

*Migration and Mobility:
Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education
Systems*

**Developing an Irish Intercultural Strategy
A Home School Community Liaison Response (HSCL)**



The Green Paper, “Migration and Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems”, seeks good policy responses to the various challenges presented. The Irish Home School Community Liaison Scheme in this submission outlines its policy response to specific challenges named in the Green Paper. **“What are the important policy challenges related to the provision of good education to children from a migrant background?” and “What actions could be taken via European Programmes to impact positively on the education of children from a migrant background?”** These challenges occur in the following areas of:

1. partnership with parents and community
2. second chance and adult education
3. pre-school education with a focus on language development
4. building bridges with parents
5. leadership towards change
6. targeted support to counterbalance educational disadvantage
7. intercultural education

Included in the response is a list of current practical actions by Home School Community Liaison Coordinators specifically aimed at the development of both welcoming and inclusive schools. The actions are founded on the principles of the Scheme which focus on the parents, teachers and other significant adults in the child’s life. Coordinators work collaboratively in school teams and network with key agencies in the community in order to build effective partnerships to ameliorate the effects of educational disadvantage.

The Home, School, Community Liaison Scheme has been operating in designated areas of disadvantage since 1990. It seeks to support families in the education of their children through a range of initiatives including home visitation, facilitation of educational opportunities for parents, networking with voluntary and statutory agencies and direct involvement of parents in programmes in the classroom. The focus of the Scheme is the development of partnership and collaboration and an acknowledgement of the complementary skills of parents and teachers. The Scheme is targeted and focused on the most marginalised within the schools in designated areas, inclusive of immigrant and indigenous families. Coordinators work with the significant adults in the child’s life - parents and teachers. The coordinator also works as part of a school team, promoting effective communication between home and school, spearheading initiatives and supporting whole-school involvement in building an inclusive school ethos.

Positive Policy Responses

1. Partnership with Parents' Organisations and Community Institutions

Partnership is an emerging concept in the contemporary world; consequently neither the language nor the idea itself is fixed.

The HSCL Scheme has been built on the theory and practice of partnership since its initiation in 1990.

The emphasis in the HSCL Scheme is on developing the potential of parents, teachers and the community through the process of partnership in order to provide a seamless service to young people.

Partnership is brought about by the consistent commitment to the demanding and painful work of human relations and invites people to share power and mutual vulnerability. It implies that there is an ability to listen; clarity in thinking; self understanding; a high level of motivation; and commitment to conflict resolution. Partnership also calls for the capacity to acknowledge feelings and to be compassionate.

The partnership process is a difficult one. It has taken many years for the HSCL Scheme to work through Gillian Pugh's definition, which is as follows:

"Partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by:

- a shared sense of purpose
- mutual respect
- a willingness to negotiate

this implies:

- a sharing of information
- responsibility
- skills
- decision-making
- accountability" (Pugh:1989).

A key element in the promotion of partnership is the Local Committee (LC). The LC deals with issues in the community that impinge on learning. The strength of the Local Committee is partnership in action. This enables parents to have greater involvement in their child's learning and local ownership of school-community strengths and challenges in a very practical and rooted way. In the interval between Local Committee meetings the coordinator regularly meets the "core group" of parents to facilitate the development of committee skills and to enable parents to express their point of view. In fact all coordinators have a core group of involved parents who work with them and support the goals of HSCL. Many LC members have done training together on the development of teams, committee work, partnership, and community development. The current climate and the flow of literature, which accepts the mutually interacting roles of community and school, have opened up possibilities for the further

development of LCs. In addition, different geographical areas, groups of people and diverse cultures dictate that there cannot be a uniform solution when it comes to the linking of community and school.

In summary collaboration, cooperation and trust between all agencies and community groups, both voluntary and statutory, who are working towards alleviating the effects of marginalisation are key components of HSCL. The Local Committee, with its broad representation of parents, pupils, community members and school management is a powerful means of examining issues that impact on learning, thus enabling people to identify and plan relevant interventions. Enhanced cooperation with various agencies helps access meaningful services, whether courses, information, family support, diversionary activities for young people, such as homework and leisure time clubs. Parents are encouraged to take leadership roles in these areas and they play an important part in developing transfer programmes, policy making with school and community, drugs awareness campaigns and parent-to-parent support. Increasingly, migrant parents are actively involved in Local Committees and are instrumental in helping organise intercultural weeks or days in schools where customs, cooking , dress, dance and heritage are shared.

