HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON SCHEME

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Home-School-Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme was introduced by the Department of Education in the latter part of 1990 as an initiative to counteract disadvantage by increasing co-operation between schools, parents, and other community agencies in the education of young people. During its first year, the scheme was limited to primary level and provision was made for 30 posts of home-school-community liaison co-ordinators to be filled by teachers. In all, 55 schools in seven areas in Dublin, Cork, and Limerick became involved. At the end of the first year the scheme was extended at primary level and also to second level. Thirteen post-primary schools serving families that were served by primary schools in the HSCL scheme as well as 25 primary schools joined the scheme.

A National Steering Committee was established to advise on all aspects of the scheme. A National Co-ordinator and, subsequently, an Assistant National Co-ordinator were appointed to advise on and support the development of the scheme, to liaise with participants in the scheme at local level, and to provide a link with national level. Other support for the scheme was provided through inservice courses (for co-ordinators, principals, inspectors, and, to a lesser extent, teachers) and cluster meetings of co-ordinators.

Much of the evaluation effort was directed towards the formation and development of programmes and evaluation strategies were modified as the programmes developed. School principals and co-ordinators provided information in written form and, during visits to schools, interviews were conducted with principals, co-ordinators, teachers, parents, and pupils. Following analyses of HSCL activities during the first year, six schools were selected for more detailed study in subsequent years. Measures of pupils' achievements were obtained to serve as baseline data for later study of the impact of HSCL programmes on pupils. A sample of mothers who were involved in the HSCL scheme was interviewed at the end of the second year.

All primary and post-primary schools had a number of basic structures in place to facilitate home-school relationships before the inception of the HSCL scheme. However, it

was recognized that more needed to be done. For the most part, the role of parents was a relatively passive one. A consideration of this state of affairs indicated a need for the school to adopt a more proactive role in promoting home-school relationships. Three major approaches seemed appropriate. The first would involve increasing the variety and quantity of home-school contacts. Secondly, the quality of the contacts would need to be improved. And thirdly, there was a need to ensure that as great a number as possible of parents would be involved in home-school activities.

In implementing HSCL programmes, work with parents (either in school or the home) took up two-thirds (67%) of co-ordinators' time. By contrast, only 15% of time was spent with teachers and 9% in community-related activities. It can be accepted on the basis of these data that concern with parents was the main preoccupation of co-ordinators and was directly related to two of the aims of the scheme.

Parents' main area of involvement was attendance at courses and activities, the most popular of which were those related to children's education, self-development, parenting, and home management. The pattern of activities at post-primary level was not greatly dissimilar to that at primary level. However, at primary level, there was greater parent involvement in paired-reading programmes and in classroom activity than at second level.

A major advantage of the HSCL scheme was in its provision of a co-ordinator to liaise with parents and the community outside the school. This was found to be a boon to teachers. Through home visits, co-ordinators generally managed to make contact with parents who had no other contact with the school. Contacts with community agencies were generally perceived as helpful, the most valued contributions coming from agencies which one would expect to provide services related to the long-term development of parents and communities.

In general, the picture is one in which changes occurred in primary schools as a result of HSCL programmes. Further, changes in teachers' attitudes towards parents--their role in the home and in the school--were more frequently positive than negative. However, there was variation between schools in the extent to which HSCL programmes impacted on schools.

And even where there was an impact, it did not touch all teachers. Despite differences in context, many of the reported effects on post-primary schools were very similar to those reported for primary schools. The most striking effect of the extension of the HSCL scheme to post-primary schools was the development of links between primary and post-primary levels in the scheme, and in particular, of activities relating to the transition of students from primary to post-primary school.

The views of co-ordinators and teachers are in general agreement in seeing considerable benefit for mothers arising from HSCL programmes at both primary and post-primary levels. Parents' personal development was perceived to have benefited and their attitudes towards involvement in the school were perceived to have become more positive. Further, parents developed a new interest in what happened in school, came to the school more frequently, were more aware of the working of schools, talked more about educational issues, and had a greater awareness of the classroom situation and of the problems of teachers.

Findings on the characteristics of uninvolved parents lend support to teachers' views that some parents who were considered to be most in need of assistance did not become involved in HSCL programmes. They also indicate the need for further efforts to increase the level of involvement of such parents.

A number of effects on pupils were reported by co-ordinators. These included improved behaviour, improved attendance, improved scholastic achievement, greater care in their school work, and more positive attitudes to school and teachers, to themselves, and to their parents.

A number of problems emerged regarding the operation of Local Committees. However, though slow to develop, by the end of the third year of the scheme, Local Committees had begun to play a greater role in planning and decision making in relation to HSCL activities.

It seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of the evaluation that a major start had been made in promoting active co-operation between home and school. Schools had become more accommodating of parents, providing a wide range of services for them, and allowing them to

participate more actively in the work of the school and of classrooms. There is also some evidence that movement had occurred towards raising awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills. Judging the extent to which the active participation of children, particularly those at risk of failure, in the learning process was enhanced is more problematic. Effects on pupil achievement of a project such as the HSCL scheme would be likely to be long-term rather than short-term. However, schools had moved in the direction of providing a more appropriate educational environment for children, providing basis for hope that long-term benefits would accrue to the children. Given the intransigence of the problems associated with disadvantage, it is suggested that home-school-community initiatives should be linked to other more school-based strategies.

1. HOME BACKGROUND AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Summary

Relationships between home background factors and educational achievement are examined. Reasons for concern about low achieving students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are outlined. Criteria that generally apply to students regarded as being disadvantaged are listed.

The relationship between home background factors and educational achievement has long been the subject of empirical enquiry. Binet in his pioneering work on intelligence testing at the turn of the century had noted a positive relationship between test performance and the occupation of children's parents. Relationships between social class or socioeconomic status and children's performance have since been documented in numerous studies (see White, 1982), including ones in Ireland (Greaney & Kellaghan, 1984; Investment in education, 1965; Kellaghan & Macnamara, 1972). Four major findings emerge. First, level of social class or socioeconomic status is positively but not very strongly related to a variety of measures of scholastic ability and achievement. Second, the effects of home differences are already in evidence when children start school and are reflected in children's preparedness to benefit from schooling. Third, the level of social class or socioeconomic status of a child's family is related to the length of time a child stays at school. And fourth, when curriculum options are available, there is a marked tendency for children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to follow academic-type curricula which lead to third-level education, while children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to enrol in technical, vocational, 'short-cycle,' or general educational courses (Kellaghan, 1994).

