



Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Policy

Meán Scoil Mhuire

Chairperson: Ms. Karen Clabby

Principal (A): Ms. Mairéad Lyons

Date: 17th April 2024

Mission Statement and School Ethos

Meán Scoil Mhuire is an all-girls post-primary voluntary Secondary Catholic School under CEIST trusteeship. It is a centre for the holistic formation of girls and young women.

Aims

- We respect the dignity of each person with her unique background, talents, traditions and beliefs.
- We provide a pleasant disciplined atmosphere in which students can grow spiritually, morally, academically, socially and culturally.
- We expose all to a rich cultural heritage and help them to acquire the knowledge and skills, which enables them to understand, appreciate and respect themselves, others and their environment.
- We foster positive Christian values and self-esteem so that our students leave school with a sense of self-worth and self-esteem and are well equipped for the challenges of life.
- We encourage partnership at all levels between the management, staff, parents, students and the local community.
- Meán Scoil Mhuire has not only a highly respected academic tradition. We also develop creativity, leadership and social skills by promoting involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Rationale

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme is an integral part of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in schools (DEIS) initiative in Meán Scoil Mhuire and is a targeted intervention aimed at addressing educational disadvantage within the school. Meán Scoil Mhuire was granted DEIS status in 2022 and was therefore granted a Home School Community Liaison Coordinator.

The Purpose of the HSCL Scheme

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme seeks to promote partnership between the home and the school, parents/guardians and teachers/staff. The purpose of this partnership is to enhance the students' learning opportunities and to promote their retention within the educational system.

The HSCL 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 the parent/guardian as an educator.

Goals of the HSCL Scheme

- To maximise active participation of the students in the scheme schools 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 student.
- 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' uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and third level education and their lifelong attitudes to learning.
- To develop a caring, open environment where information and guidance are provided and shared among the whole school community.

Principles of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme

1. The scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of home and school, of parents/guardians and teachers.
2. The scheme is unified and integrated at both primary and secondary levels.
3. The approach of the Home school community Liaison scheme is preventative rather than curative.
4. The focus of the Home School community Liaison scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely, parents/guardians and teachers.
5. The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and working to ensure these needs met.
6. The Home School community Liaison scheme develops teacher and school staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and a whole-school approach.
7. The Home School Community Liaison 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 coordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies increases effectiveness, obviates duplication and leads to an integrated delivery of service to marginalised children and their families.
10. The Liaison coordinator is an agent of change.

Home Visitation

1. Home visitation is at the heart of the HSCL scheme's focus on partnership. The ultimate purpose is to maximise the student's involvement and their retention in the education system.

2. Through home visits the co-ordinator endeavours to extend the welcoming and friendly face of the school through the context and circumstances of daily life.
3. The HSCL co-ordinator aims to be friendly and non-judgemental in their approach while carrying out home visits.
4. It is important for the co-ordinator to show willingness to listen and to stay as long as is necessary.
5. During the visits, the HSCL co-ordinator gives information and establishes a rapport with the parents.
6. The HSCL co-ordinator aims to help parents express their fears around approaching school and seeks to break down negative attitudes among parents/guardians towards school and education.
7. Referrals for home visits will come from the principal, teachers, pastoral care team and parents/guardians.
8. Teachers who express concerns and would like a home visit to a particular family, may refer to the HSCL co-ordinator.
9. Home visits will not be made in the case of issues directly relating to student discipline or where personal safety of the HSCL is deemed to be at risk.

Classes/ Courses:

- Classes and courses are delivered through our family and local cluster schools
- Needs are identified through contact with parents
- 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 coordinator's role to refer parents to a specific course

Cluster meetings

The HSCL scheme arranges local and family cluster meetings. These meetings help co-ordinators to share resources, to organise common courses for parents and to prepare transfer programmes.

Other Duties:

1. To regularly communicate with the Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads and Staff.
2. To develop links with feeder primary schools.
3. To liaise with the SCP Project workers and Educational Welfare Officers.
4. To liaise with feeder primary schools re transfer information.
5. Student Support Team

Roles and Responsibilities of the HSCL Coordinator

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Co-ordinator

1. Encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents/guardians and teachers in the education of their children.
2. Work with staff to develop an understanding of educational disadvantage and promote innovative approaches and methodologies to address it.
3. Actively develop and promote parental/guardian 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.
4. Establish structures to identify the needs of parents/guardians.
5. Work with parents/guardians to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and also to the wider community.
6. Spend a minimum of one third of their time visiting the homes of pupils in order to:
 - Build bonds of trust between home and school.
 - Encourage parents/guardians to become involved in their child's education.
 - Provide and distribute information about the school and services available in the community.
 - 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.
7. Monitor the effectiveness of intervention, which have been put in place.
8. Facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents/guardians.
9. Work with the Educational Welfare Service (NEWB) 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.

10. Establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents/guardians in their children's learning in school and in the home in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting etc.
11. Liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
12. Establish/maintain/participate in the Local Education Committee which seeks to respond to school related issues at community level, that impinge on learning and to strive to address these issues, by working collaboratively with parents/guardians, students, voluntary and statutory agencies.
13. Plan, monitor and evaluate HSCL interventions and programmes through
 - a) Together with the school principal, producing an annual HSCL plan with specified targets.
 - b) Together with the school Principal, producing a weekly timetable.
 - c) Recording all significant contact with families and prioritising home visitation.
 - d) Completing a HSCL Return Form in relation to Expenditure an

Health and Safety

- A fully charged mobile phone is to be taken on all visits.
- The principal, deputy principal or school's secretary will be informed of all out of school activities, meetings, home visits etc.
- The HSCL co-ordinator will return or make contact with the school before going home at the end of the day.

Monitoring and Success Criteria

Success will be evident as per the following:

- Success indicators will be teacher/ parent / community feedback.
- Greater involvement of marginalised parents in the education of their children.
- Better attendance.
- Improved communication between home and school.
- A more positive attitude towards school from families experiencing educational / socioeconomic disadvantage.

Implementation and Review

The Policy will be supported, developed and implemented under the aegis of the HSCL in consultation with the principal and teaching staff.

- It will be implemented on an ongoing basis.
- It will be necessary to review this policy regularly to ensure optimum delivery to those targeted.

- The Principal, HSCL and interested school partners will be involved in the review of this policy.