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Partnership

- home visitation
- provision of parents' room
- courses and classes for parents
- parenting courses
- parental involvement in school, including classroom literacy and numeracy activities
- parents as policy makers
- parents celebrating diversity
- parents on Local Committee
- parents as educational home visitors
- parent-to-parent activities/support – including interpretation/translation
- transfer programmes at all levels
- developing an inclusive school ethos through ongoing provision of appropriate school-community programmes.

2. Second Chance Education/Adult Education

Return to education courses, family learning programmes, mentoring, neighbourhood projects, access programmes where marginalised families avail of further educational opportunities all stem from an integrated and partnership model of working and will ultimately help break down the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage among many migrant families.

Employment will be a key factor in facilitating the integration of migrants. It provides economic independence, status, security and opportunities for interaction with people from host communities. It brings many benefits, including improved income and lifestyle, an increased sense of belonging and interaction outside their own communities. Accessing meaningful employment, particularly in recessionary times, is a serious challenge, but is even more difficult if children drop out of school with inadequate or no qualifications. Apart from the acquisition of the host language, which is essential for any form of integration by migrants, their retention in the educational system is of paramount importance. So too, is the creation of opportunities for continuing education, certification and practical skills development for adults.

HSCL coordinators, through liaison with education providers help marginalised parents, including those from other countries, access literacy and numeracy courses and other necessary skills. Through the involvement of parents in school life, children have a more positive experience of education and are more likely to attend regularly and stay on at school. Acknowledging parents' efforts, affirming them in their role as prime educators, celebrating, encouraging them to attend coffee mornings, information meetings, parent-teacher meetings are all key components of HSCL and support participation, attendance and retention. The increasing level of cooperation and integration between HSCL, SCP and NEWB, which should ensure a targeted, multi-faceted approach to issues of non-attendance, whether it be with migrant or indigenous children, which includes Travellers (see Appendices 1 and 2).

The coordinator facilitates parents' involvement in Adult Education programmes and promotes the use of community library facilities. A comprehensive list of literacy initiatives undertaken by coordinators is attached (see Appendix 5). Parental involvement in developing children's numeracy skills is implemented by coordinators through a Mathematics for Fun programme. This programme promotes activity-based learning. Class teachers are consulted to identify the area of the Mathematics curriculum to be addressed. Appropriate materials and games are sourced. Parents familiarise themselves with the games during a series of training sessions. Parents take charge of a particular Mathematics activity and children move from one activity to another at a given signal. The Mathematics for Fun programme provides an opportunity for collaborative learning, in a novel approach, promoting partnership between parents and pupils.

HSCL recognises the crucial role of parents in education and their capacity to enhance educational outcomes. Parental development is a key element of the coordinator's work. Emphasis is placed on building confidence, acquiring skills, curricular support and personal development. A wide range of classes and courses are provided by coordinators in response to the expressed needs of parents. These allow parents to become active learners within the school environment. They usually begin with introductory leisure type activities. Coordinators carefully ensure that this is done in a non-threatening manner and that the whole experience is a safe, positive and enjoyable one. As a core group develops and parents become confident more formal courses are provided. These can be divided into two distinct strands, educational and personal. Courses in such areas as family learning, literacy, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), numeracy, Irish and information technology are specifically designed to enable parents to develop skills and strategies that allow them to be comfortable and confident in being close to their child's learning. Personal development is enhanced through such courses as first aid, parenting, healthy eating and nutrition. Many coordinators link with agencies such as the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI), Vocational Education Committee (VEC) or other appropriate bodies to provide accredited courses. Care is taken to avoid duplication and links with existing services within the community are encouraged. An important benefit is the parent-to-parent interaction, which provides great opportunities for building relationships, problem-sharing, problem-solving, informal parenting and parent-to-parent support in the education context.

