

Holy Family Senior School

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Draft Revised Parental Involvement Policy

Holy Family Senior School

■ Title

Revised Parental Involvement Policy

■ Introductory Statement

Holy Family Senior School is a community where pupils, parents and teachers collaborate and work in partnership for our 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*.

■ Rationale

It is necessary to revise the policy on parental involvement at this time to ensure that there is an agreed understanding of the role of all the partners in the education of the pupils of Holy Family Senior School. This policy has been drawn up cognisant of the following:

- Parental involvement benefits pupils' learning
- Partnership between parents, teachers and members of the Board of Management is vital for the wellbeing of the whole school community
- Parental Involvement provides the opportunity for making lifelong friends
- School Self Evaluation
- Education Act 1998 and Education Welfare Act 2000

■ 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 child, with particular concern for those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

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

■ Aims

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are:

- *To foster a school community committed to supporting all its pupils*
- *To enrich and extend the educational opportunities for the pupils by involving the parents wherever possible*
- *To establish procedures for the sharing of information between home and school*
- *To ensure that our school is an open and welcoming place for parents*
- *To enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for pupils by accessing the skills and talents of parents*
- *To develop 'good parent/teacher relationships and a better level of understanding between home and school' as advocated by the National Parents' Council*
- *To enhance communication, trust and respect between parents and teachers*
- *To encourage parents to have a positive role in complementing and supporting the work of the school in educating their children*

■ Guidelines (content of policy)

These guidelines address parental involvement in the following areas:

- Parents' Association
- Board of Management
- A shared Vision for our school
- Meaningful involvement in devising school policy
- Communication
- Courses for parents
- Guest Speakers
- Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator, Education Welfare Officer and other relevant personnel

(a) Parents' Association

The Parents' Association is the structure through which parents/guardians can become actively involved in the school life of their children. Holy Family Junior School and Holy Family Senior School enjoy the involvement of a very active joint

Parents' Association. (It is the policy of both schools that it is more effective to have one joint shared Parents' Association). The Parents' Association meet regularly (approximately every six weeks) in the shared Parents' Room which is situated in the Senior School.

All parents/guardians are notified of these meetings and are welcome to attend. The A.G.M. is held each September/October and the Holy Family Schools' Parents' Association is affiliated to the National Parents' Council. The Parents' Association is in regular contact with the school, most especially with the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL). The Parents' Association is involved in the following:

- The School Library - parents rostered to manage the library five days a week; source books and work closely with Hugh Connolly (library co-ordinator)
- The School Garden - help with maintenance of the garden
- Helping with Sports Day
- Decorating the Parents' Room - craft club work on display
- Decorating the cafeteria on Holy Communion Day; providing refreshments for parents and family afterwards; giving out goody bags to all the children
- Attending Graduation evening, providing cake and refreshments for parents and family; presenting autograph books and pens to 6th class children
- Helping out with Christmas dinner for children in cafeteria
- Policy development - sub-committee review policies.
- Active Flag
- Green Flag
- Organising Ice Cream Day
- Fundraising Eg: Cash for Clobber, Bag-packing, cake sales, recipe book, school calendar
- Purchasing and distributing Easter treats at Easter
- Helping with Book Week and Book Fairs
- Actively involved in Christmas Concert preparations, most especially in the creation of costumes
- Making Christmas crafts/decorations with classes for the school Christmas tree
- Organising the recycling and sale of school uniforms
- Liaising with Students' Council

Details of the present Parents' Association are included in Appendix A

(b) Board of Management

The Board of Management meets, on average, every six weeks/two months during the school year or as required. The Board is comprised of:

1. Two Patron Nominees - Joe Carmody - Chairperson
Fr. Ger Fitzgerald - Treasurer
2. Two Parent Nominees - Karen O'Donnell
Fintan Meaney
3. Two Community Nominees - Mary Cashin
Mary Howard
4. Two Teacher Nominees - David Moroney
Sarah Connolly Barnes - Principal
& Secretary

The roles and responsibilities of the parents' representatives on the Board of Management are outlined in the Constitution of Boards and Rules of procedure, DES.

(c) Vision

Our vision is based on the ideals of Catherine McAuley, working to enable each pupil to reach his/her potential. Parents are acknowledged as partners in all aspects of school life and are facilitated to engage in classroom activities, policy development, extra curricular activities and other school related activities.

