

1.4 Parents as partners in Education Policy

Introduction

Scoil Choilm CNS is a multi-denominational Primary School which recognises and welcomes pupils of all beliefs, cultures and ethnicities. The Community National School model comes under the patronage of Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board.

A board of management was established during the academic year 2017-2018. The board of management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the equal Status Act 2000.

Scoil Choilm CNS aims to provide a caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and met. Scoil Choilm CNS is committed to a high standard of education where the child is at the centre of the learning process. Every effort is made at all times with the co-operation of parents to help each child reach his/her full potential.

This policy was developed in collaboration with the principal, the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL), The In-School Management team (ISM), staff, the manager and parents. This policy was devised with reference to a number of other school policies and documents namely the Vision, Mission and Ethos Statements of Scoil Choilm CNS.

A need for this policy was recognised in order to outline the roles and responsibilities of the school community in relation to parental involvement in our school and also to inform parents as to how best they can support the school and its pupils. We very much acknowledge the role of parents as partners in education and as the primary educators of their children and encourage them to be actively involved in the educational life of their child and more broadly in school life.

Rationale

'In Scoil Choilm CNS parents are encouraged to become active members of the school community, participating in the education of their children and in developing a sense of pride and harmony in the school. The staff, management and parent body work together to develop a sense of community within the school and to help pupils and parents to become engaged in school life'.

This policy was developed with reference to the *DES circular 24/91 'Parent's as Partners in Education'*. It is envisaged that this policy will provide guidance to our school community in the following ways:

- Assist our school community in providing the optimum learning experiences for its pupils.
- To outline the roles and responsibilities of staff and parents in relation to the education and welfare of the children in our school.
- To promote and develop home/school partnership in a range of ways.
- To explore and outline how parents may best support the school and pupils.

Aims

In developing this policy the school aims to;

- Build on the school community's commitment to supporting all of its pupils.
- Promote an open and consultative environment, where parents are recognised as partners in their child's education.



- Encourage parental involvement in the education of their child and as a school community to support them in this process.
- Parents will be seen as the prime players in the education of their children. Towards this end, the school will always seek to keep parents fully briefed on their child's educational development and to guide them in the most effective way of collaborating with the school.
- Have clear and timely procedures for the sharing of information in relation to pupil progress and attainment.
- Develop strategies to promote the role of parents as partners in our school.
- Outline clearly the importance of the professional role of the teacher in relation to parents and the statutory responsibilities of the principal, patron and the board of management.

School Communication with parents

School communication with parents is undertaken in many ways. The following outlines the general ways in which the principal, teaching staff and HSCL coordinator in Scoil Choilm CNS communicate on a daily, monthly, termly and yearly basis with our parent body.

- ***Termly Newsletters***

These are circulated to our parent body at the beginning of each school term. They outline all school events taking place in that term for example general classroom meetings for all parents in term one, whole school coffee mornings, Eid celebration, winter shows, community days, school tours and agreed school closures.

- ***General weekly letters and notes***

In addition to the termly newsletter a number of general letters go home each month to communicate to parents in relation to important school matters such as safety and parking around our school, After School Clubs taking place in each term, letters for all parents in relation to the book rental scheme, letters in relation to whole school fundraising initiatives such as the school walk, letters in relation to time-keeping and notes in relation to school events such as book week and the book fair and sports day. This is not an exhaustive list and it changes from year to year depending upon school events, initiatives and issues of importance for the whole school community.

- ***Telephone calls & Text a parent***

Through the school database, 'Databiz' the school can readily contact parents by phone and text message using the 'Cadoo' app . It has the facility to send group texts to all parents or to groups of parents (for example parents in a particular class in relation to a class event). The class teachers regularly contact parents by phone in relation to upcoming meetings, if a child is unwell or has had an accident or if a child is regularly missing school, coming late to school or being picked up late. Attendance issues and late coming is also dealt with by the HSCL coordinator.

- ***Website & School Blog***

The school website is regularly updated with the latest school news, whole school events and class activities. Many school policies are also uploaded on the school website such as the school enrolment policy, anti-bullying and anti-racism policies, child protection policy and RSE policy to mention but a

few. The content of the website is regularly reviewed and updated by members of staff. Parental involvement is facilitated through blogging and many parents post comments of encouragement and support for various school activities which take place throughout the school year.

- ***Homework Journals***

Homework journals are purchased by all pupils from 2nd to 6th class. These homework journals provide an effective means of daily communication between the parent and the teacher in relation to completion of homework and any other class activity or reminder required in relation to school events. It is the duty of the parent to read the homework journal, check that homework is completed and sign the homework journal each day. Communication in relation to homework from Junior Infants to 1st class is via a note from the class teacher in the child's homework folder.

