



St Paul's Secondary School

Care - Inclusion - Respect

HOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIAISON POLICY

Ratified: 14 December 2021

To be reviewed: December 2025

Home School Community Liaison Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated in line with *Circular 0058/2013 – Home School Community Liaison scheme: Assignment of Home School Community Liaison Coordinators within DEIS schools.*

Purpose

The purpose of The Home School Community Liaison Policy is to outline and clarify the role of HSCL in St Paul's Secondary School. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies.

Context

St Paul's Secondary School is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for girls comprising 450 students and 60 staff members.

The ethos of St Paul's is 'Omnibus Omnia', meaning 'All Things to All'. This policy adheres to the spirit and ethos of the school.

St Paul's is a respectful learning community which nurtures the wellbeing and the academic, spiritual and creative growth of every student. We embrace diversity and recognize that everyone is unique and has a positive contribution to make. Our Core values of Caring, Inclusion and Respect, guide our policies, our procedures and how we work with our staff, students and parents. We embrace diversity and recognise that everyone is unique and has a positive contribution to make to our school community.

This policy is written in the context of contemporary legislation and other relevant publications.

Rationale

The HSCL scheme endeavours to 'build confidence, communication skills and raise the self-esteem of each child so that he/ she can reach his/her full potential'. This is supported by the goals set out in this policy of building open communication between school and home and empowering parents to take an active role in their child's education.

The Education Act (1998:32[9]) refers to educational disadvantage as, *the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.*

The HSCL Scheme operates as part of DEIS, which is focussed on communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion and where intergenerational disadvantage exists (DEIS

2017). The overarching objective of the HSCL Scheme is to improve educational outcomes for the students at risk of not fully attending, participating or being retained within the formal educational system, by supporting the salient adult(s) in the child's life. The main thrust of HSCL should be preventative rather than curative.

The Underlying Principles:

- Fulltime role
- Spirit of partnership between parents, teachers and the community.
- Develop and promote teacher and staff attitudes to partnership
- Early intervention and solution focussed
- Targeted and focussed work with families, through evidence informed interventions.
- Focus primarily on the salient adult in the child's life.
- HSCL Coordinators are agents of change.
- Preventative, rather than curative.
- Unified and integrated at both primary and post primary level

Objectives

The five goals of the HSCL Scheme focus on

1. Supporting marginalised pupils
2. Promoting co-operation between home, school and community
3. Empowering parents
4. Retaining young people in the Education System
5. Disseminating best practice.

The goals of the HSCL scheme are supported by the twelve basic principles of Home School Community Liaison (from Vision to Best Practice, pp.8 – 15).

1. The scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complimentary skills of parents and teachers
2. The scheme is unified and integrated at both the primary and post primary level
3. The thrust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative
4. The focus of the scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviour impinges on the lives of children, namely parents and teachers
5. The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having these needs met
6. The scheme develops teacher and staff attitudes in the area of partnership and the whole school approach
7. The scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence
8. Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families
9. Networking with and promoting the co-ordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies increases effectiveness, eliminates duplication, and leads to an integrated delivery of service to marginalised children and their families.

10. HSCL is a full-time undertaking
11. The HSCL co-ordinator is an agent of change

Circular –16/2019: Assignment of HSCL Coordinators within DEIS Schools (Appendix F)

The HSCL Co-ordinator shall:

- Spend a minimum of one third of their time on visiting the homes of pupils.
- Establish structures to identify the needs of parents.
- Support successful transitions from early childhood care and education to primary, primary to post-primary, to further and Higher Education.
- Work collaboratively with EWS and SCP.
- 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:
 - Together with the school Principal, producing an annual HSCL plan with specified targets
 - Together with the school Principal, producing a weekly HSCL timetable
 - Recording all significant contact with families and prioritising home visitation
 - Completing a HSCL Return Form in relation to a) Expenditure and b) Objectives, Targets, Activities and Outcomes under HSCL Scheme.