(d) Policies

Draft copies of all policies are placed on our school website, and parents' comments, opinions and contributions are welcomed and encouraged. Draft policies can also be discussed at Parents' Association meetings where the HSCL teacher is always in attendance.

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

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.

(e) Communication

Good communication between parents and the school community is essential for the implementation of this policy. Communication is enhanced and encouraged by the use of:

- Text-a-parent messaging service
- School Website: co-ordinated by Eilis Faherty and updated on a regular basis
- Newsletters: Regular newsletters (usually two per term) giving general information on school activities, parent classes/courses and upcoming events
- Parents' Association Newsletter
- Posters on school windows & classroom doors displaying information about activities, parent classes/courses and upcoming events/Parents' Association fundraisers.
- Informal meetings of a short duration occur at the beginning and end of days at the school door.
- 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.
- Parent-Teacher Meetings - held over two evenings (one early and one late); P/T meeting feedback forms from all teachers.
- Notes home: Notes are sent home through the homework journal or in the children's schoolbags, 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.
- Phone calls
- Open Days: The school holds an open day for prospective parents in May/June each year. People are notified of this through the Parish Newsletter and Local Newspapers.
- Registration Evening
- School Reports: 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 support teachers.
- IEP meetings for pupils who have been allocated resource hours by the NCSE
- Fundraising: The Parents' Association undertake fundraising activities for their own association and for the school communities. This is done in

collaboration with school management and HSCL.

(f) Courses for parents

The Home School Community Liaison Coordinator organises courses throughout the year to encourage parents to develop their own skills. These courses also afford parents the opportunity to make new friends and to avail of the facilities provided by the school community. These courses are organised in conjunction with The Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and The Clare Local Development Company.

Courses may include:

- English language classes for newcomer parents
- Cookery
- Christmas Crafts
- Parenting
- Mindfulness
- Beauty Therapy
- Sewing Classes
- Crafts Club
- Men's Woodwork Club
- Healthy Food Planning
- Maths For Fun
- Science For Fun
- Irish
- As requested by the parents

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

(g) Home School Community Liaison Coordinator

As part of a dedicated HSCL team, parents are encouraged to become involved in organised classroom activities under the supervision of the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator and Class Teacher. The Guidelines for this involvement include:

- Parents come into the classroom at the invitation of the HSCL coordinator and/or class teacher by prior arrangement and for an agreed purpose
- The happiness, welfare and safety of the pupils are central to all school activity. A child's personal history and academic progress are strictly confidential and it is important that a parent in the classroom does not comment on any aspect of a child's behaviour, academic progress, ethnic or social background
- Respect for the professional role of the teacher is essential to the

meaningful involvement of parents in the classroom

- Behaviour management is always the responsibility of the class teacher.
- Parents who participate in classroom activities must be conscious of, and sensitive to the needs of all the pupils in the class
- In the interests of safety, toddlers and younger children cannot normally be facilitated in a classroom during school time.
- The highest standard of adult behaviour and language is expected.
- Punctuality and consistency is crucial to the success of any parental involvement in the classroom
- No fees are payable. Any expenses incurred must be sanctioned in advance by the Board of Management and receipts must be presented
- The teacher has the final say in the event that he/she feels an activity is falling short of its original aims and objectives

(h) 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.

■ Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if:

- There are open and honest relationships between parents and school staff
- Parents are comfortable coming into the school
- Teachers are comfortable with parental involvement in the classroom
- Pupils enjoy a wider range of activities
- Parental involvement encourages children and parents to see that school is an extension of home and therefore fosters the idea of the 'school family.'
- Parental involvement provides the opportunity of making lifelong friends.

■ Roles and Responsibility

Members of the Board of Management, Parents' Association and Holy Family Senior School staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

■ Timeframe for Implementation

This revised policy will be implemented from March 2017.

■ **Timeframe for Review**

This policy will be reviewed in 2019 and amended as necessary by means of a collaborative and consultative process.

■ **Responsibility for Review**

The review will be instigated by the Home School Community Liaison Teacher and Principal.

■ **Ratification and Communication**

This revised policy will be discussed by representatives from the Parents' Association in term two 2016/2017. It will then be posted on the school website for a three week period. It will be presented to the Board of Management for ratification at the March meeting.

Appendix A

Holy Family Schools' Parents' Association

2016-2017

Chairperson: Liliana Lacka

Secretary: Katy Maher

Treasurer: Maria Fitzpatrick

Committee Members: