

Parental Involvement Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was drafted as a collaborative exercise between Board of Management, staff and parents. A policy group was established in May 2012. We are formulating a draft for consideration and comment by other partners and the draft will be presented to the Board of Management for ratification. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. The Board of management, teachers and Parent Association are responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Rationale

It is necessary to have a Parental Involvement Policy because:

- Parental involvement benefits pupil learning
- It promotes partnership between parents, teachers and the Board of Management, which is vital to the health of the school community.
- Education Act 1998; Education Welfare Act 2000.
- School Self Evaluation
- It provides ‘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.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Inspired by the Vision of Catherine McAuley, Holy Family Senior School, through a holistic approach, aspires to achieve the full potential of each student, with particular concern for those who are disadvantaged or marginalized.

Holy Family Senior School seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

Aims

- *Helping parents to develop a positive role in complementing and supporting the work of the school in educating their children.*
- *To build a school community committed to supporting all its pupils*
- *To establish procedures for the sharing of information in relation to pupil progress and attainment*
- *To enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents*

Guidelines (content of policy)

These guidelines address parental involvement in the following areas

1. Parent Association
2. Board of Management
3. Vision / Mission and Aims
4. Organisational policies and curriculum plans
5. Communication
6. Home School Community Liaison Teacher, Rural Co-ordinator, Education Welfare Officer
7. Guest speakers

1. Parent Association

The Parent Association is the structure through which parents/guardians in the school can work together for the best possible education for their children. Holy Family Schools have a very strong Parent Association who meet regularly (about every six weeks). All parents and guardians are welcome to attend these meetings. The A.G.M. is held each September/October, and the Association is affiliated to the National Parents Council. The Parent Association also communicates regularly with the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL).

The Parent Association are involved in organising fundraising with the teachers of Senior School, distributing Christmas cards and gifts and Easter Eggs to all the children, giving out ice cream to all the children and raising money for Downs Syndrome Ireland, decorating the Cafeteria on Holy Communion Day and providing refreshments for parents and family afterwards, and giving out a goody bag to all the children concerned, helping out on sports day by providing supervision and refreshments to the children, assisting the book sale each year, providing refreshments in the cafeteria on graduation night for the 6th class children and their families, producing a school calendar, and helping out at other events from time to time.

2. Board of Management

Section 15 of the Education Act 1998 states that (1) It shall be duty of the board to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

The Board of Management meets, on average, every six weeks during the school year (September to June) or as required. The Board is comprised of 2 direct nominees of the Patron; 1 Teachers Nominees; 2 Parent Nominees and 2 Community Nominees.

The following persons have been appointed to the Board of Management: Carmel Honan (Chairperson); Tony Barrett (Treasurer); Sarah Barnes (Principal); Sean O Neill (Staff Nominee); Paddy Keane; (Patron Nominee) Mary Cashin;(Parents nominee) Fintan Meaney (Parents nominee) and Fr. Ger Fitzgerald (Patrons Nominee)

BOM members are not delegates for their electorates. They have no obligation to report back to their electors or to take instruction from them on how to vote at Board Meetings as this would be a breach of confidentiality 8(a) constitution. . The BOM

decide on what may be reported and an agreed report is sent to the parent's room from viewing after each meeting.

3. Vision / Mission and Aims

Our vision is based on the work of Catherine McCauley which centres on the child and an inclusive environment. As such Parents/Guardians are partners in all aspects of school life and are facilitated to engage in policy making, classroom activities, extra curricular activities and any community events. We have a dedicated, welcoming Parents' Room in the Senior School which can be used by parents of the Senior and junior schools to attend courses, coffee mornings, information days or just as a drop in centre. A variety of courses are offered in conjunction with Clare Family Learning Network, these vary term to term and are widely advertised through Newsletters, websites and posters around the school.

4. Organisational Policies

We establish a committee including parents where necessary. All policies are put in draft format for parental consultation which can be viewed through our website. Parents can discuss any issues that arise with the draft policy directly with the principal. Draft policies are also discussed in Parents' Association meetings where a teacher representative from the schools is always present.

Our parents have a role and responsibility in relation to the following policies and procedures:

- Administration of Medicine
- Anti-Bullying
- Attendance
- Book Fairs
- Child Protection
- Code of Behaviour
- Environmental Awareness
- Excursions
- Homework
- Learning Support and Special Needs
- Lunches
- Mobile Phones
- Parent Teacher Meetings
- Sports Day
- Substance Use
- Uniform
- Cafeteria and playground

5. Curriculum Plans

- Class teachers in collaboration with Resource and Learning support teachers; produce a guide for parents annually. This includes information on curriculum planning and how parents can support their child in accessing the curriculum. Year groups can also hold information evenings where they can disseminate information regarding curricular and school related issues.
- Parents are canvassed annually regarding their skills and strengths. A list is kept of skills and volunteers which are used when required.
- Parents of children with Special Educational Needs as defined by departmental circulars are involved in the process of developing and implementing an Individual Education Plan for their child. There is an initial consultation meeting in September to discuss the child's strengths and needs and to establish the focus for the year. Class teacher, Resource Teacher, SNA (where necessary) and parents are invited to attend this meeting. If required a multi-disciplinary meeting including outside agencies can be convened. Parents are given a copy of the targets set after this discussion. A review meeting is held in February and again in June to discuss progress and to isolate new focus if required

Parents of children in receipt of Learning Support are updated through informal meetings with the class teacher, by formal meetings with L.S. teacher when necessary and through the annual Parent Teacher meetings which are held in February each year. They will receive a School Report each June which will show progress.