- ***Induction meetings for new parents***

An induction meeting is held each year in May for the parents of the new incoming Junior Infant Classes. Parents are invited to this meeting by letter. In addition, parents receive a reminder text the day before the meeting. At the meeting parents are given an induction pack outlining important information about Scoil Choilm CNS. There is also a presentation for parents by the principal, current Junior Infant teachers and HSCL Coordinator. This presentation includes items such as helping your child settle into school, discussions around curriculum expectation and curricular areas, discipline procedures, uniforms, school lunches, school events etc. This meeting provides a forum to allay any fears parents may have regarding their child's learning and settling into school. Parents' questions are invited and answered at this meeting. Parents that do not attend the induction meeting are contacted by telephone and asked to come to reception to pick up the induction pack and to ask any questions they may have in relation to their child commencing school.

- ***Classroom Meetings for all parents***

All class teachers have an initial classroom meeting in September each year with their parent group. On a particular morning parents are invited into their child's classroom to a general classroom meeting with the class teacher. The class teacher discusses the expectations they have for the children that year for example; curriculum work, homework, general school procedures, attendance, time keeping, the book rental scheme, school lunches, healthy eating policy, uniforms, PE tracksuit, class rules, behaviour, what to do in the event of issues arising, arranging to meet with the teacher through the secretary etc.

- ***Parent Teacher Meetings***

All parents have an opportunity to have an individual meeting with their child's class teacher, learning support/resource teachers (where applicable) to discuss their child's academic and social progress. This is in accordance with Circular 14/04. Parents are given advance notice of the date and time via a note from the class teacher/LSRT. Teachers arrange that meetings for siblings are synchronised to accommodate parents as far as possible. Parent teacher meetings are always scheduled for term 2. To meet the needs of parents who are unable to attend on the specific date or time given, teachers make every effort to re-arrange to meet parents before or after school on an alternative day.

- ***Open Evenings***

A number of open evenings are held in our school each year to allow prospective parents to visit the school. There are up to 3 open evenings each year and they allow for parents to take a school tour around our school, meet the principal and staff and clarify any questions or concerns they may have.

- **Individual Education Plan meetings (IEP)**

Parents have a very important role in relation to children with special educational needs (SEN). Parents of children with SEN are included in the following way by Scoil Choilm CNS;

- The writing of the IEP is undertaken by the resource teacher in consultation with the class teacher, principal and parents to outline the child's strengths, needs and future targets for that term.
- IEP meetings are held termly with parents in consultation with the SEN coordinator and/or principal and class teacher where necessary.
- Specific time-related targets for SEN children will be agreed between the class teacher, principal, SNA and parents.
- Targets will be reviewed in consultation with the class teacher and where necessary, with the parents in question.

Note: Outside of the formal parent teacher meetings/IEP meetings, it is school policy that teachers always speak to parents in a timely fashion in relation to any issues pertaining to their child; academic, social, emotional, behavioural and health. We always encourage regular contact between the class teachers, Learning Support Resource Teaching team (LSRT) and parents outside of the formal parent teacher meeting.

As a school community we realise that early communication often prevents a later difficulty arising and is in the best interest of our pupils. Parents from the beginning are encouraged to raise any concerns in relation to their child at the earliest possible opportunity. Parents are informed by teachers at the initial classroom meetings in September to speak with their class teacher if they have any concerns about their child and to arrange a meeting with their class teacher/LSRT team through the school office.

In addition, it is school policy for all classroom teachers and support staff to be present in the yard for morning assembly. This is a good opportunity to have a friendly informal chat with parents. Home-time also provides an informal opportunity for teachers to build good relations with our parent body.

- **End of year report cards**

Parents receive an end of year report card in relation to their child in June every year. This report outlines each pupil's progress for the year, including their performance on standardised tests (1st to 6th class). An explanatory note is available on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment website (NCCA) for teachers to discuss with parents should any concerns arise in relation to standardised testing. End of year reports are given to parents at least three weeks before the end of the school year to facilitate parents who may have a query or require clarification regarding their child's report.

- **School events**

School events are a very important part of school life for our parent body. It gives parents the opportunity to visit the school for many different occasions and to take part in school life. The events

vary from year to year but have included and will in the future include many of the following celebrations and activities. This list is not exhaustive and will always depend on the needs of the school and the school community in any given year;

