



St. Peter Apostle Junior National School

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Home-School Policy

Policy Summary Details

Policy Title:	Assessment Policy
Written/Reviewed:	October 2020



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Introduction

St. Peter Apostle Junior School is a DEIS (Band 1) junior primary school catering for classes ranging from Junior Infants to Second class. We also have four Early Start classes, as well as three classes for children with autism spectrum order. Our staff is made up of 27 full-time teachers who endeavour to welcome all children, regardless of their medical and/or special educational needs. We pride ourselves on seeking to ensure that all children in our care have equality of opportunity to derive positive outcomes from their educational experience. In doing so, we endeavour to create an inclusive learning environment that caters for the diverse needs of all different types of learners.

1. Vision and mission statement

We in St. Peter Apostle Junior school believe in the potential of each child. As a staff we seek to ensure that all children in our care have equality of opportunity to derive positive outcomes from their educational experience. In doing so, we endeavour to create a safe, happy, respectful, and inclusive learning environment, where the diverse needs of all different types of learners are catered for. It is envisioned that by providing an all-inclusive approach to education that the children in our school shall reach their academic potential whilst developing the confidence and courage to be fair, kind, moral, tolerant and respectful when acting in the world.

We strive to realise vision by seeking to:

- Craft a caring, supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment in which children's social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development is catered for,
- Develop children's interests, talents and hobbies by providing a wide range of learning experiences,
- Harness the collective talents of all staff to ensure that all children, irrespective of their medical status and/or special educational needs feel cherished and thrive in in dynamic educational settings,
- Provide tailored learning experiences for children who present with special educational needs (gifted or otherwise) by meeting children where they are at and building upon their strengths,
- Collaborate with colleagues and outside agencies to ensure focused and effective supports are in place to advance the social, emotional, and cognitive development of all the children in our care,
- Build strong and collaborative relationships with parents with a view to fine tuning and augmenting the supports that children receive in both the home and school,
- Promote a culture of inclusivity by ensuring that children across the school settings integrate as appropriate during tuition time, yard breaks and school events,
- Create an environment where all have freedom and opportunity to reach their full potential.



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2. Rationale for a Home-School policy

In 1997 the Department of Education advocated for home-school partnerships as one of the most effective ways of combating impediments to education arising from social and/or economic disadvantage. The Home-School-Community-Liaison (HSCL) Scheme is an integral part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative in St. Peter Apostle Junior National School. As such, our HSCL officer's work is aimed at deriving positive outcomes for the children in our school by focusing on the salient adults in their lives, their parents.

2.1 The relationship between our Home-school policy and the schools' Mission Statement

Our Home-School policy reflects and supports the overall aims of Mission statement by enabling us to:

- To maximize the active participation of pupils in the learning process, particularly those who may face impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent them from deriving appropriate benefit from education
- To promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the pupils.
- To raise awareness of and harness the parents/guardians' own capacities to enhance their children's education process and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
- To enhance the pupils' participation and retention in the educational system,
- Develop positive attitudes toward life-long learning
- To develop a caring, open environment where information and guidance are provided and shared among the whole school community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Role of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator

- To encourage, support and facilitate partnership between parents / guardians and teachers in the education of their children
- To establish structures to identify the needs of parents/guardians.
- To work with parents / guardians to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and, also, to the wider school community.
- To visit the homes of pupils 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.
- To 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.
- To monitor the effectiveness of interventions, which have been put in place.
- To facilitate the provision of leisure, curricular, parenting and personal development programmes for parents / guardians.
- To work with the Educational Welfare Service and the School Completion Programme (SCP) in a unified way, to address issues, which affect attendance, participation and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.



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- To establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents /guardians in their child's learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting, etc.
- To liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
- To plan, monitor and evaluate parental involvement in accordance with the school's DEIS plans

3.2 The Role of Principal / Deputy Principal

- To encourage 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.
- Strive to initiate and sustain positive relations with parents and caregivers
- To support the HCSL coordinator in the activities of the HSCL scheme.

3.3 The Role of Teachers

- Make initial contact with parents and then bring concerns to the HSCL
- Strive to make parents welcome
- Strive to strike up collaborative relationships
- Support HSCL in delivering parental involvement activities
- Discretion/confidentiality
- Facilitate parental involvement activities where possible

4. Theoretical concepts underpinning the work of our HSCL

Partnership and collaboration of the complimentary skills of parents and teachers.

- Parents are encouraged by the HSCL to attend parent teacher meetings.
- Relevant information is filtered by the HSCL between home and school and visa versa.
- Parents are consulted on policy formation
- Parent Association
- Parent members of the Board of Management.

The work of the HSCL is integrated and unified at both primary and post primary level.

- The HSCL works closely with her colleagues in the post primary schools and also with the other primary schools in the area.
- The HSCL and other local HSCLs meet regularly
- Resources are pooled where possible e.g. organising courses for parents.
- Transfer supports are provided by HSCLs

The trust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative.

- Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families and the early detection of families who may need supports
- Parents are encouraged to keep in contact with class teachers, learning support teachers and principal and are welcomed in a friendly manner to the school

The focus of the scheme is on the significant adults in the child's life i.e., Guardians, Parents and teachers.