HSCL Planning within Whole -School Context

DEIS Action plan for Improvement

1. Attendance
2. Retention
3. Literacy
4. Numeracy
5. Supporting Educational Transitions
6. Partnership with Parents and Others
7. Wellbeing
8. Academic Outcomes

Tusla Education Support Services (TESS)

- Tusla Education Support Service operates under the Education Act (1998) and the Educational Welfare Act (2000). The three national targets of TESS are:
 1. Improve attendance
 2. Improve participation
 3. Improve retention
- TESS comprises three strands:
 1. HSCL

2. SCP
3. EWS

HSCL Target List

The primary concern of HSCL is to promote attendance, participation and retention of young people. In compiling the HSCL target list, many factors need to be considered. This should not be done in isolation, but as part of consultation with School Principal, SCP, EWS, Student Support Team etc. This list should be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the school year.

Families who should be on the HSCL Target list will include but will not be restricted to:

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

Sample additional risk factors to consider:

- Families experiencing difficulties due to a Public Health Emergency
- Families experiencing economic stress
- Families who are socially isolated
- Families experiencing / at risk of homelessness
- Families from an ethnic minority
- Families where English is an additional language
- Single parent families
- Families experiencing domestic violence
- Families having a difficulty with transition
- 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 abuse
- Children with attendance / punctuality issues
- Families with a mental health concern
- Children who may be a young carer
- Families with SEN Children – Support of parents and siblings
- Child welfare concerns
- Children with SEN
- Families dealing with exceptional circumstances (eg, traumatic event)
- Families experiencing a specific difficulty (eg. Bereavement)
- Children with challenging behaviour at home and or in school
- Families where the school is unable to make contact / unengaged with the school

Home Visits during a Public Health Emergency

Home visitation is at the heart of the HSCL scheme, and it is clear that contact with those most at risk of increased educational disadvantage as a result of the pandemic will be more valuable than ever. (HSCL Guidelines for Working during the Covid 19 Pandemic, Update August 2021)

In the event of a Public Health Emergency, Public Health guidelines, advice from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), and guidelines from the Department of Education are strictly adhered to.

Essential visits to homes must be agreed with the Principal and must be planned. Parent visits to the school will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal

Attributes of Home School Community Liaison Co-Ordinator

“Key to the ongoing success of the HSCL Scheme is the selfless dedication of the HSCL personnel. Coordinators act not only as liaison between the schools, teachers, parents and communities but also act as advocates of partnership and collaboration as well as drivers of the range of activities that the scheme supports.”

Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science 2005

As per Circular 0058/2013, HSCL Coordinators shall:

- Have a commitment to children developing 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(s) and relevant stakeholders, in order to make a positive difference to a child’s experience of school
- Be up to date with evidence-based research on what works 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 0058/2013, the HSCL Coordinator shall:

- Encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents and teachers in the education of their children
- 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 DEIS Action Plan
- 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
- Visit the homes of students 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
- Facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents
- Work with the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and the School Completion Programme (SCP) in a unified way, to address issues, which impinge on the attendance, participation and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving
- Participate in, contribute to and support integrated services policy of the Educational Welfare Services.
- 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

Using Circular 0058/2013 and 0016/2019 to inform the HSCL policy, the following aims have been agreed:

AIMS

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

This will be achieved by:

- ✓ Encouraging parents to participate in courses run by HSCL co-ordinators (building the link between home and school and promoting lifelong education and parent self-care).
- ✓ 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 / Board of Management Meetings
- ✓ Attending Student Support Team meetings
- ✓ Liaise with Year Heads and Attendance Co-ordinator.
- ✓ Liaising regularly with School Completion Programme (commenced September 2021) and the Educational Welfare Services. The work of HSCL continues as a vital part of the integrated Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency Tusla.
- ✓ Meeting with parents through home visits and in- school meetings

2. To promote active co-operation between home, school and the community for the benefit of the family

This will be achieved by:

- ✓ HSCL co-ordinator attending community agency meetings to be informed as to what is available in the wider community
- ✓ Visiting parents to offer support/promote active co-operation
- ✓ Linking parents with 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 such as Open Day, School Play. This promotes the presence of Parental involvement to the wider school community.
- ✓ Facilitating parent representatives to aid policy formation
- ✓ Be a teacher link to the Parents' Association in St Paul's

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, HSCL Office, Phone calls.
- ✓ Personal development courses for parents (e.g. Parents Plus, Life coaching)
- ✓ Literacy and numeracy courses for parents (e.g., Helping Your Secondary School daughter with Maths, Book Club)
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Organising Talks for Parents (John Lonergan, Colman Noctor, Jigsaw, Shane Martin, Anti Bullying Centre in DCU)