- Eid Celebration – the whole school community is invited to celebrate this important Islamic event with our Muslim parents.
 - Christmas celebration – the whole school community is invited to celebrate this important event with our Christian parents.
 - Winter shows – each year group rehearses and performs a winter show for the parents in that year group. These winter shows take place every second year and there is always a large parental attendance at the shows.
 - A whole school Community Day is held every second year to give parents, teachers and children an opportunity to come together to celebrate Scoil Choilm CNS and all the positive things about our school community. In the past we have celebrated diversity, anti-racism & anti-bullying events and positive people celebrations. Parents play an active role in these events, bringing in food, setting up refreshments and presenting some positive affirmations to the whole school community.
 - Whole school coffee mornings held each term give parents an opportunity to meet and interact with each other and the teaching and SNA staff of our school.
 - Coffee mornings for the parents in our ASD units Sonas and Bród. Parents from the units meet termly for their own coffee morning to discuss issues affecting their children and make links with one another.
 - Book week – during book week parents get an opportunity to visit the book fair with their children.
 - Parents play a very big role in the preparation of their children for the Christian Sacraments of Communion and Confirmation. As a multi belief school this is a very important role for parents and we really depend upon parents to impart their own religious or other belief systems to their children.
- ***Policy consultation/Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) information letters for parents/Goodness Me Goodness You!***

Relationships and Sexuality in Education (RSE)

A letter will be sent to parents of 5th and 6th class pupils in the third term each year outlining upcoming lessons in which the children will be taught about the physical and emotional changes the children are going through and to outline ways in which parents can assist their children in navigating these changes. A link to the new RSE programme will be included in this letter enabling parents to familiarise themselves with the content of the 5th and 6th class lessons.

Goodness Me Goodness You!

When drawing up the GMGY policy we recognised and sought to respect the, religious, cultural and ethnic diversity among our school community. The development of the GMGY Senior Curriculum 3rd-6th class in Scoil Choilm CNS was therefore informed by engagement with the GMGY school group. This group consists of NCCA members, the principal, teacher representatives and parent representatives from our school. The leadership role played by the GMGY School group ensures that the curriculum is developed in line with the needs of the school community. This connection is essential in developing a curriculum that enables our school to live out our ethos fully. Parents played a meaningful role in developing and reviewing the GMGY policy. Parents on the GMGY policy

committee attended a series of meetings to review lesson content and resources. They also assisted in the development of this policy.

External Agencies and Professionals

A number of external agencies and professionals work directly and indirectly with the school, from time to time and these agencies will always seek parental permission, information and possible future meetings and appointments with parents. Such agencies include;

- Department of Education and Skills (DES)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Parent groups have met with the NCCA in our school in relation to the development of the senior level 'Goodness Me, Goodness You' curriculum which is currently under development with the NCCA for the community national school model.
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) / Educational Psychologist's. Children within the school may be referred by the principal to the NEPS educational Psychologist for assessment following consultation with parents and teachers.
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
- Educational Welfare Services (TUSLA) & the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). On direction from the school and coupled with other welfare concerns. The EWO communicates with parents whose children have missed 20 or more days from school.
- The Duty Care Social Worker, employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE).
- The HSE – Nurses and other professionals from the HSE visit the school to administer national programmes such as vision, hearing and vaccinations. All of these programmes must have parental consent.
- Occupational therapists
- Speech & Language therapists

Parent / Teacher Association (PTA)

Scoil Choilm CNS has an active and supportive parent/teacher association. The PTA provides a further essential link between the parents and the school. The Chairperson is instrumental in arranging organising meetings and events in conjunction with the PA and the school, for example talks for parents, fundraising and Community Day. In addition, the chairperson liaises with the principal in relation to school related matters such as safety around the school and issues which may be affecting our wider parent body for example the development of the new senior level curriculum 'Goodness Me, Goodness You', the admission policy, uniforms and the healthy eating policy.

The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme

Scoil Choilm CNS appointed a full time HSCL Coordinator in September 2014. The HSCL coordinator works closely with parents in our school community and in conjunction with the principal and school staff. Relationships are at the heart of the work of the HSCL, building, developing and promoting partnerships between school, community and home.

The following outlines the way in which the HSCL coordinator has developed the role to date. This is not an exhaustive list and will be updated, developed and changed depending upon the needs of the

school and the parent body. The following outlines the main ways in which the HSCL coordinator promotes and supports parents as partners in our school;

- ***One to one meetings with individual parents***

This is a vital component of the role of the HSCL. Meeting with parents in relation to issues which are affecting them is key component to building parental relationships in Scoil Choilm CNS. There is a huge diversity within the parent body in Scoil Choilm CNS and the one to one meetings with parents can range from new families enrolling in the school community to supporting a family who have become homeless. While the HSCL is a supportive ear and may provide advice for parents it is also the aim of the HSCL coordinator to empower the parents themselves thus improving the educational outcomes for their children.

- **Phone calls, Letters, text a parent**

The HSCL coordinator phones parents on a regular basis and in relation to a wide variety of issues. The HSCL coordinator also uses the text a parent facility and sends letters termly in relation to parent courses taking place in the school, inviting parents to whole school coffee mornings, or general letters explaining school procedures or school events/talks taking place.