Parental Development is further enhanced through their participation in literacy and numeracy projects both in the classroom setting and in the home. Coordinators work with groups of parents to prepare and implement initiatives that actively support the children's learning. The HSCL Scheme prepares and supports parents to be actively involved in policy formation in schools. This collaborative process builds confidence and promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility. It also increases parents' knowledge of the education system and of how schools work. Training parents as Educational Home Visitors creates a parent-to-parent support (see appendix 4).

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Adult Education

Leisure courses:

- cookery
- keep fit
- dance
- art and craft
- flower arranging
- walking clubs/yoga

- interior décor
- gardening

Educational courses:

- computer classes
- English – newcomer parents
- Literacy classes
- Irish
- help your child with Maths etc
- strong links with educational agencies e.g. FETAC, VTOS, VEC
- Junior and Leaving Certificate for parents
- supporting your child at post-primary level – study skills etc.

Personal development:

- First Aid
- healthy eating and nutrition
- parenting

Parents as a Resource:

- parents in the classroom
- Mathematics for Fun
- Science for Fun
- Literacy for Fun
- Paired Reading
- school library
- games and toy library
- homework clubs
- breakfast clubs
- art work and craft work

3. Pre-school/Strong focus on Language Development

The HSCL Scheme aims to enable parents to become active participants in their children's learning and to stimulate learning in the home. A wide range of literacy initiatives are implemented by coordinators, each adapted to the age and ability level of the pupil. Parents are invited to participate in these programmes both in the home and in school.

At pre-school and early primary level the focus is on early language skills as the foundation for later literacy achievement. Proposed programmes are outlined to parents, best practice is modelled and parents then work with individuals or with groups of children. Workshops are held in which packs containing materials to support early learning are demonstrated and an opportunity is afforded to parents to work on the material with their child. Parents participate in storybook reading, literacy games and shared reading in a positive, enjoyable atmosphere. In consultation with class teachers, the coordinator endeavours to familiarise parents with the content of the curriculum and the school's approach to learning to read. Class novels are read simultaneously by parents and pupils. Parents come into the classroom to discuss the novel with the pupils and to engage in fun activities based on the novel.

Existing HSCL Actions to Promote Pre-school/Strong focus on Language Development

Initiatives undertaken by Home, School, Community Liaison coordinators in support of literacy

Early literacy:

Storybook reading by parents to groups of children in school

Speech and Language therapist working with groups of parents in class, modelling to parents how to support their child's language development and parents delivering the programme to groups of children in the classroom.

Pre-school literacy packs, delivered to the home by coordinators and by parents

Pre-school, Early Start and Junior Infant parents workshops on literacy

Paired reading by parents in school

Parent and Toddler groups- talking about pictures in books

Storysacks, both bought ready-made and also made by parents. Parents go into class and tell the story, using props from the story sack.

100 most used words brought to parents

Forward Together (MIST) programme: parents working at home with children

Community Mothers programme: reading with infants

Letterland for Parents (course)

Literacy for Fun: literacy games

Parent libraries in schools

Language development programme: Workshops for parents using seasonal activities as basis for children's language development

Reading Challenge-supported at home by parents
Make a Book
Write a Book
Books into the home
HSCL supporting teachers in explaining language of curriculum and content of curriculum to parents

Middle and Senior Primary:

Parents working with children on computers.
CAPER-Children and Parents Enjoy Reading
Paired Reading with parents and Senior pupils at home and at school
Homework Support where parents attend with child and parents advised on how to help their child with homework.

4. Building Bridges with Parents

A belief in the power of parents, as the primary educators, to want the best for their children, is central to all work carried out by HSCL coordinators. To this end, they work towards an enhanced environment of partnership and collaboration between home, school and community, where individual and collective talents and power are harnessed for the good of all. They build trust, respect, relationships, openness and cooperation between school and marginalised communities, which now include many newcomer families, so that they become empowered to engage fully in the education of their children.