Over the past three decades, the interest of many investigators and policy makers has focused on those students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and perform poorly at school. Interest and concern developed for at least two reasons. First, the relatively poor performance in the educational system of children from certain socioeconomic backgrounds was seen as a failure to provide equality of educational opportunity, a principle to which most industrialized countries, including Ireland, subscribe today (see Greaney & Kellaghan, 1984; Ireland, 1992). A second reason for the interest in and concern for low achievers was that their achievement was not just relatively poorer than that of higher performing students but was absolutely poor. Many left school with very limited skills and went on to a life of dependency on state aid, unemployment, and sometimes crime. While these factors should not be related to low achievement in a simplistic way, there can be little doubt that a low level of scholastic achievement places students at an enormous disadvantage in the labour market.

Various terms such as 'educationally disadvantaged,' 'marginalized,' and 'at risk' have been used to describe such students. The terms have been defined in various ways but most

definitions imply a discontinuity between children's homes and community experiences and the demands of schooling. An early definition regarded students as being disadvantaged if, because of sociocultural reasons, they entered the school system with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make adjustment difficult and impede learning (Passow, 1970). In the United States, such children most likely belong to a racial/ethnic minority group, live in a poverty household with a single parent, have a poorly educated mother, and speak a home language that differs from that used in school (Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989). Obviously these criteria would not all apply in the Irish situation. While it may be important to develop indicators for use in Ireland to help identify families, students, or areas that are likely to be disadvantaged, it is important to bear in mind that the presence of an indicator does not necessarily imply disadvantage and perhaps even of greater importance, it does not mean that the indicator is the cause of disadvantage.

While ethnic minority or language minority groups do not exist on the same scale in Ireland as in many other countries, at the same time, there can be little doubt that there are serious problems of disadvantage in the country. The Investment in education (1965) report drew attention to problems of inequality in the system though it did not specifically deal with the problem of disadvantage. Since the report was published, several studies have documented the particular problems of children living in disadvantaged areas (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977), and the early school drop-out and poor labour-market prospects of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Breen, 1991; Hannan, 1992; Hannan & Shortall, 1991). In the next section, the educational strategies that have been developed in Ireland to deal with such problems will be briefly described.

2. EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH DISADVANTAGE IN IRELAND

Summary

Educational strategies to deal with disadvantage in Ireland are outlined. These include additional funding for schools, preschool education, and non-formal education for older students. Two major approaches that focus on family intervention, the cognitive-behavioural and the community-based approaches, are described.

There have been few educational efforts in Ireland to deal specifically with the problems of disadvantage compared to those in other countries, particularly the United States (see Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez & Bloom, 1993). Since early in the century, there have, however, been limited schemes in Ireland to provide children in need with food, school books, clothing, and footwear (National Economic and Social Council, 1993).

More recently (in 1984), a scheme for providing additional funding to schools in disadvantaged areas was set up. Indicators used to identify a disadvantaged area include numbers of children living in rented local authority housing, numbers of children whose parents are unemployed, numbers holding medical cards, and inspectors' assessment of need (National Economic and Social Council, 1993). The number of designated disadvantaged schools is at present 258. Grants were paid to schools for the purchase of books and equipment (£10 per pupil) and for the development of home-school-community liaison (£5 per pupil). Review of the operation of the scheme indicated that while the grants for books and equipment had proved very useful, the quality of home-school-community liaison activities varied widely and indeed activities were not undertaken in some schools at all. Feedback from schools indicated that if home-school-community relationships were to be adequately developed, there was a need for a teacher who would be assigned responsibility for this work. Schools' views of the nature of the home-school relationship indicated that the greatest perceived need was for parent education. There was less appreciation of the contribution which parents could make to their children's education or of the possibility that schools also might need to change. Schools, however, did express a wish to receive guidelines to guide their practice in the development of home-school-community relationships.

Apart from these mainstream developments, a number of small-scale projects have also been initiated to cope with disadvantage. The first of these involved the establishment of a preschool in 1969 for three- to five-year old children in a disadvantaged area in central Dublin (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977). A major aim of the project was to assist children in developing their cognitive skills and so prepare them for the work of the primary school. While the project was primarily centre-based, a variety of efforts were made to involve parents. It was found that children (particularly those whose initial achievements were low)

made good progress in acquiring school-related knowledge and skills during their two years in the preschool. However, in their early years in primary school, the children failed to keep pace with the achievements of children in the general population.

A follow-up of the later educational careers, labour-market experience, leisure activities, and social deviance of the participants in the preschool programme indicated that, compared to non-participants from the same geographical area, participants (especially girls) stayed longer at school and were more likely to take a public examination (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1993).

An initiative for older students in disadvantaged areas is to be found in Youth Encounter Projects (YEPs), of which there are two in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Limerick. Set up in the late 1970s, YEPs are intended to provide educational experience for a small number (25 to 30) of students, aged between 10 and 16 years, who are unable to cope with the conditions of normal schools. Each YEP has the services of a full-time community worker who liaises with students' homes and maintains contact with students after they leave the centre.

It will be noted that these interventions to deal with disadvantage have been primarily school- or centre-based, though efforts were made in both the preschool and YEPs to involve parents in the educational activities of the centres. It could be argued, however, that not sufficient cognizance was taken in the projects of the important roles that homes and the communities in which the homes are embedded play in children's development and education.

If one looks to other parts of the world, one finds greater variation in efforts to deal with problems of disadvantage than in Ireland. Following the major Head Start intervention in the United States in the 1960s, and the initially disappointing reports of its effects, many projects have set out to accord a greater role to parents in intervention efforts (see Comer, 1980; Davies, 1991; Epstein, 1987; Fine, 1989; Swap, 1990). When given such a role, parental involvement was considered to have made an important contribution to the success of programmes (Lazar & Darlington, 1982). In Britain also, parental involvement has been found to be associated with improved pupil achievement (Athey, 1990). Reflecting these findings, many parent involvement programmes in many countries today are seen as representing a substantial public commitment to the provision of educational opportunity for disenfranchised populations (Powell, 1988).