- The HSCL liaises with parents mainly through home visits, calls and emails
- The HSCL will support parents (as best he/she can) who may need assistance



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- The HSCL will focus on harnessing and enhancing the interests and talents of parents by organising classes and courses.
- By focusing on the adults in children's lives, it is envisioned that indirect gains will be garnered by their children

The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having these met.

- Needs are identified through informal contact, observation and or questionnaire. These needs divide into the following categories:
 - ✓ **Leisure** – A non-threatening starting point for marginalised parents.
 - ✓ **Curricular** – To enable parents to become closer to their children's learning.
 - ✓ **Self-development** – Harness parent's capacity to support and become a resource to their child, to the HSCL and teachers. Eg. Maths for Fun, Literacy packs, concerts.
- These areas give parents skills that further enhance their own self-esteem, thus having a more positive effect on their children's learning

The scheme develops teacher and staff attitudes to partnership and the whole school approach.

- Parents and teachers working together on varied projects e.g. Maths for Fun, story sacks, fundraisers etc.
- Parents and teachers working together on support files, assessment documents etc.

The scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence

- Through involvement in scheme activities (such as Incredible Years, Parents Plus parenting courses), self-esteem is enhanced, new skills are acquired, thus enabling them to take a more active and responsible role in their children's education.
- Parents are referred to community agencies where they can access supports.

Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.

- In September /October the main focus of visits will be to parents of Junior Infants.
- Efforts will be made to make contact with all parents on the priority list
- The HSCL will conduct home visits where and when needed
- It is through these visits that barriers are broken down and trust and confidence begin.

Networking with and promoting the coordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies in the community, as a step towards the integrated delivery of service to marginalized families.

- The co-ordinator liaises with groups such as, Schools Completion Programme, Barnardos, Blue Skies and community groups such as Family Resource Centre, Dóchas, Cumas etc.

5. The principles of the HSCL scheme in action

While no means limited to the following four areas, the tangible work of the HSCL informed by the principles discussed in section 4, can be conceptualised as:

- Home Visitation
- Classes and courses
- Cluster Meetings
- Liaising

Each of these areas are discussed in detail in Table 1.1



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Home Visitations

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

Through home visits the coordinator endeavours to extend the welcoming and friendly face of the school in the context and circumstances of daily life.

The HSCL coordinator aims to be friendly and non-judgemental in his/her approach while carrying out home visits.

It is important for the coordinator to show a willingness to listen and to stay as long as is necessary.

During the visits, the HSCL coordinator gives information and establishes a rapport with the parents.

The HSCL coordinator 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 family, may refer to the HSCL coordinator.

Home visits will not be made in the case of issues relating to student discipline or where the personal safety of the HSCL is deemed to be at risk.

Classes and courses

- A Survey is conducted regularly to assess parents' interest in courses, suggestion box at Lorraine's office
- Needs are identified through contact with parents.
- 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 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
 - ✓ See Appendix 1 for examples of activities designed to encourage parental involvement in the school
- Once the needs have been identified, it is the coordinators' role to organise a specific course.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In organising the course, the coordinator will need to consider time, venue, availability of a tutor, funding, resources needed and suitability of the course for the parents. • Essential duties of the coordinator include setting up the venue, organising refreshments, purchasing resources, inviting and contacting parents by text, phone call or letter and role of course facilitator where appropriate. • Designing Posters and advertising courses. • Networking with local community agencies.
<p>Cluster Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HSCL scheme arranges local and family cluster meetings • These meetings help coordinators to share information regarding shared families, share resources, organise common courses for parents and to prepare transfer programmes. • The schools in the family cluster are St. Peter Apostle Junior and Senior Schools, St. Mary's Junior and Senior School Rowlagh, Collinstown Park Community College • The local cluster schools are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ St. Bernadette's Junior and Senior School Quarryvale ✓ St. Kevin's Community College ✓ Our Lady Queen of Angels, Clonburris ✓ Deansrath Community College ✓ St. Ronan's National School, Deansrath ✓ Nano Nagle, Bawnogue ✓ Scoil Talbot, Bawnogue ✓ Lucan East Education Together National School ✓ Esker Educate Together National School
<p>Liaising</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication with the principal and school staff. • Liaising and collaborating with SCP Project workers. • Participation in information meeting for in-coming parents/ guardians each year. • Assisting and supporting Parents at Parent Teacher meetings and following up non-attendees. • 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. • Maintaining and updating the HSCL notice boards and social media

Table 1.1



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Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Date:

Vivion Powney (Chairperson of the BOM)

Date:

Laura Hannon (Principal)



Appendix 1

Examples of the activities organised by the HSCL to encourage parental participation in St. Peter Apostle Junior School

- Adult education courses.
- Parent association.
- Parent –teacher meetings.
- Class meetings.
- Induction /welcome mornings for new pupils and their parents.
- Promotion of literacy e.g. modelling of storytelling technique, Story sacks, CLOVER Literacy packs, Halloween and Easter trails, Participation in Schools Completion Programme.
- Transfer support for pupils moving to the senior school and to post primary.
- Networking with local agencies. Involvement of parents in policy formation. Parents' participation in programmes such as Peace Proms, Maths for Fun, Parents Plus, Parent and child cookery, Parent and child Lego. Home Visits. HSCL cluster meetings. Inputs on HSCL at staff meetings and BOM meetings. Informal get together e.g. fund raising coffee mornings.