- **ETB courses**

The HSCL coordinator in conjunction with the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) organises a series of subsidised courses in school which parents can attend. The HSCL coordinator applies for a series of courses termly/yearly and then promotes these courses to the parent's in our school. Courses which have taken place in Scoil Choilm CNS in the past include; career planning, personal development, numeracy classes, child development and play, preparation for work and yoga. English classes for parents are not provided by the local ETB. The HSCL coordinator on a number of occasions has privately arranged for a tutor to teach the English language to parent groups. This is funded by our DEIS grant and is very important for our parents as over 90% of our parent body speak English as a second language.

- **Attendance letters**

The HSCL coordinator monitors attendance of all the children on a regular basis through a series of letters and meetings with individual parents. Reminder letters are sent to parents of children whose attendance is poor. These letters outline the importance of regular school attendance, the 20day rule and the possibility of contact from the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The HSCL coordinator also meets with parents whose children have prolonged and serious absences from school to inform, discuss and support parents who may have issues in relation to getting their children to school each day.

- ***Time-keeping***

The HSCL coordinator supports parents and looks for strategies to resolve the problem of regular late-coming to school, for example parents who live a long distance from Scoil Choilm CNS or parents who may be homeless and currently residing in temporary hotel accommodation.

- **House calls**

It is school policy that at all times the HSCL coordinator endeavours to meet parents in his/her office in the school building. It is important to us as a school community that our parent's feel welcome in our school. However, there are occasions when the HSCL coordinator visits families in their homes for example if the class teacher or HSCL coordinator cannot contact a family, in the case of an attendance issue or any other serious issue which arises and requires a house call from the HSCL coordinator.

- **Coffee mornings**

The HSCL coordinator organises a number of coffee mornings each term for the parents. These events are a great way for parents to get to know each other and informally meet with school staff. The HSCL coordinator also engages with parents in relation to setting up and helping out at coffee mornings and whole school events in general such as 'Community Day', 'Anti-Bullying & Anti-Racism' events and the '6th Class Graduation' lunch.

- **Book Rental Scheme**

The book rental scheme in Scoil Choilm CNS is a very important initiative in relation to reducing the cost of school books for our parents. The more expensive school books are rented out by parents each year at a reduced cost and returned to the school at the end of the year. The HSCL coordinator regularly communicates with parents in relation to the book rental scheme and maintaining the condition of the books their children are renting.

- **Homeless Families**

The HSCL coordinator works directly with families who have become homeless or who find themselves in temporary accommodation. The HSCL coordinator in Scoil Choilm CNS is an important link person for families in the school who are experiencing homelessness. The HSCL coordinator supports the family to maximise their children's engagement in school despite the difficulties the families are experiencing. The HSCL coordinator may in certain circumstances subsidise (DEIS funding) the cost of schooling for families experiencing a severe shortfall in income. The HSCL coordinator in Scoil Choilm CNS works closely with Focus Ireland personnel and the other HSCL coordinators in Dublin 15 to endeavour to sign post services and support parents in our school experiencing a housing crisis. The HSCL Coordinator supplies families experiencing homelessness with a support pack that includes a directory of all local services and facilities available in the family's local area.

- **Information meetings in relation to issues of importance for parents**

The HSCL coordinator organises a number of school based talks for parents each year. These information sessions are given by the HSCL coordinator in conjunction with another member of staff or arranged by the HSCL coordinator in consultation with an outside agency. The following is a list of talks and/or events which have previously taken place in our school. This is not an exhaustive list and is adapted to suit the needs of our parents and our school on a yearly basis.

- 5th class meeting for parents in relation to securing a second level place for your child.
- School Self Evaluation (SSE) meeting; ways in which to help your child in the area of Numeracy and/or Literacy.
- Child development & positive parenting talks.



- Online safety talks for parents.
- Super Troopers information session – encourage walking to school and ‘Active Homework’ for children supported by their parents.
- Year group coffee mornings for parents
- Book Week; parents reading for children

Complaints Procedure

The Education Act 1998 provides a legal framework for the delivery of education to the children in our school.

At Scoil Choilm CNS if a parent has a concern or complaint about a member of staff or a situation which has arisen it should be brought to the attention of the teacher or the other staff member in the first instance. If not resolved, it should then be referred to the principal. A complaint against the principal should be brought to him/her initially. All staff are expected to deal with concerns as soon as they are raised in order to avoid issues escalating to a more serious level. Any complaint against the school or individual member of staff must be addressed through the agreed school procedures for example the code of behaviour policy and dignity in the workplace policy.

Success Criteria

Practical indicators of the success of this policy include;

- Improving educational, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes for the children of Scoil Choilm CNS.
- Increased parental involvement in school activities and events.
- Feedback from parents and staff.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was adopted in 2017. The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in April 2018

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents’ Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed in April 2020 by the school management. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel and provided to the Parents’ Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of BOM

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____



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