As in other social programmes, two major approaches can be detected in ones which focus on family intervention. One approach is cognitive-behavioural in its orientation and seeks to enhance personal skills, knowledge, and teaching and learning skills. Programmes following this orientation may be directed towards parents or towards children. When directed towards parents, they seek to increase their sensitivity to the importance of their role

in the educational process, promote their acceptance of the perceived benefits of formal education, develop skills for interacting with their children in ways that would promote the children's educational development, or provide opportunity for self-development. Programmes attempting to achieve any of these things may also work to change social norms in the interest of supporting and maintaining behaviour change related to education. Programmes when focused more directly on children provide activities and opportunities for developing skills, knowledge, attitudes, and affects related to scholastic behaviour.

The alternative approach to the cognitive-behavioural one is community-based. Among the objectives of programmes following the community-based approach are the establishment and strengthening of social networks to effect change in attitudes to education and in the conditions which support children's scholastic efforts; the empowerment of community members by facilitating the development of their skills, knowledge, and motivation; the organization of communities to address and deal with their own problems; and the improvement of the availability of, and access to, community resources and services. Such programmes are more likely to be focused on parents than on their children though one could also envisage programmes directed towards the mobilization of peer groups to support scholastic development, particularly during the period of adolescence.

Many programmes, of course, do not fit neatly into either the cognitive-behavioural or community-based category since they attempt to provide a comprehensive range of services for families and children. There are two reasons for developing comprehensive programmes. First, although there is evidence that would appear to support the idea that cognitive-behavioural programmes that focus resources close to the teaching-learning situation are likely to be more effective, at least in the short run, in affecting the scholastic achievement of children (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993), the evidence is not sufficiently conclusive to indicate that resources should be limited to such activities. And second, the needs of children and families are often so widespread that it does not seem feasible to concentrate efforts in only one area, while ignoring other needs. For example, many programmes for the disadvantaged in other countries find it necessary to assist families in nutrition, health care, and child-rearing practices before commencing, or in conjunction with, activities focused on parent behaviours that are more directly related to the development and reinforcement of their children's cognitive or scholastic skills.

In the 1990 budget, £1.5 million (a trebling of the 1989 allocation) was made available for primary schools in disadvantaged areas. It was decided by the Department of Education to use this money to support pilot Home-School-Community Liaison (HSCL) programmes designed to use school-based personnel to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education.

3. THE HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON (HSCL) SCHEME

Summary

Five aims of the HSCL scheme are listed. Structures and personnel that provided support for the development and maintenance of the scheme are described. A description of participating schools at primary and post-primary levels is given. An outline of selection and assignment of co-ordinators is provided.

Aims of the HSCL Scheme

The aims of the HSCL scheme developed during the first three years of its implementation. At the end of the 1992-93 school year the scheme had five main aims.

(i) To maximise active participation of the children in the scheme schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure.

(ii) To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.

(iii) To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.

(iv) To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their life long attitudes to learning.

(v) To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.

Structure and Personnel

The HSCL scheme was designed to operate through the following structures and personnel: National Steering Committee, National Co-ordinator, Local Co-ordinators, Local Committees, and Evaluator.

National Steering Committee

A National Steering Committee was established 'to advise on aims, objectives, arrangements for the establishment and monitoring of the project' (Pilot Project on Home/School/Community Liaison). At the outset of the scheme, this committee was composed of representatives of the Department of Education (primary), the Department of Health, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, the National Parents' Council (primary), the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association, the Conference of Major Religious Superiors, Dr Thomas Kellaghan (Educational Research Centre), Professor Damian Hannan (Economic and Social Research Institute), and the Community Relations section of the Garda Síochána. The National Co-ordinator and the Evaluator were also members of the National Steering Committee.

In conjunction with the extension of the scheme to second level, the membership of the National Steering Committee was expanded to incorporate representatives of the Department of Education (post-primary), the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, the Teachers' Union of Ireland, the Irish Vocational Education Authority, the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, the National Parents' Council (post-primary), the Secretariat of Secondary Schools, and the Assistant National Co-ordinator.

National Co-ordinator

The responsibility of the National Co-ordinator as defined in An Explanatory Memorandum for Schools is as follows:

> to advise, support and animate the local co-ordinators and the local committees, liaise with the local co-ordinators on an individual, local and school cluster basis and act as a liaison person between the cluster areas and the national steering committee of the pilot project.

In association with the extension of the scheme to second level, an Assistant National Co-ordinator, with relevant experience in second level education, was appointed to work with the National Co-ordinator at the beginning of the third year.

Local Co-ordinators

According to an initial job description, the aim of the each local co-ordinator was 'to establish confidence, trust, mutual support and co-operation between parents and teachers, thereby enhancing perceptions and attitudes to the social, behavioural, and educational advantage of the children' (Pilot Projects in Home/School/Community Liaison Draft Job Description). The draft job description consisted of 16 areas of involvement or tasks for local co-ordinators.

In March 1991, a document entitled An Explanatory Memorandum for Schools was circulated to schools involved in the scheme. According to this document, the 'objective' of co-ordinators was 'to reinforce the aspect of co-operation between home, school, and community in the educative process.'

Evaluator

Evaluation was perceived to be an integral part of the HSCL scheme and was expected to perform formative and summative functions. The Evaluator was a member of the National Steering Committee and provided reports at each meeting as well as annual reports on primary and post-primary schools. It was agreed that the National Steering Committee would discuss and have input to the evaluation at all stages of the work. From the outset, all parties were in agreement that the evaluation should contain formative as well as summative components so that evaluation findings could be of benefit to the ongoing development of the scheme.

Participating Schools

Primary Schools

Schools in seven areas--five in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Limerick--were invited by the Department of Education through the chairpersons of their Boards of Management to participate in the scheme. Provision was made for 30 posts of home-school-community liaison co-ordinators to be filled in 1990-91 by teachers seconded from their teaching posts for a three-year period. In all, 55 out of the 190 schools which were in the Department's disadvantaged schools scheme at the time became involved in the scheme. There were 18,600 children in the 55 schools (52,000 in the 190 schools). In May 1991, one further school was officially admitted to the scheme, bringing the total number of schools to 56 and the total number of home-school-community liaison co-ordinators to 31.

A further 24 schools (including schools from new areas of Galway and Waterford) entered the scheme in the 1991-92 school year bringing the total number of schools to 80 and the total number of co-ordinators to 45. During the course of the year, one of the schools that had entered the scheme in 1990-91 withdrew. In this report, where the distinction seems appropriate, schools which entered in 1990-91 will be referred to as first cohort schools and those that entered in the second year as second cohort schools.