HSCL develops and affirms parents through identification of specific needs and the creation of appropriate mechanisms for motivating, up-skilling and developing self esteem, so that they become a resource in their community and to the school. This is particularly important in the case of migrant parents, who must be given opportunities to engage with the school system, both to understand what their children are learning and to help them integrate in the culture of Ireland. Parental involvement in classroom activities such as paired reading, Mathematics and Science for Fun, games and toy library, artwork, computer skills, homework and breakfast clubs are essential, so that a non-threatening environment of welcome and participation is experienced.

Home Visitation is an integral part of the HSCL Scheme. Coordinators spend approximately one third of their time visiting the homes of marginalised families. While the ultimate purpose is to maximise the child's engagement with and retention in the education system, these visits enable the coordinator to build bonds of trust with parents and establish a positive working relationship. They affirm the parents' role as prime educator and enhance the home-school relationship. Coordinators visit homes with a clear purpose but without an agenda. Information about the school and other services in the community is shared and parents' views and opinions are sought. Home visits allow parents to express their needs and the coordinator to respond in an appropriate way.

The interaction during a home visit allows the coordinator to value and validate the parents' role, identify their strengths and build their confidence. It also serves to break down negative attitudes and fears and to show the caring inclusive nature of the school.

Home Visitation is the foundation upon which deeper and more enriching involvement in the HSCL scheme is built. Parents may attend courses run by the Scheme, develop their parenting skills, join the Local Committee; train as home visitors themselves, contribute to school policy formation, or develop their own skills and return to education or work. They also become active participants in their child's learning in school and in the home. Home visits are viewed positively by all involved and lead to raised expectations and a more active engagement with the school and education.

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Building Bridges with Parents

- home visitation
- parents' room
- parental involvement in school
- parental involvement in the classroom
- parents as policy makers
- parents as educational home visitors – see Appendix 4
- parents on Local Committee
- parent-to-parent support

5. Targeted Support to Counterbalance Educational Disadvantage

The vision of HSCL is of an equal, inclusive and caring society where all children will achieve their full potential and be able to contribute fully to the development of holistic communities and engaged citizenship. The Scheme is central to addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils/families, regardless of country of origin, through acknowledging the role of the parent as prime educator. The key goals of HSCL, underpinned by a far-reaching vision, ensure that targeting of all those at risk of educational failure takes place in a cohesive planned manner, so that appropriate interventions with the significant adults in the children's lives can be undertaken. The Scheme is targeted and focused on the most marginalised within the designated schools, inclusive of immigrant and indigenous families. The coordinator works as part of a school team, promoting effective communication between home and school, spearheading initiatives and supporting whole-school involvement in building an inclusive school ethos.

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Targeted Support in order to Counterbalance Educational Disadvantage

Operating within *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) – An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* the HSCL coordinators prioritise the following issues:

- strengthening Early Education supports
- improving Literacy and Numeracy standards
- placing a renewed emphasis on the involvement of parents, family members and the community in children's education
- enhancing attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment
- supporting recruitment and retention of principals and teaching staff
- strengthening planning, target-setting and measurement of progress and outcomes
- strengthening professional development
- enhancing integration and co-ordination both within the education sector and cross sectorally.

In doing this HSCL coordinators, in conjunction with the principal, the staff and families, work within the framework of the following underpinning principles:

- equal chance and access
- opportunity to reach full potential
- the crucial role of education and social inclusion.

The five goals of the HSCL Scheme are as follows: supporting marginalised families; promoting co-operation between home, school and community; empowering parents; retaining young people in the education system and disseminating good practice. This enables HSCL coordinators, in partnership with parents school and community to maximise the active participation of the children in the learning process.

The family and school indicators of educational disadvantage include

- unemployment
- local authority housing
- medical card
- lone parenthood
- size of family
- level of education of parents
- transience/immigration
- addiction

Indicators at school level

- poor attendance
- lack of punctuality
- lack of material requirements

- lack of parental support
- emotional/behaviour issues
- poor academic performance
- lack of self esteem
- poor relationship with peers
- poor sense of identification with school

The response of HSCL to the above issues is carried out through

- identification of needs
- staff development, including the drawing up of the DEIS plan (see Appendix 3)
- school development planning – whole-school approach
- literacy and Numeracy activities
- parental involvement
- review current practice
- identify what works well
- build on and share good practice
- draw on resources
- set targets
- plan, monitor, evaluate
- use research
- ongoing training and development
- collaboration and partnership with key agencies, e.g. National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB), School Completion Programme (SCP), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), Primary Professional Development Services (PPDS), Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

6. Leadership towards Change

The school is a significant resource for the community it serves, thus there are also many advantages for the school in drawing from the strengths of the community and identifying potential leaders. The HSCL Scheme's philosophy recognises that the school on its own cannot effect or lead meaningful change but that it can harness skills and potential. Working collaboratively with other interest groups it can minimise the effects of problems associated with educational disadvantage.

