



# CARLOW VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

KILKENNY ROAD  
CARLOW

## Home School Community Liaison Policy

### Scope

This policy applies to the students, parents / guardians and staff of Carlow Vocational School.

### Relationship to School's Mission / Vision / Aims

This policy works within the mission statement of Carlow Vocational School and is directly linked to its aim to treat every person equally and to help all students to achieve their full potential at the school. The school's mission statement states:

*Administration, staff and parents at Carlow Vocational School seek to promote a secure and caring community environment and a well-balanced curriculum, which is student centred, with parents recognised as the first educators and teachers as facilitators of the learning process. In partnership, we hope to provide an atmosphere, which encourages respect, responsibility and commitment, drawing forth the positive potential of each individual, thus equipping all students to take their place in life and work in the future.*

### Rationale

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme is an integral part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative in Carlow Vocational School and is a targeted intervention aimed at addressing educational disadvantage within the school.

### Goals

- 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 students.
- 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 life long attitudes to learning.
- To develop a caring, open environment where information and guidance are provided and shared among the whole school community.

## **Policy Content**

The Home School Community Liaison Policy includes:

1. Introduction
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Principles
4. The work of Home School Community Liaison scheme
5. Success Criteria

### **1. Introduction**

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

This purpose is pursued by identifying and responding to parent / guardian needs and by creating a greater awareness in teachers of the complimentary skills of parents in their children's education.

The Home School Community Liaison 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.

### **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

School Staff

- Be aware of the positive effects of the parent / guardian - teacher partnership.
- Keep parents informed of the students progress, programmes and other school related issues.
- Be aware of the importance of providing positive and constructive feedback to parents / guardians with regard to all areas of the school life of their children.
- Enable parents / guardians to actively participate in their child's education through informal meetings, encouraging contact, listening to suggestions and making relevant changes where possible and as appropriate.
- Work closely, and provide regular feedback, to the co-ordinator as a support for the student's home.

## Parents / Guardians

- Maintain an active interest and involvement in the school's activities of their children.
- Actively communicate with the school on relevant educational issues and activities of their children.
- Make their talents, expertise and skills available to the school where appropriate.
- Access parent / guardian courses, information evenings and adult education as appropriate.
- Keep the HSCL co-ordinator up to date with local developments and information which might be of interest

## Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Co-ordinator

- Encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents / guardians 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 / 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.
- Establish structures to identify the needs of parents / guardians.
- Work with parents / guardians 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 / guardians to become involved in their child's education.
  - Bring information about the school and about 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.
- Monitor the effectiveness of interventions, which have been put in place.
- Facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents / guardians.
- 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.
- Establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents / guardians in their child's learning in school and in the home in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting, etc.
- Liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
- 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 seek to address these issues, by working collaboratively with parents / guardians, students, voluntary and statutory agencies.
- Plan, monitor and evaluate HSCL interventions and programmes.

## Principal / Deputy Principal

- Encourage both parents / guardians and staff to participate and support all activities and ideas in developing a whole school approach to the Home School Community Liaison scheme.
- Support the HSCL co-ordinator in the activities of the HSCL scheme.

### **3. Principles**

The principles of the Home School Community Liaison policy are:

- The scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of home and school, of parents / guardians and teachers.
- The scheme is unified and integrated at both primary and secondary levels.
- The approach of the Home School Community Liaison scheme is preventative rather than curative.
- 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.
- The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having those needs met.
- The Home School Community Liaison scheme develops teacher and school staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and the whole-school approach.
- The Home School Community Liaison scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence.
- Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.
- Networking with and promoting the co-ordination 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.
- The Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator is an agent of change.

### **4. The work of Home School Community Liaison scheme**

Home Visitation:

- 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.
- 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.
- The HSCL co-ordinator aims to be friendly and non-judgemental in their approach while carrying out home visits.
- It is important for the co-ordinator to show a willingness to listen and to stay as long as is necessary.
- During the visits, the HSCL co-ordinator gives information and establishes a rapport with the parents.
- 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.

- Referrals for home visits will come from the principal, teachers, pastoral care teams and parents / guardians.
- Teachers who express concerns and would like a home visit to a particular family, may refer to the HSCL co-ordinator.

#### Classes/ Courses:

- A needs analysis meeting with a focus group of parents / guardians is held at the beginning of each school year.
- At these meetings discussions and suggestions are given by the parents / guardians of courses they would most like to participate in.
- Parents / guardians can frequently identify both direct and indirect needs concerning their children's education. These courses will allow parents / guardians to improve their life skills, to foster their self-confidence and should also develop the parents' / guardians' awareness of their capacities as educators.
- Scheme activities, which meet the parents' / guardians' needs include classes and courses -
  - Personal development courses such as parenting courses, assertiveness courses, etc.
  - Leisure activities
  - Educational courses such as basic literacy
- Once the needs have been identified, it is the co-ordinator's role to organise a specific course.
  - In organising the course, the co-ordinator will have a number of issues to consider, i.e.: time, venue, availability of a tutor, funding, resources needed and suitability of the course for the parents.
- Essential duties of the co-ordinator include: setting up the venue, organising refreshments, purchasing resources, inviting and contacting parents by text, phone call or letter.
- Networking with local community agencies.

#### 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.
  - The schools in the family cluster are: Carlow Vocational School, Carlow Educate Together, Muine Bheag Vocational School.
  - The local cluster consists of DEIS schools in Carlow, Kildare and Laois.

#### Other Duties:

- Regular communication with the principal and school staff.
- To develop links with feeder primary schools.
- To liaise with the SCP Project workers.
- Information meeting for in-coming parents / guardians each May.
- HSCL co-ordinator prepares 'Welcome Pack' for new entrants.
- HSCL co-ordinator meets families of all incoming students in May to deliver information packs to parents / guardians.
- Drawing on expertise of the local community to provide training for our parents / guardians and co-operating with them to maximise the effectiveness of services available.

## Health and Safety:

The health and safety guidelines for all HSCL activities are those of Carlow Vocational School. In addition to those, the following guidelines will be adhered to by the HSCL Co-ordinator:

- A fully charged mobile phone is to be taken on all visits.
- Special notebooks are to be left in the principal/s office/s of both schools in which the HSCL co-ordinator will document on a daily basis all out of school journeys.
- The HSCL co-ordinator will return or make contact with the school/s before going home at the end of each day.
- It will be the responsibility of the HSCL co-ordinator to strictly adhere to these guidelines

## Success Criteria

Success indicators will be

- Teacher / parent / guardian / community feedback,
- Greater involvement of marginalized parents / guardians in the education of their children,
- Improved communication between home and school,
- A more positive attitude towards the school from those at risk families,
- Better attendance.

## Timeframe

This policy was reviewed in April 2015.

Modifications were made and ratified by Board of Management May 2015.

Published and circulated May 2015.

The above Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Carlow Vocational School at a meeting

In: \_\_\_\_\_ (venue)    On: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Secretary, Board of Management)

## References

- The Home, School, community Liaison Scheme in Ireland. From Vision to Best Practice. Department of Education and Science. Written by HSCL Coordinators 2005-2006.
- DES Circular 0058/2013: Home, School, Community Liaison Scheme.