Post-Primary Schools

The HSCL scheme was extended to post-primary schools with effect from November 1, 1991. Sixteen schools at post-primary level which serve families that are served by primary schools in the HSCL scheme (with one exception) were invited by the Department of Education to join the scheme. This would involve all schools designating a concessionary post in the school for HSCL work. Thirteen schools accepted the invitation. Six were community colleges, two were vocational schools, three were secondary schools, and two were community schools.

Selection and Assignment of Co-ordinators

Primary

There were three methods by which the 31 first cohort co-ordinators were chosen for the position. For almost half the appointments (n=14), Boards of Management were in agreement with the recommendation of the National Co-ordinator. In eight instances, the school principal or two or more principals made a recommendation with which the Board of Management agreed. Finally, there were nine instances in which only one person applied for the position and was appointed.

Just under half (n=15) of the co-ordinators were appointed to serve a single school. Of these, six were appointed to an all-through national school. The remaining nine were

appointed to either a junior or senior school and were encouraged to work as a unit with the co-ordinator in the other school.

Just over a third (n=12) of co-ordinators were assigned to serve two schools. Again, the nature of this assignment varied. Half were assigned to junior and senior schools which were located beside each other. The other half were assigned to a variety of situations--i.e., to serve a boys' and a girls' school (n=1), to serve two girls' schools (n=3), to serve a mixed junior and a senior boys' school (n=1), or to serve a mixed junior and a developing school some distance away (n=1).

A third group of co-ordinators (n=4) was assigned to multiple schools (either 4 or 5) in Dublin city centre. In this case, an attempt was made to group schools according to their proximity to each other. Enrolments in the schools were low, ranging from 53 to 337 pupils.

During the second year of the scheme, 14 additional co-ordinators were appointed at primary level. The National Co-ordinator met candidates for the position and made a recommendation about the appointment to the Board of Management of the schools in question. In most cases (n=11) this recommendation was accepted. In two cases there was only one applicant for the position.

Four of the co-ordinators were appointed to serve a single school, all of which were all-through national schools. Eight were assigned to serve two schools: three to a situation in which the junior and senior schools were located beside each other; three to a boys' and girls' school on the same campus; and two to schools in separate areas. The remaining two co-ordinators were assigned to serve a group of four schools in the same area.

While schools which were identified as exhibiting a high level of activity in the first year of the scheme were as likely to be associated with a co-ordinator who had responsibility for more than one school as with a co-ordinator who was responsible for only one school, at the same time difficulties were experienced in serving two or more schools. These arose particularly from time constraints that affected visiting homes, attending meetings, and meeting with staff of more than one school. There were also increased demands in terms of planning for more than one school and in being accountable to several principals and staffs, sometimes resulting in resentment between schools if a co-ordinator was perceived to be spending more time or energy in one than in another. Co-ordinators were also expected to report on their work to each principal on a school basis rather than on their work as a whole.

Further practical difficulties included the necessity to delegate responsibility for sending notes about activities (since the co-ordinator might not be in the school on the relevant day), the need to reach several catchment areas and different families, and to carry materials from place to place, or the fact that contact with one's own staff group was diminished. Co-ordinators also found that parents became confused about the days or times that they were in

the school and frustrated when the co-ordinator was not available. They also often experienced difficulty in following up on a problem when time was lost in taking action.

However, there were also some advantages in serving more than one school. One such advantage occurred when the schools involved were junior and senior schools serving the same families. Since it is easier to reach parents through a junior school, this facilitated work within the senior school. Co-ordinators also found that when they served more than one school they had a broader contact group to call on (parents, staff, principals, etc.) and that their work resulted in increased communication between the staffs of different schools. Again, when serving more than one school, if the schools were in one area, the co-ordinator tended to think more in terms of an area than in terms of a school and this resulted in more integration of activities. Co-ordinators also used positive experiences gained in one school to work through difficulties in another and, in some instances, staff from one school assisted in establishing activities (e.g., paired reading) in another.

In the first year of the scheme enrollment was a factor in deciding whether a co-ordinator should serve one or more schools. Since some schools had quite small enrollments, this criterion seemed appropriate. In subsequent assignments of co-ordinators, to address problems experienced at an earlier stage, the proximity of schools and their location were also considered. The optimum arrangement would seem to be that a co-ordinator would serve no more than two centres.

Post-primary

Due to the fact that the scheme was introduced at relatively short notice to post-primary schools, most of the appointments to the position of co-ordinator were made by principals. The National Co-ordinator was involved in the appointment of one co-ordinator.

During the 1991-92 school year, four post-primary co-ordinators worked full-time in the position. Others worked from 11 to 18 hours a week, and had teaching responsibilities for the remainder of their hours. At an early stage in the scheme, co-ordinators tended to think that continuing to teach part-time would have the advantage of keeping them in touch with classes and students. Towards the end of the year, however, having experienced the demands of the co-ordinators' role, they were more inclined to the view that the post should be full-time.

During the 1992-93 school year, eight post-primary co-ordinators were full time, one had four hours teaching responsibility, and the remaining four co-ordinators worked for 11 hours a week on HSCL and had teaching responsibilities for the remainder of their hours.

4. SUPPORT FOR THE SCHEME

Summary

Support for the HSCL scheme was provided mainly through inservice courses (for co-ordinators, principals, inspectors, and, to a lesser extent, teachers), cluster meetings, and a National and Assistant National Co-ordinator. During their first year in the scheme, each cohort of co-ordinators participated in approximately nine days of formal inservice designed to inform them about the scheme and to develop attitudes, concepts, and skills for their work. Subsequent inservice provision developed in parallel to co-ordinators' experiences and needs. Principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and inspectors attended one-day seminars to inform them of the background to, and activities involved in, the scheme. In the third year of the scheme, the National Co-ordinator provided staff development sessions in most schools. Throughout the three years, cluster meetings became increasingly important as a source of support and development among co-ordinators. The National Co-ordinators met co-ordinators individually and in clusters, visited schools, and attended various meetings to provide support and to disseminate information about developments within the scheme.