Pupils are not only members of families and schools, they are also part of community groups, churches, teams, clubs, and gangs. Leadership includes recognising all the influences at work, aiming to bring coherence to the multiple messages young people receive. Acceptance of the community aspect of the HSCL Scheme has been growing from the mid 1990s. This growth has been accelerated over the past

years with the development of Local Committees and the general emphasis on the power of community as portrayed in contemporary literature.

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Leadership

- initial and ongoing CPD for all HSCL coordinators focusing on the key areas of work e.g. home visitation, courses and classes for parents, Local Committee, Literacy and Numeracy/Science initiatives, cluster meetings, staff development, parents as policy makers, parents as educational home visitors, networking with statutory and voluntary agencies. CPD also includes modules on personal/professional development for the coordinators
- CPD for principals and chairperson of BOM
- ongoing information and awareness raising initiatives for school staffs on all levels
- developing and encouraging partnership and engagement through encouraging/supporting the creative use of posts of responsibility effectiveness
- HSCL coordinators actively in involved in Care/Pastoral teams
- key role in informing parents regarding roles, rights and responsibilities
- identifying and mentoring future leaders in the community
- pupils on LC
- parents assuming leadership roles
- effective use of resources
- holistic approach
- collegiality
- collaboration
- understanding of roles
- sharing of skills
- sharing of information
- support structure for individuals
- team support

7. Intercultural Education

There is no doubt that the nature of Irish society has changed immensely since the 1990s, with the large influx of migrants from several different countries. Ensuring adequate educational opportunities for all these newcomer families and helping them become integrated into Irish society places enormous challenges on our school system. This is particularly the case if families suffer from disadvantage and marginalisation. The Bernard van Leer Foundation strongly holds that:

“The bond between parent and child should be the central pivot of educational activities...the community has to perceive a commitment to educational change, not for the benefit of the outsiders, but for itself and its children... Teachers for their part must know the **cultural access point** in the local community. If they do not, they run the grave risk of failing the child and the community they pretend to address”.

Current HSCL Actions to Promote Intercultural Education

- building partnership
- Local Committee
- home visitation
- parents visiting parents
- identifying parent needs
- directing parents towards relevant agencies in community
- awareness raising in the community towards curricular, transfer, examination system
- understanding the school system e.g. school ethos, behaviour, parent-teacher meetings
- intercultural days/weeks/events
- provision of language classes for parents
- interaction with parents in parents' room
- meeting parent needs for second chance education
- policy formation – parents, teachers, pupils, community
- newsletters in a variety of languages
- linking parents and other agencies
- homework help for parents
- promoting good attendance

Conclusion

An open, caring and happy school environment, where the efforts of all are directed to bringing about success; where the values of compassion, empathy, courage, commitment and tenacity are paramount and govern all interactions between parents, pupils, school management is necessary, if we are to retain marginalised children in the system. For this reason, HSCL has a very significant role in shaping teacher attitudes and school culture; in promoting awareness and understanding of the multi-faceted nature of marginalisation and educational disadvantage; in reviewing current practices and policies; in needs analysis; planning and prioritising areas for development; identifying success criteria and developing effective links with all agencies working with marginalised families/communities. The development of clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjusting school policies and evaluating progress on integration. Schools are central in the community and therefore will have to provide leadership, vision, hope and belief in the unique potential of all human beings to bring about a more wholesome society; a society that values our environment, unique heritage and culture while at the same time articulating and emphasising the rights and responsibilities of a civilised, diverse society, sensitive to realities of gender, ethnicity class and culture.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The Role of the HSCL Coordinator Regarding Attendance

