



St. Louise de Marillac Primary School

Parents as Partners Policy

(encompassing the Home/School/Community/Liaison Scheme)

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This policy has been formulated and reviewed in line with the requirements of our School Improvement Plan (SIP) / DEIS Action Plan. The content of the policy is informed by DES Circulars 24/91 and 53/13 as well as the publication “*Home/School/Community/Liaison – From Vision to Best Practice.*”

The principal teacher, the HSCL teacher, some class teachers and a parent group were involved in drafting the policy.

RATIONALE

Our school is a community where children, parents and teachers and school staff collaborate and work in partnership for the good of our children. The rationale behind this policy is to acknowledge the role of parents as partners in the education of their children and to further recognise the partnership that exists between schools, parents and the wider community. It enables us to define and clarify the roles of all the parties within the partnership.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHARACTERISTIC ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This policy adheres to the Catholic spirit and ethos of the school which was founded as a Junior and Senior School in 1958/59 by the Daughters of Charity. In January 2012 the two schools were amalgamated to form St. Louise de Marillac Primary School. In our school’s mission statement emphasis is placed on co-operation and teamwork and this is to be reflected in this policy. We also recognise and acknowledge parents as the primary educators of their children. When parents decide to send their child to our school they are entering a very important relationship.

“Partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate.” (Gillian Pugh, Working Towards Partnership in the Early Years).

OBJECTIVES

A high level of parental involvement is a feature of our school community and this requires a commitment from parents. The goals of the HSCL scheme are supported by the twelve basic principles outlined in “Home/ School /Community/ Liaison – From Vision to Best Practice” (p.8-15).

These principles include:

- an emphasis on the partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of parents and teachers in order to foster a spirit of inclusion for all
- a focus on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely children’s parents and their teachers
- a focus on the identification and meeting of needs
- the unification and integration of the scheme at both primary and post-primary levels
- a thrust that is preventative rather than curative.

POLICY - CONTENT

AIMS

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

This will be achieved by:

-liaising with parents, teachers and principal, School Completion Programme and the National Educational Welfare Board under Tusla, and all other agencies that may offer support;

-visiting marginalised parents in relation to supporting them with any difficulties they may have in sending their children to school;

-encouraging effective parent-teacher communication;

-organising activities for parents in the school, in some or all of the following areas: parenting skills, literacy and numeracy, helping your child with school work, healthy eating/cooking/baking, yoga/fitness, drugs awareness course, first aid etc.

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

This will be achieved by the H/S/CL co-ordinator with the support of other school staff:

-attending community agency meetings in order 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;

-organising adult education courses for parents and linking parents to training/education opportunities in their community;

-organising parents' representation on the School Completion Management Committee and Local Committee;

-providing and maintaining a Parents' Room;

-organising for parents to help in the organisation and running of school-related and parish events such as First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Graduation, School Concert, talks for parents of incoming Junior Infants and Early Start pupils as well as helping in the organisation of fundraising activities run by the school;

-liaising with the Parents Association wishing to run fund-raising activities/events for the school;

3. To raise awareness in parents of how crucial a role they play in their child's education/how much they can do to help in their child's education

This will be achieved by:

-conversations with parents on home visits/in parents' room;

-provision of adult education courses for parents;

-organisation of activities which allow parents to participate in their child's education within the school;

-organisation of discussion groups on particular topics/subjects as they arise throughout the year;

-organisation of discussion groups on particular topics as they arise throughout the year (e.g. Policy Formation, Local Committee, etc)

-respect for the professional role of the teacher and the statutory responsibilities of the Principal, Patron and the Board of Management is always an important consideration

-recognition that parents as a group have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of opportunities for parents and school to work together:

- meetings in school: introductory meetings for new pupils, beginning of year meetings for class levels, one to one parent-teacher meetings, SSP meetings for relevant pupils, second/sixth class meetings around sacramental preparation, all parents invited to specific meetings during the year for various issues such as cyberbullying, head-lice treatment strategies, faith blessing for new pupils in September.
- curriculum areas: as well as consulting on policy, book-lending in junior and senior infants, parent involvement days in Early Start.
- parent groups to work/consult on relevant policy formation: e.g. Code of Behaviour, Homework Policy, SPHE/RSE Policy, Special Needs Policy, Healthy Eating;
- Parents have opportunity to serve on school bodies (Board of Management, Parents Association, sub-committees for specific purposes/events).
- Parents can work in conjunction with the teachers in a planned and co-ordinated way. For example, they could help with library and shared reading book exchange, assist at art times, work with the children at various curricular activities and lend a welcome hand in many other areas, which can be identified with the teacher.
- Ongoing projects over a number of weeks may enhance and enrich the work the children are involved with in the classroom: parents are encouraged to discuss any ideas they may have with the teacher.
- Parents can help with outings, activities, tours and trips, organising the school library, organisation of art and P.E. resources, and they may also like to make costumes for school concerts.
- Parents are welcome to help out with organisation and running of social events, various annual events and fundraising events.

HOW PARENTS CAN GET INVOLVED

- respond to letter sent home by H/S/C/L co-ordinator every September asking for volunteers to help out in school, to attend parents courses, and offering opportunities for parents to give ideas on how they think they could become involved;
- respond to letters sent home by H/S/C/L co-ordinator about individual activities as they are being planned;
- consult with H/S/C/L co-ordinator by phone or in the Parents' Room;
- consult with other teachers/let other teachers know they are interested in becoming involved;
- Parents are invited to consider their skills, interests and time available, and communicate this information to the HSCL co-ordinator, the class teacher, the principal and/or to the Parents Association.
- Parents can consult with the class teacher about hobbies, skills or interests they can share with the class bearing in mind that needs of class may change from year to year.
- Parents can respond to end of year review conducted by HSCL co-ordinator.

(Please note that an appendix to this document contains guidelines for parents in the classroom and a confidentiality form. Parents must be Garda vetted if partaking in particular activities in the classroom over a number of weeks.)

4. To keep children in the Education System from primary through to third level education

This will be done in the main by the HSCL coordinator and will be achieved by:

- liaising with SCP (School Completion Programme) and Caritas College to organise and facilitate transfer programmes to secondary school;
- inviting parents to annual talk given by the NPC (National Parents Council) on transitions from primary to post-primary school;
- liaising with principals and H/S/C/L co-ordinator from Mary Queen of Angels schools for the transition of first class boys to second class.
- liaising with other schools regarding students transferring mid-year;
- providing support for parents whose children are experiencing academic and/or social/behavioural difficulties;
- meeting regularly with H/S/C/L co-ordinators from other schools, primary and post-primary;
- regular meetings with the E.W.O. (Education Welfare Officer) and the Care Team in order to ensure that the most vulnerable children are monitored and supported;

-liaising with parents to inform them of in-school supports that are available that may enhance their child's participation in school and ability to achieve their potential (e.g. homework clubs, after-school sports clubs, therapies, etc);

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 for parents in our school;

-promoting life-long learning outside the school, with opportunities for courses/classes for adults in local centres such as Kylemore College, the Civic Centre, Ballyfermot College of Further Education, Ballyfermot Library being advertised in the school.

6. To raise awareness in the school and in the wider community of the benefits of parental involvement in education

There are a number of benefits to parental involvement in the school community including:

- Children benefit from greater diversity in the classroom.
- Children profit from more one-to-one attention.
- Parental skills may support and complement work already taking place.
- Parental involvement actively supports and encourages the child's learning.
- A wide range of activity is facilitated. This can be interesting and fun, and can lead to a broader and more holistic education
- It promotes 'good parent/teacher relationships and a better level of understanding between home and school' (National Parents' Council).
- It enhances communication, trust and respect between parents and teachers.
- Parents can learn about the curriculum.
- Parental involvement allows children to see that school is an extension of home and therefore fosters the idea of the 'school family.'
- Parental skills can contribute to the smooth running and development of the school.
- Parental involvement provides the opportunity of making lifelong friends.