The main sources of support for the HSCL scheme were inservice courses (for co-ordinators, principals, inspectors, and to a lesser extent, teachers); cluster meetings; a National Co-ordinator, and subsequently an Assistant National Co-ordinator, who were available to schools and local co-ordinators.

Inservice for Co-ordinators

Inservice provision for co-ordinators is described in detail in the National Co-ordinators' Annual Report for 1992-93. In undergoing a systematic process since November 1990, co-ordinators have been exposed to processes designed to develop a range of attitudes, concepts, and skills for their work.

The skills involved related to both personal and professional development. Personal qualities which were targeted included improved self-esteem, the ability to make decisions, to delegate responsibility, and to begin a process of empowering those around them, as well as coping with negative attitudes of others and overcoming hindrances in their work. Co-ordinators were encouraged to influence teachers and parents as much as possible by being examples of these attributes.

Aspects of professional skills that were the focus of courses for co-ordinators included the ability to identify needs in collaboration with people in the community and to tailor programmes, as far as possible, to meet these needs. Co-ordinators were encouraged to listen to each other and to everybody with whom they have contact. Closely related to this is the notion of developing trust and openness within groups so that discussions can be of optimal benefit to HSCL programmes.

Co-ordinators have continually been encouraged and reminded to focus their attention on the causes of problems rather than on the immediate symptoms (though, in certain

circumstances the latter may be necessary). Leadership skills have also been emphasised in individual co-ordinators, as well as the ability to identify and develop leaders within the community. Co-ordinators have also been encouraged to establish links with as many other individuals and agencies as possible in the community. This would enable them to avail of as many services and resources (including information) as possible, to direct parents to appropriate services, and to avoid duplication of services. Finally, co-ordinators have been encouraged to plan, monitor, and evaluate their work on an ongoing basis and support for this has been available through the National Co-ordinators and cluster groups.

Inservice for Co-ordinators, 1990-91

Formal evaluation of inservice provision for the HSCL scheme was not invited or carried out. However, issues identified during the courses are noted here.

Co-ordinators

A one-week induction course for co-ordinators was held in November 1990. The main emphasis in the session was on combining theoretical background and practical insight to provide co-ordinators with an understanding of the philosophy underlying the HSCL scheme and an awareness of the variety of resources that could be tapped in home-school-community liaison. The course format was outlined to co-ordinators and an overview of the HSCL scheme was presented. Co-ordinators were facilitated in the identification of their hopes, fears, and expectations for their role and for the scheme. These issues were referred to and discussed in the context of various aspects of the course throughout the week.

The underlying philosophy of partnership (between homes, schools, and communities) was presented and the characteristics of school practice that reflect different home-school relationships were examined. Each co-ordinator then identified the characteristics of practices in his or her own school to reveal a 'starting point' on the path towards equal partnership. At another point in the course, principles of 'good school practice' were examined, along with some different perceptions of what constituted such practice.

Detailed information on a project in Strathclyde, Scotland was outlined with particular emphasis on the assessment of area needs, examination of good practice, the skills needed by co-ordinators, and the variety of resources that could be drawn upon in HSCL. Co-ordinators were given a practical exercise in examining such an area from the reality of the Strathclyde project. This was an attempt not only to highlight the identification of area needs, but also to determine which of these needs they as co-ordinators could address.

In the session 'Reflecting on skills and processes,' co-ordinators were presented with a list of inherent personal qualities and specific abilities relevant to the role of co-ordinator. Once recognized, these could be drawn on as valuable resources both within themselves and

amongst colleagues, community members, and others (e.g., paraprofessionals). The processes involved in the stages towards development of these skills were also outlined.

A practical insight into two Dublin experiences of home-school-community liaison work was provided by a group including parents, teachers, and the former principal of a school in which home-school-community programmes were established. A person who had been working in the capacity of co-ordinator in another school also spoke at the course.

The evaluation component of the scheme was explained and co-ordinators were given an opportunity to discuss and provide input to the draft evaluation plan and to the substance of the proposed monthly progress record (which was subsequently modified to a bi-monthly record of HSCL activity).

Two seminars on 'Leadership and change processes' were held to provide a model for working with different groups (in the context of oppression). A detailed description of oppression was presented (i.e., what it is, the processes it involves, and its numerous consequences). Given this theoretical base, co-ordinators then carried out an exercise which highlighted how such processes might manifest themselves in their particular contexts. This exercise also served to raise a precautionary awareness within co-ordinators of the internalized attitudes and feelings they possibly carry with them into their new roles. The second part of this session described the processes of leadership and change in society, reflecting on the contexts of each change stage, from dependency to co-operation.

Representatives of three community-based structures in education, health, and law enforcement areas gave presentations relating to the scheme's 'community networking' dimension. Co-ordinators were encouraged, where possible, to liaise with outside agencies as a means of facilitating community involvement. In a session on planning, a step-by-step model out of which co-ordinators were encouraged to work in their approach to their new role was also put forward. Time was allocated for co-ordinators to raise issues about which principals should be made aware and it was planned to present these at the day seminar for principals and inspectors during the following week.

The second inservice course for co-ordinators was held over a three-day period in February, 1991. The course was designed to allow co-ordinators to reflect on current needs, to share experiences among the group (progress, fears, expectations), devise directions to guide future goal-setting and activities, and prepare the ground for Local Committees.

Shared experiences, at group and individual level, revealed a palpable feeling of isolation and lack of clear direction among co-ordinators. This was indicated through voiced needs to spend a full day together as a group listening to each other's experiences, to 'clear the air' about obstacles encountered, to define roles more clearly, to establish some feasible limit on goals and activities, and to receive training in needed skills.

Co-ordinators provided feedback on the Progress Record to the evaluators. The evaluators presented a plan to assist co-ordinators in focusing their work.

A series of presentations and practical group exercises were conducted to help co-ordinators identify and develop listening skills as well as skills and processes associated with group meetings.

The contents of the draft Local Co-ordinating Committees' document served the basis for discussion of Local Committees and the National Co-ordinator gave a description of her role in planning, identifying needs, and supporting co-ordinators.

Finally, co-ordinators identified issues to be addressed at the next inservice course. A third inservice course for co-ordinators was held in June 1991 to address the issues raised. The agenda for the day covered discussion of experiences, assessment of current needs, and forward planning.