- The role of the HSCL coordinator is proactive and as such, attendance is addressed in the broader context of family support. The coordinator works with the deeper causes of absenteeism
- HSCL, as part of its focus on keeping parents close to children's learning will continue to promote good attendance as central to their success in school
- During home visitation bonds of trust are developed; coordinators offer support and advice and direct parents to relevant networks and agencies in the community, when specific needs are identified
- Where an attendance issue emerges, school management will offer the services of the HSCL coordinator to the family. The onus is on the school to take the initial step. This ensures that the HSCL coordinator is not used in a reactive way. A proactive role enhances their safety in the home-community and the chances of being accepted and allowed into the home. In the normal course of a home visit, once a relationship has been established with the family, the coordinator will seek to support the parent in fostering good attendance and linking closely with the school
- HSCL coordinators link with SCP and NEWB at local level in order to foster and support good attendance, to maximise effectiveness with families and to ensure an integrated delivery of service.

Child/children used as in the National Children's Strategy i.e. relating to age 0-18 years

Appendix 2

Role of Home, School, Community Liaison with Traveller Families

The Home, School, Community Liaison Scheme acknowledges diversity and has worked since its inception in 1990 and continues to work in an inclusive way with all marginalised groups including Travellers.

The HSCL Scheme is central to addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils/families, through acknowledging and developing the role of the parent as prime educator.

This is done through:

- targeting in a cohesive, planned, manner the families of pupils at risk of educational failure
- home visitation by HSCL coordinators, who build trust, encourage and involve parents in further self-development, education, up-skilling and leisure pursuits
- parental involvement in school life at curricular, policy and organisational level
- harnessing the strengths of the local community in setting up and maintaining Local Committees of parents, pupils, school management and local agencies, all of whom work together to address issues in the community, which impinge on learning. Examples of these include attendance, healthy eating, substance misuse, road safety, bullying and environmental improvement
- training parents to be a resource to their own children, to each other, the school and the wider community. This is achieved through the practical involvement of parents in visiting each other's homes, bringing reading material and information from the school, using their skills in the classroom by involvement in Mathematics for Fun, Paired and Shared Reading, Science for Fun, Storysacks, and working with school and other support staff in areas such as community-based homework clubs, yard games and adult education.

Underpinning all HSCL activities is the importance of needs identification and responding proactively to these needs. The development of partnership at all levels is essential to ensure a whole-school response to educational disadvantage, as well as the effective linking of agencies and the wise utilisation of all available resources.

11.5.1 Recommendations for parents (based on the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*)

These recommendations are in line with the normal work of HSCL coordinators with Traveller families.

Traveller parents' education: Coordinators work to meet the educational needs of parents.

Community Development: Coordinators work to build Traveller parents' understanding and value of education and their direct engagement with the system.

Traveller Representation: Coordinators work to get parents involved in the representative structures

Parent-teacher communication: Coordinators work to build effective communication between Traveller parents and teachers.

School-parent relationship: Coordinators work to include Traveller parents in all aspects of school life.

An inter-agency approach: Coordinators liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies to respond effectively to Traveller parents' educational and other needs.

11.7.2 Expected Outcomes (*based on the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*)

To date the following outcome of HSCL work with Traveller families is noted.

Traveller parents:

- are developing a greater understanding of the education system
- are participating in the education system
- are moving towards higher educational expectations for themselves and many are involved in their own ongoing development
- have high educational expectations for their children and encourage them to continue beyond compulsory education
- participate more fully in the education of their children
- are invited in a gentle way, and in line with their level of readiness, towards partnership in the education system.

