



5.7 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

JANUARY 2009

Parent Involvement in our School:

At St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College we see education as a life long process, in which people develop knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. Schooling is an integral part of this process. Parents are acknowledged as the prime educators of their children, a responsibility shared with teachers. The active participation of parents in the school is encouraged as an effective way of ensuring a strong home/school partnership.

Throughout the school, parents are invited to work with the teachers in a variety of activities. Some of these activities might include, art/craft sessions, assistance with individual reading and writing, excursions and sports training.

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote parent/carer participation in a diversity of roles to support children's education
- provide a framework for effective partnerships with parents/carers at system level and in schools
- affirm parents/carers participation as a highly desirable component of Glenvale School, and
- acknowledge parents/carers as first educators of their children and their right to participate in their children's schooling.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 This policy applies to St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College. It also includes some general principles which parents/carers are encouraged to adopt in working with and in schools in support of students' learning.

3. DEFINITIONS

- Parent/Carer(s): people with parental responsibility and guardians.
- Children: primary school and secondary students.
- Parent/Carer participation: engagement with their child's schooling in a broad sense (refer to scope for further details).
- Partnership: a mutually respectful and responsive relationship in which goals are shared and the assumption of goodwill exists. It also implies participation in decision-making or an ability to influence decisions.
- School community: includes parents/carers, students, the Coptic community and staff – both non teaching and teaching.
- Two-way communication: regular, meaningful dialogue initiated by both parents/carers and staff.

4. CONTEXT

Parent/Carer participation:

- enhances social and educational outcomes for children, and communication between classrooms and homes
- allows schools to benefit from socio-cultural diversity that children and parents bring to schools
- enhances understanding of parents/carers and school activities
- provides schools with a broader resource base from which to draw in providing learning opportunities and services to children and families
- increases participation in decision-making in the community, and
- enhances community spirit and cohesion.

5. SCOPE

The scope of parent/carer involvement enables the planning of more inclusive strategies to enhance parent/carer participation. It acknowledges the rights of parents/carers to have their opinions respected and considered, including the need for sensitivity to the rights and roles of adults with different caring responsibilities.

The scope covers:

- ***Parenting Responsibilities: the basic parenting responsibilities that support children and which are central to a child's successful participation in schooling.***
- ***Learning at Home: participation and support in general developmental learning through childhood and adolescence and in school work at home.***
- ***Communication: formal and informal communication between home and school about school programs, activities and student progress. Communication is a two way process and is one of the most basic elements of supporting home-school partnerships.***
- ***Volunteering: the traditional, visible and highly valued form of parent/carer participation in schools. It includes helping in classrooms and other areas of the school, fund raising and support services. It may also include the support and involvement of parents/carers in Parent/School/Friends Associations.***
- ***Decision Making: the involvement of parents/carers in decision-making at various levels, e.g. Composite Classes.***
- ***Community: Parents/Carers support students and schools through active roles in the school community.***

6. PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 All parents have knowledge, skills and resources that support their children's learning in school and parents have a strong complementary role to play in their children's learning and behaviour.
- 6.2 Parent/Carer participation is very important to student achievement and school success. Effective partnerships between schools and families foster student learning and contribute to the general climate and development of schools. Comprehensive parent/carer participation is valued and encouraged at all levels of the school.

6.3 The school aims to acknowledge, encourage and extend parent/carer participation by:

- creating an environment in which the participation of all parents/carers in schools and student learning is welcomed, where teachers and parents treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinions are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions;
- involving parents/carers in decision-making at the school, by consulting with parent/carer representatives on education policy, school development issues, including parent/carer representation on advisory groups;
- encouraging parent/carer participation as volunteers to support schools and classroom activities; (**Note:** parental assistance is additional to paid, trained teacher assistants and not in place of them).
- promoting relevant, accurate and timely communication between schools and families about student progress, all aspects of school programs and policies with respect for the diversity and differing needs of families;
- developing system and school programs and strategies that encourage and assist parents/carers to actively participate in their children's education both at school and at home;
- connecting children and families with community and support services;
- supporting programs and activities designed to develop parenting skills; and
- providing information about the benefits of parent participation and enhancing the skills of teachers and parents in developing effective home-school partnerships.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Responsibilities of the College Management Team:

- provide a system framework for the development of effective home-school partnerships and encouragement of parent participation in schools and students' learning;
- provide opportunities for teachers and parents to enhance their skills in developing effective home-school partnerships; and
- establish a school environment that welcomes and encourages all parents to raise questions, participate in school activities and volunteer their services in a variety of ways;
- ensure that parents are treated as collaborators in children's learning;

- ensure that parent views are sought in developing policies and addressing school issues,
- ensure a school wide approach to communication with parents about school policies, programs, activities and reporting on students that is frequent, clear and two way; and
- report on parent participation in annual reports/school magazines and the like.

7.2 Responsibilities of Teachers

The responsibilities of teachers in parent/carer participation are to:

- acknowledge that all parents have positive strengths that contribute to their children’s learning;
- respect diversity of family backgrounds and their contribution to children’s learning;
- encourage parent involvement in their children’s learning and provide advice to support that environment; and
- provide clear and timely information to parents about the achievements and progress of their children and provide regular opportunities for two way dialogue about progress.

7.4 Responsibility of Parents/Carers:

- Parents/Carers need to comply with all relevant policies, procedures and guidelines, and the College Management Team’s directives that pertain to visitors when they enter a school.
- Parents/Carers need to comply with all relevant legislation applicable to working within a school, e.g. Working With Children.
- Parents/Carers who have issue with decisions taken by class teachers should attempt to resolve these at the school level in the first instance with either the Head of Primary or the Head of Secondary. Should resolution be unachievable, the issue(s) should be raised with the College Management Team.
- Parents/Carers who, in the course of their participation, become a party to confidential information must agree not to divulge the information to any other person.

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