During later inservice courses, as far as possible, training needs identified by co-ordinators were the focus of the courses. The response of co-ordinators to a request to suggest issues for discussion resulted in a considerable list of topics including home visits; courses/classes in parenting, curriculum, self-development, health, budgeting, literacy, parent training for the classroom; leisure activities; paired reading; networking; local committees; teacher participation; whole-school approach; conflict between school and community perspectives; and time management. Due to time constraints, discussion was limited to some of the above issues.

Most time was spent in the discussion of home visits. Co-ordinators reported feeling helpless when visiting some homes. While they went to homes to discuss educational issues, they often found that social problems were foremost in parents' minds. Co-ordinators felt that the visits were important for many reasons, one being the importance of being seen around the area.

During this discussion, co-ordinators reported the purposes for conducting home visits as being to develop a profile of the area; to develop a network between co-ordinator, home, and teachers; to bridge the gap between home and school; to build relationships; to discuss educational issues; to provide a new outlet for parents (new hope); and to provide an opportunity for parents to see the teacher as a human being. Other issues discussed were courses/classes and the need to encourage teachers to participate more fully in the scheme.

At the inservice, co-ordinators said that there was a need for some preparation to help them make the transition from a structured classroom environment to the unstructured, often frustrating, schedule with multiple and diverse demands on their time that they faced in their new role. They also identified a need for basic knowledge in the area of home-school-community relationships and would have liked information on 'state of the art' developments and findings. Also identified was a need for new skills (e.g., counselling, personal

development, dealing with adults as opposed to children) and some preparation for dealing with and accepting 'hopeless' situations (e.g., feelings of guilt, limitations of role).

Inservice for Co-ordinators, 1991-92

The provision of inservice courses for co-ordinators during the second year of the HSCL scheme was structured in the same way as that of the previous year. Courses were conducted for both existing and incoming co-ordinators (primary and post-primary) and an information day was held for school principals and inspectors.

A one-week induction course was held jointly for incoming local co-ordinators at both primary and second level in November 1991. The format and content of the course was similar to that of the previous year. Once again, the main thrust of the session was to provide training for the co-ordinators through a process that they could replicate both in schools and in communities.

A valuable development in the inservice provision was the input of co-ordinators and parents who had been involved in the implementation of the HSCL scheme during the first year. Two co-ordinators (one who had been assigned to four schools and another who had been assigned to one school) described their experiences and how their activities had evolved within their unique circumstances. They also offered advice to the incoming co-ordinators based on what they had learned. A group of parents shared their insights into what their involvement in the HSCL scheme had meant to their lives. They also answered questions from co-ordinators about the home processes which helped to alleviate some of the co-ordinators' apprehensions (e.g., regarding parents' perceptions of and reactions to home visitation).

On the last day of the course, the hopes, fears, and expectations identified on the first day were revisited and additional issues or questions were discussed. Co-ordinators were invited to report any further skills in which they felt lacking in the progress record to be submitted to the National Co-ordinator for consideration for inservice in the future.

In this inservice, in light of the experience of the previous year, co-ordinators could identify more realistic goals and objectives for themselves for the six weeks after the course (leading up to the school Christmas break). Suggested plans of each cluster group were reported back to the whole group.

Co-ordinators were encouraged to speak with their principals about their new role before principals attended an inservice day to be held the following week. A further three-day inservice course for new co-ordinators was held in May, 1992

Inservice for Co-ordinators, 1992-93

Co-ordinators appointed in 1990 and 1991 attended a three-day inservice course in September 1992. The issues covered were: leadership, change, counselling skills, and forward planning for '92-'93. Newly appointed co-ordinators attended a week-long inservice course that followed the same format and procedure as those of the first two years of the scheme. (National Co-ordinators' Annual Report, 1992-93).

Inservice for Principals and Inspectors

A one-day seminar for principals and inspectors was held in November 1990. The purpose was 'to inform principals about the background to, and activities involved in, the HSCL scheme.' The following issues were discussed during the seminar: a rationale for the clustering of schools; objectives of the HSCL scheme; the role of principals, inspectors, local co-ordinators, Local Committees, evaluator, and other agencies (e.g., community) in the scheme; difficulties for principals; implications of the scheme for school personnel; group work to identify and air perceptions of their own role and contributions to the programme; concerns to be communicated to other specified parties (i.e., local co-ordinators, Department of Education, evaluator), and further assistance they might need. Similar one-day seminars were held throughout the three years of the scheme.

Courses for Teachers

Summer courses of one week were run in Dublin and in Limerick during July and August 1991 as part of the general summer inservice programme for all primary teachers. The courses were staffed by a Department of Education inspector on the National Steering Committee, the National Co-ordinator, and three local co-ordinators. Teachers who attended were not necessarily from schools in the HSCL scheme. Similar courses were held in subsequent years in Dublin, Cork, and Galway

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Cluster Groups

As a response to co-ordinators' expressed need for ongoing communication and discussion of ideas and difficulties, it was decided that cluster meetings would be established. Each cluster group consists of all co-ordinators serving schools in a specific area (e.g., Clondalkin, Tallaght). During 1991-92, meetings were held in September, October, December, and in May-June, the main purpose being to consolidate inservice training and the National Co-ordinator's work with individual co-ordinators.

In response to co-ordinators' suggestions about cluster group meetings, changes were made in the format of same and some procedural aspects were specified. Meetings are held each month from 9.00 to 14.30 on a designated day and an agenda and minutes are circulated

in advance. The meetings include aspects of review, evaluation, and planning, as well as sharing of current good practice and discussion of difficulties. Each meeting also has an inservice component prepared by one or more of the co-ordinators. The meetings also provide an opportunity for sub-groups of co-ordinators (e.g., those serving same families) to work together. One of the National Co-ordinators also attends the meetings.

Role of National Co-ordinator

Throughout the three years of the HSCL scheme, ongoing work of the National Co-ordinator (and subsequently the Assistant National Co-ordinator) as a support to co-ordinators included individual meetings with co-ordinators, principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and some parents and parent groups. The National Co-ordinators also attended cluster group and Local Committee meetings and assisted co-ordinators in setting up Local Committees in their areas. In meeting co-ordinators, the National Co-ordinators discussed current practice, needs, and fears of co-ordinators and provided encouragement and direction. This included how to: 'establish and sustain programmes; reach out to parents; develop the scheme in the local community; network; meet training needs for themselves; and plan and evaluate on a consistent cluster and personal level.' (National Co-ordinators' Report, 1992-93, p.7).