Appendix 3

Review Instruments for DEIS Schools

Initial Review: Parent and Community Partnership

Parent Partnership	Strength	Concern	Evidence
Effectiveness of communication between home and school			
Engagement of parents with children's education			
Structures for involvement of parents in school			
Consultation with parents and parent input in organisational/curricular planning			

Community Partnership	Strength	Concern	Evidence
Communication between schools in the community			
Co-operation between schools in the community			
Effective structures for liaising with voluntary and statutory agencies			
Effective community links developed through Local Committee			

Parental Involvement: Evaluation of Current Practice

	Strength	Concern	Evidence
Communication			
<i>Informal Parent/Teacher meetings are facilitated</i>			
<i>Formal Parent/Teacher meetings are held</i>			
<i>Parents are informed of school events: Newsletter/Notice Board/email/text</i>			
<i>Letters/Notes to parents are parent friendly</i>			
<i>Pre-entry/Transfer/Information meetings are held</i>			
<i>School policies and plans are effectively communicated to parents</i>			
<i>Provision is made for parents to respond to communication from school</i>			
<i>Provision is made for parents whose first language is not English</i>			
<i>Other...</i>			

Engagement of Parents with Child's Education: Evaluation of Current Practice

	Strength	Concern	Evidence
Parents are made welcome in the school by all school personnel			
The HSCL scheme engages parents through Home Visitation			
The HSCL scheme provides a variety of supports to promote active cooperation between home and school			
Parent development is facilitated through courses for parents:			
<i>Leisure courses</i>			
<i>Curricular Courses</i>			
<i>Personal Development/Parenting Courses</i>			

Involvement of Parent in Child's Education: Evaluation of Current Practice

	Strength	Concern	Evidence
Parents receive advice and support in relation to supporting their children's learning in the home			
Parents receive information in relation to school subjects, programmes, examinations and careers			
Parents are involved in programmes in school			
<i>Shared Reading/Novel</i>			
<i>Maths for Fun</i>			
<i>Science for Fun</i>			
<i>ICT</i>			
<i>Faith development</i>			
<i>Mini-company</i>			
<i>Work experience</i>			
<i>Parent as visiting speaker</i>			
<i>Craft</i>			
<i>Gardening projects</i>			
<i>Cookery</i>			
<i>Other...</i>			

Involvement of Parents in School Policies and Planning: Evaluation of Current Practice

	Strength	Concern	Evidence
The school has a policy for home/school liaison			
Parents are involved in drawing up school policies			
Parents are involved in organisational planning			
Parents are involved in curricular planning in programmes such as JCSP, LCA, Transition Year, LCVP			
Parents are involved in putting together a school plan			
Parents are involved in drawing up IEPs for own child			
<i>Other...</i>			

Partnership between School and Statutory/Voluntary Agencies: Evaluation of Current Practice

	Strength	Concern	Evidence
The school works in partnership with other schools in the community - pre-schools, primary and second-level schools and third-level			
The school building is available to the community			
The school has a Parents' Room			
The school is part of an effective Local Committee			
The Principal, teachers, parents, pupils regularly attend Local Committee meetings			
The school has effective links with:			
<i>Visiting Teacher Services</i>			
<i>SCP</i>			
<i>NEWB</i>			
<i>NEPS</i>			
<i>HSE</i>			
<i>Gardaí/JLO</i>			
<i>VEC</i>			
<i>NALA</i>			
<i>Fás</i>			
<i>Area Partnership</i>			
<i>Enterprise Boards</i>			
<i>School Business links</i>			
<i>Local Employers</i>			
<i>Other....</i>			

Parental Involvement in Pupil Learning

A Possible Sample Structure for Part of Three Year Plan

Review	Review of structures for parent involvement in the school
Priority	Development of parents' skills in helping their children with numeracy
Target	Set up Maths for Fun at four class levels per year
Action Plan	<p>Establish Action Plan to involve parents in the Maths for Fun:</p> <p><i>Meet relevant teachers and parents to plan work.</i></p> <p><i>Decide Maths strands/strand units to be addressed.</i></p> <p><i>Identify suitable Maths games and place where games can be played.</i></p> <p><i>Purchase Maths games.</i></p> <p><i>Letter to parents inviting participation.</i></p> <p><i>Targeting of marginalised parents by HSCL.</i></p> <p><i>Arrange timetable of participating parents.</i></p> <p><i>Organise classroom layout.</i></p> <p><i>Organise refreshments</i></p>
Who	<i>HSCL coordinator, parents, Principal, relevant teachers, pupils</i>
When	<i>Four-week period, two per term, first and second term</i>
Resources	<i>Appropriate Maths Games, refreshments</i>
Monitoring	<p>Record attendance of parents</p> <p>Record parents' views on the impact of their involvement</p> <p>Record teachers' views on the impact of parents' involvement</p> <p>Record parent and teacher observation of impact on pupils' attitude to Maths</p> <p><i>(Hard-back copy-book placed in classroom could be used)</i></p>
Evaluation	<p>Are parents' skills being developed?</p> <p>Are collaborative ways of working being developed?</p> <p>What might be done differently on next occasion?</p> <p>Are Maths skills being developed? Assessment through teacher designed tests/Standardised Maths tests</p>