6. Communication

- **Parent Teacher Meetings:**

These are held every February over two days. Parents are given an option of an afternoon or an evening meeting. Dates are set by the staff and management but any parent who is unable to attend will be facilitated at a convenient date.
- **School Report:**

There is a yearly school report which is generated through 'Aladdin'. This is disseminated to parents through the post in accordance with departmental guidelines. Every school report is read and signed by the Principal. Reports are written in collaboration between class and resource teachers.
- **Newsletter:** Regular newsletters (usually two per term) or school website updates will be issued from each school giving general information on school activities, parent classes/courses and upcoming events.
- **Notes Home:**

Notes are sent home through the homework journal or in the children's school bags, unless they are of a serious nature when they are sent by post.
- **Homework Journal:**

Homework policy requires that parents monitor and sign their children's homework journal daily. The homework journal is also used as a means of communication between home and school. Teachers inform parents of any issues as they arise and parents are able to comment or raise an issue to the teacher through the journal.
- **Parent/guardian requested meeting:**

Parents are aware that they should contact the office to arrange a time to meet any member of staff. They are informed of this through the homework journal and enrolment policy. Informal meetings of a short duration occur at the beginning and end of days at the school door.
- **Teacher requested meetings:** Procedure in relation to these meetings - letter of notification outlining purpose, time, etc. Procedure for recording decisions agreed. Arrangement for supervision of class if meeting takes place during school time, etc.
- **Open Days:**

The Schools hold an open day for prospective parents in May/June each year. People are notified of this through the Parish Newsletter and Local Newspapers.
- **Notice Board:** Information notice boards are located near the reception and in the Parents room. Parents will be notified regularly using these notice boards of activities, parent classes/courses and upcoming events.
- **Written Communication from parents/guardians:**

Comments from parents can be given to the class teacher through the homework journal.
- **Fundraising:**

The Parents Association undertake fundraising activities for their own association and for the school communities. This is done in collaboration with school management.

7. Home School Community Liaison.

As part of a dedicated HSCL team parents are encouraged to become involved in organised classroom activities with the supervision of HSCL and class teacher. These activities include: Maths for Fun in 2nd class, Science for Fun in 5th class, making Christmas decorations with all classes, music and art events, sporting events, the development of a school garden, class trips where necessary, extra –curricular activities which are held in the school (e.g. pottery classes for children) refer to APPENDIX 1

The HSCL teacher is also responsible for facilitating educational opportunities for parents. In conjunction with The Clare Family Learning Network the following courses have been offered to parents on a regular basis:

- English Language classes for parents.
- Cooking on a budget and for a family
- Craft and sewing classes.
- Helping your children with Reading, Maths and Irish.
- Basic Irish for beginners.
- Story bags to help early reading.
- Computers for Beginners
- Family Health.

The HSCL teacher will also support parents to access adult education classes in the Adult Education Centre.

8. Guest speakers

Guest speakers, including parents and grandparents who have skills and knowledge to share, may be invited to classrooms with the sanction of the Board of Management. As with all visitors to the school Guest Speakers are expected to sign in and sign out at reception. They will be accompanied by a teacher during their time in school.

Implementation Date

The policy will be implemented from May 2013

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Ratification & Communication

Ratification

This policy was ratified by The Board of Management of Holy Family Senior School at its meeting on the **10th April 2013**

Communication

This policy will be available through hard copy in the foyer of the Senior School and the school website.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for parental involvement in classroom activities.

- Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of the HSCL co-ordinator, by **prior arrangement** and for an agreed purpose. A volunteer form must be signed for child protection purposes.
- The happiness, welfare and safety of the children are our primary concern. A child's personal history and academic achievements are **strictly confidential**: it is important the parent does not discuss their thoughts on how a pupil might be doing [academically/behaviourally/socially/emotionally] with any party. (Uncertainties in this area should be discussed with the class teacher or principal only.)
- **Respect** for the teachers in their professional capacity is **essential**.
- Discipline/behaviour remains the responsibility of the teacher.
- All work will be supervised by the teacher and/HSCL co-ordinator.
- 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 HSCL co-ordinator 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 adult behaviour and language is expected.
- Punctuality and consistency are crucial.
- **No fees are payable**. Any previously agreed expenses that a parent wishes to reclaim must be sanctioned in advance by the Board of Management, 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 and/or HSCL co-ordinator to discuss the activity. It remains the responsibility of the teacher and HSCL co-ordinator 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 an activity is falling short of its original aims and objectives.
- The school ethos must be upheld at all times and it is important to keep in mind that the school is multi-denominational, co-educational, child centred and democratic. Consequently, respect for all the partners in education – children, teachers and parents – **must be upheld at all times**.