Work with principals was 'towards the support of principals in developing a 'whole school' approach' (National Co-ordinators' Report, 1991-92, p.11). It included discussion of principals' concerns about change and 'beginning to develop participative policy formulation and democratic decision making' (Ibid, p.11).

The National Co-ordinator made regular contacts with chairpersons of Boards of Management (primary level only), on an incidental basis and through meetings of Local Committees or related to the setting up of same.

Informal contacts were also made with teachers in staff rooms and with groups of parents. Some home visits were occasionally made.

At the beginning of the 1992-93 school year the National Co-ordinator initiated a sequence of learning experiences with newly appointed co-ordinators. These were as follows: 'selection to attend inservice training; briefing and preparation which could include work experience in selected schools; becoming committed to learning; learning; preparation for the transfer of learning back in the work place; return to work; transfer of learning; ongoing support, monitoring and evaluating.' (National Co-ordinators' Annual Report, 1992-93, p.38).

Throughout the year, the National Co-ordinator and Assistant National Co-ordinator held meetings with various individuals and groups involved in the HSCL scheme. An average of seven visits was made to individual co-ordinators, the range being from 3 to 13. When requested, additional visits were made by appointment. Work with individual co-

ordinators followed the same general focus as during the previous year, the main thrust being to listen to, support, and encourage co-ordinators and to share current practice. As the scheme is further extended, it is envisaged that this will continue on a less frequent basis, with additional support provided to co-ordinators who are experiencing difficulties.

During the third year, the National Co-ordinators met principals and chairpersons of Boards of Management (only one at post-primary level), the emphasis of these meetings being similar to those of the previous year. There were also regular meetings with parent groups.

Staff Development Sessions

A new feature of the scheme during 1992-93 was the provision, by the National Co-ordinator, of staff development sessions in 72 primary and 15 post-primary schools.

The staff sessions began with small group discussions of benefits of the scheme to date, staff expectations for HSCL, and their fears about partnership with parents (National Co-ordinators' Annual Report, 1992-93). The National Co-ordinator addressed these issues and outlined the rationale of the scheme and the role of the co-ordinator. In most schools, a group of three parents, who had not had a profile in the school prior to the HSCL scheme, outlined their fears of school and of teachers based on their own experience of school. They also described how, as a result of their involvement in HSCL activities, they had increased their confidence and changed the way they relate to their children. It is envisaged that developmental sessions with staff will continue for schools who request them.

Co-ordinators in six post-primary schools stated that ongoing education for teachers about the HSCL scheme was provided in their schools during the 1992-93 school year. When questioned about the nature of the ongoing education for teachers, co-ordinators reported that the National Co-ordinator facilitated an inservice day covering aspects of the HSCL scheme for staff members in four schools. In one of those schools, a full-day inservice on interpersonal relationships was presented to staff members by an outside facilitator. In another school, the same facilitator presented a half day inservice session on the HSCL scheme to staff members. In one school, one staff member attended the bishops' conference on education. In another school, the co-ordinator reported that staff members attended a talk on the Green Paper on Education to help the school develop a mission statement in the context of the Green Paper.

In three of the six schools, inservice training was also held in September 1993. In two of those schools, a staff development day covering issues about the HSCL scheme took place and another school ran an inservice training course covering issues on stress. One co-ordinator reported that a 'parental' dimension to all other aspects of inservice and HSCL programmes will be developed within the school during the 1993-94 school year. It is

perceived that staff members (e.g., class tutors, year heads, counsellors) who will be involved in specific activities (e.g., first year parent meetings) in the school will be encouraged to bring in the 'parental' dimension to HSCL activities and to inservice training. Three co-ordinators stated that although there was no ongoing education for teachers provided in their schools during the 1992-93 school year, the principal and staff had agreed to invite the National Co-ordinator to address all staff members about the HSCL scheme in the 1993-94 school year.

Three other co-ordinators reported that there was no ongoing education for teachers about the HSCL scheme provided in their schools for the 1992-93 school year. However, in two of those schools the co-ordinators mentioned that informal information about the HSCL scheme was provided for staff members in their schools. For example, in one school the co-ordinator wrote reports on inservice courses and presented copies to the principal, vice-principal, chaplain, year heads, and any interested staff members.

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Summary

Much of the evaluation effort was directed towards the formation and development of programmes and evaluation strategies were modified as the programmes developed. Principals provided information in a School Profile about policy and practice regarding parental involvement in the school prior to the introduction of the HSCL scheme. During the first year, co-ordinators completed bi-monthly Progress Records and, in subsequent years, Annual Progress Records. During visits to schools, interviews were conducted with principals, co-ordinators, teachers, and, where possible, parents. Following analyses of HSCL activities during the first year of the scheme, six schools were selected for more detailed study during subsequent years. Measures of pupils' achievements were obtained in November, 1991 to serve as baseline data for later study of the impact of HSCL programmes on pupils in the six selected schools. A sample of mothers of pupils in the selected primary schools was interviewed at the end of the second year. The sample included mothers who were involved in some aspect of the scheme and ones who were not.

Evaluation of HSCL Programmes was carried out during the first three years of their operation (the school years 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93).

It is obvious that the type of comprehensive programmes that were anticipated in HSCL activities rendered the choice of variables to study in an evaluation a difficult task. Furthermore, since programmes were to evolve in response to local needs, it would be necessary to modify evaluation strategies as the programmes developed. One could expect individual school programmes to vary in their goals and in the structures, strategies, and actions which would be proposed to achieve those goals. One might also expect, as a result of differences between schools in the contexts in which they operated, variation in the extent to which structures and strategies were actually implemented.

While there was considerable room for variation in the way programmes developed at local school level, at the same time all programmes were being informed by the activities of the National Co-ordinator and of the National Steering Committee. It is difficult to categorize the scheme in terms of our earlier description of programmes as cognitive-behavioural or community-oriented. In fact, the HSCL scheme seemed to have been designed to possess elements of both. Insofar as the scheme focused on community development and parental empowerment, it can be considered to have been framed, in the context of a social reconstruction ideology (see Schiro, 1978). However, four of the aims of the scheme, together with the direction of the National Steering Committee to monitor development of the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in participating schools, indicate that the major focus of the scheme was scholastic academic, which would imply a cognitive-behavioural orientation.