We will continue to encourage parents to become involved by:

-notices on notice-boards in Parents' Room and around the school promoting parents' involvement in school and in education;

-articles in school newsletters/school website highlighting parental involvement in the school.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Trustees and Board of Management (BoM)

- Provision of and maintaining of Parents' Room
- Overall management of school
- Ratification of all policies.

Staff

- Acceptance and acknowledgement of the role of parents as partners in the education of their children
- Acceptance and support of H/S/C/L scheme and parental involvement in the DEIS 3 year plan
- Encouragement of various activities organised to involve parents in the life of the school (reminding children to remind parents about upcoming activities, discussing with the children opportunities for parents to get involved)
- Adopting an attitude to parents that encourages open communication
- Help in the formation of policies in collaboration with parents
- Implementation of policies.

Parents

- help in the formation of policies
- support of policies
- participation in the activities organised within the H/S/C/L scheme or otherwise within the school which allow for parental involvement
- set a positive example for their children by encouraging good school attendance, wearing the school uniform, paying for school books, helping with and ensuring completion of homework and co-operating with school staff.

Pupils

- participation in the activities organised within the H/S/C/L scheme or otherwise within the school that allow for student/parent involvement.

School Completion Programme

- open communication between SCP staff and H/S/C/L co-ordinator/other relevant staff members around parents/families who are interested in becoming involved in the life of the school or who could benefit from the services offered through the H/S/C/L scheme.

Community

- provision of necessary support for families from within the school community
- communication with H/S/C/L co-ordinator / other relevant staff members around families engaged with community supports from agencies such as FamiliBase, Barnardos, HSE, The Base, the Equine Centre, Ballyfermot Library, St. Ultan's After School Care.

CONSULTATION

A draft of the policy was brought for consultation with school staff in May 2020. The policy will be brought to the Board of Management for discussion and ratification in June 2020.

St. Louise de Marillac Primary School has an agreed systematic cycle of review of policies whereby new policies are reviewed after one year and subsequently every three years. In line with this, the policy will be reviewed in the academic year 2022/23.

Signed: *Dr. Gerry Berry*
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: 23/6/2020

Appendix

Guidelines for Getting Involved in Classroom Activities

- Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of the class teacher by prior arrangement and for an agreed purpose.
- The happiness, welfare and safety of our children are our primary concern. A child's personal history and academic achievements are strictly confidential. Any doubts about issues of confidentiality must be discussed with the teacher.
- Respect for the teachers in their professional capacity is essential.
- Discipline remains the responsibility of the teacher.
- All work will be supervised by the teacher.
- Parents who participate should be conscious of and sensitive to the needs of the entire class, not just the needs of their own child.
- Parents coming into the classroom must consult with the teacher before inviting other parents/individuals to participate.
- In the interests of safety, toddlers and younger children cannot be accommodated during a classroom activity.
- The highest standard of behaviour and language is expected.
- Punctuality and consistency are crucial.
- No fees are payable. Any expenses that you may wish to reclaim (e.g. for materials used by the children) must be sanctioned in advance by the teacher, and must be accompanied by receipts.
- In the case of an ongoing project that takes place over a number of weeks, parents will meet with the teacher to discuss the activity. It remains the responsibility of the teacher to determine its appropriateness (e.g. is it suitable for the age group, has something similar already been done etc.). The teacher has the final say in the event that he/she feels it is falling short of its original aims and objectives.
- The Catholic school ethos must be upheld at all times and it is important to keep in mind that the work of the school is child centred. Consequently, respect for all the partners in education - children, teachers and parents - must be upheld at all times.
- Parents will be asked to sign an agreement (below) to abide by the school policy on Parental Involvement in the school.

St. Louise de Marillac School Parental Involvement Agreement Form

I have read the policy document on Parental Involvement in the School and agree to abide by the guidelines.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____