Parents' involvement will be encouraged by:

- ✓ Building rapport with incoming parents during the first term by hosting coffee mornings
- ✓ Conducting home visits, where deemed necessary by the HSCL and Management. The Board of Management agrees that HSCL home visits, are for the target parents of the HSCL and not for every student in the school.
- ✓ Having an open communication policy, as far as possible
- ✓ Making HSCL contact available to all parents
- ✓ Updating School Social Media on HSCL activities
- ✓ Making HSCL presence felt throughout the school
- ✓ Sending regular notes and texts to keep parents up-to-date with HSCL activities
- ✓ Responding to letters/ texts/emails sent by HSCL co-ordinator asking for volunteers to help out in school/become involved in classroom activities
- ✓ Offering opportunities for parents to give ideas on how they think they could become involved
- ✓ Responding to letters/ texts/ emails sent by HSCL co-ordinator about individual activities as they are being planned
- ✓ Consulting with HSCL co-ordinator by phone or in Parents' Room
- ✓ Constantly re-enforcing the importance of parents' role as the primary educator of their child
- ✓ Supporting parents in managing complex and challenging situations

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/ability to perform in school (homework clubs, after-school sports clubs, therapies, etc)
- ✓ Liaising with feeder Primary Schools to promote and advertise St Paul's (Open Day and New Entrants application), and to strengthen links.
- ✓ To invite main feeder Primary Schools to attend our Subject Tasting Day (Holy Spirit Senior School, St Damian's, Scoil Una Naofa, Scoil Íosa)
- ✓ Liaising with Holy Spirit Senior Primary School to organise and facilitate transfer programmes for 6th Class girls.
- ✓ Visiting all feeder Primary Schools to promote St Paul's – twenty-eight feeder schools.
- ✓ Hosting parents' meeting which will provide relevant information about St Paul's, as well as addressing subject choices and concerns parents may have
- ✓ Liaising with other schools regarding students transferring mid-year
- ✓ Liaising with other HSCL Co-ordinators regarding students transferring mid-year
- ✓ Liaising with other HSCL Co-ordinators regarding shared families in local schools
- ✓ Liaising with other HSCL Co-ordinators regarding children transferring to new schools.
- ✓ Providing support for parents whose children are experiencing academic and/or social/behavioural difficulties
- ✓ Meeting regularly with HSCL Co-ordinators from other schools as a family and local cluster (primary and post-primary). St Paul's is in the Family Cluster of Holy Spirit Junior School, Holy Spirit Senior School and Greenhills College. The HSCL Family Cluster meet weekly. St Paul's is part of the Crumlin Dublin 12 Local Cluster. The Local Cluster meet six times a year.
- ✓ Attending Student Support Team on a regular basis
- ✓ To support families in their daughter's transition to Third Level

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., Crumlin College, Adult Education Greenhills College, Walkinstown Library)
- ✓ Liaising with Dublin South City Partnership Adult Education Officer.

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 building
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Publishing articles on school websites and social media
- ✓ Sending regular notes and texts to keep parents up-to-date with HSCL activities
- ✓ Including articles in school newsletters highlighting parental involvement in the school

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The allocation and retention of Home School Community Liaison posts to DEIS schools is contingent on schools complying with the contents of Circular 0058/2013.

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 school's 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)
- Adopting an attitude to parents that encourages open communication and partnership with parents
- Help in the formation of policy
- Implementation of policy

Parents

- Help in the formation of policy (Focus group November 2021)
- Support of policy (New policy review by Parent Association – Wellbeing)
- Encourage parent participation in the PA

- 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/parent involvement

School Completion Programme

- The HSCL coordinator will support SCP in identifying students for referral and completing the SCP referrals.

Community

- Promote the HSCL scheme
- Support families and children in the school community
- Communication with HSCL co-ordinator / other relevant staff members around families engaged with community support
- Provide funding when deemed appropriate
- Work in an integrated way with EWS (Tusla)
- Work with CYPSC to initiate Meitheals for students.
- Link with community organisations to support our target students, St Vincent de Paul / Business in the Community

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on **14th December 2021**