Appendix 4

Parents as Educational Home Visitors

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Educationalists acknowledge that parents who stay close to their own children's learning and to school have immense social, cultural and educational capital to invest in their children and in the community. The HSCL Scheme, which trains parents as educational home visitors, recognizes that experienced trained parents acting as agents for the school are best positioned to engage with other parents. Parents who act as home visitors support other parents, and they disseminate information. They enlist other parents, especially young parents, for courses, classes, committees and meetings, especially parent-teacher meetings. They also encourage them to participate in classroom-based HSCL initiatives.

An active interest in educational and school issues, capability and willingness, together with personal development undertaken, are the usual criteria. Parents from all national backgrounds and all school catchment areas are selected. The training involves –

- Explaining to parents in detail how the education system works at all levels
- Raising awareness among the parents of the learning process and to build confidence in the parents
- Maximising their communication skills so that they can convey messages and information for the schools

Visitors work generally in their own area – at first working in pairs to support each other. The training and skill development of parents is continuous and they are kept informed by means of regular meetings, of all changes and developments in education.

Visitors feel that the school, the children and the homes all gain from the visit. The visit is primarily concerned with the provision of educational information – transfer at all levels, school policies, literacy packs or information on classes and courses for parents. The parents can ask questions and share their concerns in the comfort of their own home with a peer. Lareau and Reay found that working-class parents had not got the access to educational knowledge, family and friends working in education or the social networks that middle class parents had. It is clear that the visitors fulfil these roles for each other by offering friendship and a social network, sharing their knowledge of the school system and the supports that work for them.

Appendix 5

Initiatives undertaken by Home, School, Community Liaison coordinators in support of literacy

Early literacy:

Storybook reading by parents to groups of children in school

Speech and Language therapist working with groups of parents in class, modelling to parents how to support their child's language development and parents delivering the programme to groups of children in the classroom.

Pre-school literacy packs, delivered to the home by coordinators and by parents

Pre-school, Early Start and Junior Infant parents workshops on literacy

Paired reading by parents in school

Parent and Toddler groups- talking about pictures in books

Storysacks, both bought ready-made and also made by parents. Parents go into class and tell the story, using props from the story sack.

100 most used words brought to parents

Forward Together (MIST) programme: parents working at home with children

Community Mothers programme: reading with infants

Letterland for Parents (course)

Literacy for Fun: literacy games

Parent libraries in schools

Language development programme: Workshops for parents using seasonal activities as basis for children's language development

Reading Challenge-supported at home by parents

Make a Book

Write a Book

Books into the home

HSCL supporting teachers in explaining language of curriculum and content of curriculum to parents

Middle and Senior Primary:

Parents working with children on computers.

CAPER-Children and Parents Enjoy Reading

Paired Reading with parents and Senior pupils at home and at school

Homework Support where parents attend with child and parents advised on how to help their child with homework

Many of activities listed at Junior level also operate at this level

Post-primary

Linking parents into JCSP literacy activities

Literacy activities for parents and students in the home: Largy College model

Students involved in Paired Reading with junior students at post-primary and primary level

Books on CD delivered to homes by HSCL and by parents

Parents working in schools to develop library facilities and stock libraries

Parents on Literacy Committees

Community/Adult Education

Linking with VEC Adult Education programme

Facilitating FETAC certification of parent education programmes

Liaising with Library service-facilitating parent introductory talks and parent visits

Adopting and celebrating a book in the Community

One Book One City/Town model:

A book is chosen. It is read by pupils, parents and community members. It is celebrated and publicised.

Plans for Lifelong Learning Festival in local communities.