

Coláiste Pobail Acla

Polranny

Achill

Co. Mayo

School Roll Number: 76150V

**Home School**

**Community**

**Liaison**

**Service**

**(HSCL Service)**

**Development of Policy**

April, 2014: Initial Draft: Kevin Egan

May 2014: Consultation with and input from Parent Group

12/11/2014: further development of draft – Breege O’Brien & Kevin Egan

13- 14/11/14: further development of draft and finalisation for consultation process – Ms. Gallagher & Breege

14 – 18/11/14: Consultation Period – Staff & Parents

19/11/14: Finalisation of Draft to go to BOM - Breege

20/11/14: Ratified by BOM

**Issue Date of Finalised Document : Nov. 19, 2014**

**Home School Community Liaison Policy**

**Coláiste Pobail Acla**

*“We strive to motivate our school community to realise its full potential academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally in a safe, supportive learning environment.”* *- Mission Statement, Coláiste Pobail Acla*

Introduction:

It is our belief in Coláiste Pobail Acla that best practice edcucation revolves around the partnership between child, home, school and community. We believe that parents, teachers and children working together create a winning formula for all. The close co-operation between school and parent is essential for a positive working environment.

Parents are the primary educators so we at Coláiste Pobail Acla make a conscious effort to involve them as much as possible so as to maximise effective learning, good student behaviour and also help the children to obtain their full potential as worthwhile members of the community.

Rationale:

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 further the partnership links between them in order to promote positive learning experiences for the pupils of Coláiste Pobail Acla.

The Home School Community Scheme:

The Home School Community Scheme was established by the Department of Education & Science as an intervention to help combat educational disadvantage in areas where many families live in difficult financial circumstances, with low academic achievement and other adverse factors.

Children from a disadvantaged background may show signs of difficulty adjusting to school from an early age. They are likely to leave school early, with poor formal qualifications and poor employment prospects. The nature of disadvantage is deep rooted. It is likely that each generation of the family has followed the same pattern and that aspirations regarding education are low.

In view of the similar role which parents and teachers play in the education of the children in our community, Coláiste Pobail Acla recognises the importance and value of fostering and encouraging a strong link between the home and the school. In recognition of the fact that we look upon our school as an integral part of the wider community, it is our policy also, to encourage links with our community in general.

The **Home/School** Community Scheme encourages active parental involvement, in the education of their children. We strive to develop a mutual appreciation of parents’ role and teachers’ role. We will provide opportunities for parental involvement and provide training for parents, where appropriate. Our Home/School/Community/Links Policy aims to develop and maintain a positive Parent/Teacher relationship to make our school more accessible to all parents, and in general to promote the well-being of the child.

The Home/School/Community Links Policy of Coláiste Pobail Acla encourages all the partners involved in the education of our children to keep each other fully informed of all relevant developments that may occur from time to time. The working of our Home School Community Links Programme will aim to ensure that a constant flow of information exists between our school and the local community agencies (both Statutory and Voluntary).

In summary, Home/School/Community Links encourages parents, teachers and the wider community to work in a unified manner, in a spirit of co-operation, and thus ensure that the children in our community receive maximum benefits from our efforts. They deserve nothing less.

The Aims of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme:

* To maximise active participation of the students in our school in the learning process, in particiular those who might be at risk of failure.
* To promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the students.
* To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
* To enhance student uptake of education, their retention and continuation in the education system and their attitudes to life-long learning.
* To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.

Basic Principles:

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme in Coláiste Pobail Acla is based on the principle of partnership between homes, school and community. 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.

* The Scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of parents, teachers, pupils and the wider community.
* The thrust of the Scheme is preventative rather than curative.
* The focus of the Scheme is on adults whose attitudes and behaviour impinge on the lives of the children – namely parents, teachers and other agencies.
* The basis of activities in the Scheme is the identification of needs and in having these needs addressed.
* The Scheme develops teacher and staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and “Whole-School” approach.
* The Scheme promotes the fostering of independence, self-empowerment and enablement.
* Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families in Coláiste Pobail Acla (see below).
* The Scheme promotes an integrated delivery of services to students and their families experiencing difficulties, through networking and co-ordinating the work of voluntary and statutory agencies.
* The HSCL Service aims to promote community ownership of the scheme through:

1. The development of Local Committee
2. Involvement in Parent’s Association
3. Involvement in Policy formation

* Coláiste Pobail Acla sees the Home School Community Liaison Scheme as a full-time undertaking and supports the co-ordinator in his/her vital role as an agent of charge.

