Families having difficulty with transition
- Child welfare concerns
- Children with SEN (Special Educational Needs)
- Families dealing with exceptional circumstances (e.g. traumatic event)
- Families experiencing a specific difficulty (e.g. bereavement)
- Children with challenging behaviour at home and/ or in school
- Families where the school is unable to make contact/ unengaged with the school

Basic Principles.

The Home School Community Liaison scheme has eight basic aims as laid out in summation on page eight of the 2016 document *“Information Booklet for DEIS schools participating in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme”*

1. The scheme targets children at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of family-based issues, which adversely affect pupil attainment and school retention (see handout titled ‘Guidelines for Identifying HSCL Target List’)

There are criteria applied in targeting families for additional support.

- a. Attendance is monitored and families with poor attendance are given support in co-operation with SCP.
- b. Poor educational attainment. Children are supported with additional learning support and progress is monitored at Care/Set meetings which the HSCL teacher and SCP co-ordinator attends.
- c. Families going through a crisis such as bereavement are directed towards counselling and the school has limited access to a play therapist who assists children to express their feelings and anxieties.

2. The scheme focuses directly on the significant adults in children’s lives and seeks direct benefits for the children themselves.

- a. Relevant information is filtered by the HSCL co-ordinator between home and school.
- b. The HSCL co-ordinator supports the Parents’ Association
- c. National Parents Council give support to the Association.
- d. Home visitation is an important element in establishing bonds of trust with families.
- e. Informal contact also takes place in the school yard and in the parents’ room.

3. HSCL works in an enabling way with parents to develop their capacity as a key resource in their children’s learning.

- a. Parents and teachers work together on various schemes such as the green school committee.
- b. Parents are encouraged to get involved in the curricular work of the school through various programmes such as Forward Together, Maths Recovery, Quality Time in Early Start and Word Wizards, World Book Day
- c. Support is also given through our involvement in the Incredible Years project
- d. Parents are referred to community agencies where they can access support, such as Speech and Language Therapy and CAHMS.

4. The scheme seeks to develop the pupil-parent-teacher relationship, so that school becomes a place where all young people can reach their potential.

- a. The HSCL co-ordinator encourages and monitors attendance at Parent/ Teacher meetings.

- b. The newsletter is produced every week to inform parents of events and information that they might find useful and is posted on the school website.
- c. Contact with teachers is encouraged by means of classroom visits, coffee mornings, Grandparents' Day, Multi-Cultural week, attendance awards ceremony, sports day and others which involve parents, children and teachers being together.
- d. After school clubs.

5. HSCL identifies and provides for the personal, leisure and learning needs of parents, so as to promote their self-worth and self-confidence, which will have a positive impact on their children's education.

- a. Courses, activities and information relevant to parents are placed in the school's weekly newsletter
- b. Through the newsletter parents are invited to put in requests for courses and are asked for feedback.
- c. Involvement in these courses and activities are monitored to assess success and relevance.

6. The scheme actively participates in analysing attendance patterns, in order to maximize student attendance, participation and retention.

- a. In co-operation with School Completion Project an attendance secretary is employed on a part-time basis to monitor attendance, issue standard letters to notify parents of when 10, 15 or 20 days have been missed. She also assists in organizing the attendance awards at the end of the year.
- b. Attendance strategy forms part of D.E.I.S. plan and HSCL features largely in promoting attendance
- c. Attendance meetings are held every six weeks with EWO, SCP co-ordinator, attendance secretary and principal to monitor attendance and to assess what action needs to be taken.
- d. Transfer from Early Start to Junior Infants is monitored and is recorded with HSCL and attendance secretary
- e. Similarly, the transfer from 2nd class to Talbot Senior School is monitored.
- f. Children who go to other schools are also recorded and monitored.

7. HSCL works in a supportive and purposeful way with parents and facilitates communication with class teacher and school management as required.

- a. The HSCL co-ordinator and principal meet regularly to review progress and plan what actions need to be put in places
- b. Parents' Association committee meetings are also used to discuss issues.
- c. The HSCL co-ordinator also meets with other co-ordinators at family & local cluster meetings to share ideas to apply in our own school.
- d. Foster links with community groups and agencies.

8. The scheme promotes positive teacher and staff attitudes towards partnership-working and adopting a whole-school approach to attendance participation and retention.

- a. The staff are informed and involved in the DEIS plan which covers these issues.
- b. Early Start staff work with HSCL in assisting families with the transfer of children from pre-school to school
- c. HSCL co-ordinator liaises with 2nd class teachers and teachers in the senior school to assist in the transfer of pupils from junior to senior school.
- d. She/he monitors the children who don't enrol in Senior School to ensure that they are enrolled elsewhere.
- e. Particular attention for contact is given to families who need support and encouragement regarding attendance.

“The HSCL Coordinator is an agent of change, not only for individuals and families but also for schools and the wider educational system”

Monitoring of objectives

1. The HSCL co-ordinator keeps a record to monitor parental participation as part of the school's DEIS plan. Targets are set and monitored during the year
2. Attendance is monitored and targets are set with a plan in place to achieve those targets and is laid out in the school's DEIS plan. This is done at the regular attendance meetings.
3. Transfer is similarly monitored through the DEIS (DELIVERING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOLS) Plan.
4. Progress within the Parents' Association is given at the AGM

Activities in the school to promote these aims include:

- Adult education courses
- Active Parents' Association
- Parent / Teacher meetings
- Class meetings
- Induction / welcome mornings for new pupils and their parents/guardians
- Promotion of literacy – CLOVER project, Word Wizards, Forward Together programme, Bedtime Reading , library visits with parents and children
- Working with School Completion Programme –After School Club, attendance strategy, Talkabout programme, Small group work
- Tracking movement of pupils to senior school and to other schools as changes occur.
- Networking with local agencies.
- Involving parents in policy formation (including this one)
- Parents participate in programmes such as Word Wizards and Forward Together Programme, Blue Skies Language Land programme, Maths for Fun.
- Home visits
- HSCL cluster meetings
- Informal contacts – phone call, organising courses, meet and greet at assembly and dismissal time, coffee mornings.

Parents participation in the school – Child Safeguarding

- Parents work with groups in an open area e.g. in the classroom with other parents under the supervision of the class teacher and the Home / School teacher.
- Parents work with individuals or groups within the classroom such as for baking, knitting, Word Wizards or Forward Together Programme.
- Under no circumstances will parents work with individual pupils without a teacher being present.
- Parents working with groups of children will be guided and instructed by the Home / School teacher
- If an occasion arises necessitating a parent to work outside of these circumstances Garda vetting will be required.