Achievement of Aims:

The primary purpose of the scheme is the promotion of partnership in the student’s education. Parents can frequently identify needs which are not directly concerned with the education of their children. Every effort is made to meet those critical needs as far as is practical. This can be a primary step in developing parent’s awareness of their capacities, in fostering their self-confidence and in promoting their self-empowerment.

Coláiste Pobail Acla undertakes many activities which meet parent’s needs including:

* Inviting parent’s preresentatives to be members of the Board of Management.
* Establishiing and supporting an active Parent’s Association.
* Regular home visits by the HSCL **Co-ordinator** (see below).
* Regular Parent/Teacher meetings.
* Organising talks and information sessions which help parents to assist and encourage their children in their schoolwork, homework, projects, etc.
* Organising parental courses which develop effective parenting skills and which promote positive well being for parents e.g., “Common Sense Parenting **(HSE)”** and “Time Out For Parents!”.
* Organising and facilitating programmes which encourage Parental involvement in curricular activities, e.g., “One Book-One Read!”.
* Regular communication by letter, text, email, Facebook, etc. to keep parents informed of school related matetrs eg. activities including meetings, dates of important events, school closures, etc.
* Involvement of parents in extracurricular activities as far as is practical (e.g., educational tours, sports)
* Involvement of parents in policy-making decisions

The Role of the HSCL Coordinator

* Coordiantes the HSCL Service
* Facilitates links between the school and Parents/Guardians
* Carries Out Home Visits
* Facilitates links within the school eg between teachers, with school teams, etc.
* Facilitates links between the school and the Community
* Liaises with agencies external to the school in relation to the HSCL Service
* Plays an important role in pastoral care
* Supports students with special educational needs eg. assessed needs, disability, illness, and the broad range of needs present amongst our students
* Promotes the importance of Literacy & Numeracy Education
* Develops a supportive rapport with students

Home Visitation by the HSCL Coordinator:

The role of the coordinator includes a systematic approach to home visitation. Home visitation is a purposeful outreach aspect of the HSCL Scheme for parents. It is both a symbolic and a real expression of interest in families, many of which have been alienated from the education system in the past. During the visits, the coordinator:

* supports parents in the education of their children
* seeks to establish a rapport with the parents
* offers information about the services available in the community
* endeavours to show the welcoming, hopeful and human face of the school in the context and circumstances of daily life
* seeks out potential parent leaders, who are willing to participate in the HSCL Scheme’s activities and to share their talents
* directs the parents towards relevant training
* aims at helping the parents to express their fears about approaching the school
* seeks to break down negative attitudes among parents towards schools and schooling
* sometimes, engages with students not in attendance at school

Courses and Information Evenings:

Parents frequently identify needs which are not directly concerned with their children’s education. Meeting those identified needs is a critical factor in the development of **parent** awareness of their capacities and in fostering their self-confidence. Scheme activities, which meet parents’ needs include courses and workshops on:

* Curricular areas so that parents can assist and support their children with their school work.
* Personal development through parenting and assertiveness training.
* Awareness programmes to allow parents to be more informed re. key issues
* Careers advice
* Bullying (awareness & support in this area)
* Involving parens and the wider community in Literacy & Numeracy education

Networking:

The co-ordinator will liaise with various voluntary and statutory bodies and groups within the community. They encourage a cohesive delivery of service in relation to parents, teachers, and community – all in the interest of the pupils. Just as the school is a significant resource to the community it serves, there are also many advantages for the school in drawing from the strengths of the community. The HSCL Scheme philosophy recognises that the school on its own cannot effect meaningful change, but it can, working collaboratively with other interest groups, ameliorate the effects of the problems associated with educational disadvantage. The links are very obvious in relation to the prevention of early school leaving.

The Coordinator also facilitates networking within the school, bringing school teams and individual teachers together in regard to matters related to his role.

REVIEW

This policy statement will be monitored, evaluated and reviewed at regular intervals in light of changing information, legislation, developments, in the HSCL Scheme and feedback from the relevant partners in the Scheme.

RELATED POLICIES

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

* Pastoral Care Policy
* SSE Plan
* DEIS Plan
* Supporting Transition in Our School

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request, and has been provided to the Parents’ Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date of next review: November, 2016