Whether one focuses on the social reconstruction or the scholastic academic aspects of programmes, one would expect the effects to be long-term rather than short-term. The intended goals of the social reconstruction approach are usually, of their nature, long-term

since it is unrealistic to expect major changes in communities and their members to occur overnight. The implications of this for evaluation are that all one can hope to identify in the short term are processes, behaviours, and understandings that suggest by their presence a real probability of long-term goal achievement.

While the intended goals of a scholastic academic approach are usually more short-term, reasonable effects in the short-term could only be expected if the focus of intervention was more directly on children and, in particular, on the teaching-learning situation. However, since the aim of HSCL programmes seemed to be to impact on pupil achievement indirectly through changes in communities, families, and parents, we would again expect the effect on pupils' scholastic development to be long-term, since they would be mediated through effects on communities, families, and parents. It was for this reason that it was decided to allow a number of years between the initial and final assessments of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Hence, data on scholastic development are not available for this report.

A further point that should be made about the evaluation is that much of its effort was directed towards the formation and development of programmes. Regular reports were provided for National Steering Committee meetings and an annual report was prepared at the end of each year. The findings in this report can for the most part be regarded as summative but may also serve a formative function when made available to participating schools and other schools that may become involved in home-school-community activities.

The purposes of the evaluation can be described in general terms as threefold:

1. to examine how the HSCL scheme was constructed and implemented (in each school);
2. to monitor specified outcomes of HSCL activity; and
3. to identify models of good practice which could be further disseminated.

Evaluation Procedures in Primary Schools, 1990-91

During the first year, data for the evaluation were obtained in a School Profile (completed by school principals), a Progress Record (completed by co-ordinators on three occasions during the year), and in school visits and interviews with principals, teachers, co-ordinators, and parents.

School Profile

In the School Profile, principals were asked to report on school policy and practice regarding parental involvement in the school prior to the introduction of the HSCL scheme. Corresponding questions were included in the Teacher Interview and the Parent Interview. Questions were asked about information sent to parents about the school, parent-teacher meetings (frequency, purpose, level of attendance, possible causes of non-attendance), parent attendance at school activities (frequency, purpose, level of attendance), parent involvement with teachers in school activities (type of activities, level of attendance, number of years),

teacher visits to homes (frequency, number of years), teacher involvement in extra-curricular activities with pupils, frequency of reports on work/behaviour, arrangements for parent contact with the principal, the availability of a parents' room, and structures for parent involvement in school governance. Finally, principals were asked about pupil attendance levels and numbers of pupils enrolled in the school.

Progress Record

A Progress Record was constructed from information which had been obtained from co-ordinators about their activities in the autumn term of 1990 and on the basis of information about the activities involving schools, homes, and communities elsewhere.

Co-ordinators completed the Progress Record on three occasions (January/February; March/April; May/June). This gave an account of their activities for that period of time including their contacts with parents, teachers, pupils, and community agencies and individuals.

School Visits and Interviews

Each of the 55 schools was visited once by a member of the evaluation team during February or March, 1991. (One school added to the scheme was visited in June, 1991.) During these visits interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, co-ordinators, and, where possible, a group of parents.

Evaluation Procedures in Primary Schools, 1991-92

Six Selected Schools

Following analyses of HSCL activities during the first year of the scheme, six schools were selected for more detailed study during the second year. Five of these schools had been found to have high levels of activity and the sixth had an overall moderate level of activity, which, however, might be considered satisfactory given that the co-ordinator had spent only one day per week in the school. All six schools also had received above-average ratings of success from both the National Co-ordinator and the evaluator. In selecting the schools, an attempt was made to represent different geographical areas in the scheme (i.e., Cork, Limerick, and inner and outer areas of Dublin) and to include different types of school (i.e., single sex, mixed, junior, senior, all-through).

The six selected schools were all visited at least four times during the 1991-92 school year. The first visit was in November to explain to principals and co-ordinators why the school had been selected, to discuss the proposed evaluation activities, and to respond to questions or concerns about any aspects of the evaluation. The schools were visited again later in November and December when measures of pupils' achievements were obtained for pupils in first, third, and fifth classes. This visit provided an opportunity for establishing contacts with staff and for responding to questions about the evaluation. A third visit was

made in April 1992 when three members of the evaluation team spent up to two days in each of the six schools. During this time interviews were conducted with principals, co-ordinators, and all staff (with a few exceptions where teachers were absent) of each school. A final visit was made in June 1992. During this visit, fifth class pupils completed self-report questionnaires (measures of attitudes, motivation, expectations, etc.) and some of these pupils were also interviewed. Teachers completed ratings (of pupil attitudes, motivation, etc.) on all pupils who had been tested. The data from these Pupil Self-Reports and Teacher Ratings, together with pupil achievement data will be used as baseline data for further study of the impact of the HSCL programme on pupils in the six schools.

Co-ordinators from each of the six schools completed a bi-monthly Progress Record, giving details of contacts (with parents, staff, pupils, and community agencies) and other activities throughout the year.

Finally, in July 1992, a sample of 355 mothers was interviewed about the HSCL scheme. The sample consisted of mothers of pupils in the six schools who had been tested (i.e., first, third, and fifth classes) and also mothers of pupils in Junior Infant classes. The sample included mothers who had been involved in the HSCL programme in the schools and mothers who had not been involved.

Other Schools

Co-ordinators (n=41) from all the other primary schools (n=74) with HSCL programmes were asked to complete an Annual Progress Record in June, 1992. Responses were received from 40 co-ordinators serving a total of 72 schools. These include first cohort schools that entered the scheme at its inception in 1990 (n=48) and second cohort schools that entered the scheme in 1991 (n=24).

Evaluation Procedures in Post-Primary Schools, 1991-92

In January 1992, each of the principals of 13 post-primary schools in which a Home-School-Community Liaison programme had commenced in the 1991-92 school year was asked to complete a School Profile. This questionnaire requested details of school policy and practice regarding parental involvement and contacts with community agencies prior to the introduction of the HSCL scheme.

A preliminary visit was made to 10 schools in the Dublin area in January 1992 during which interviews were conducted with co-ordinators and contacts were made with principals and some staff.

A detailed site visit to all schools was carried out in May 1992 when interviews were conducted with all co-ordinators and principals. A total of 193 other staff members, including vice-principals, year heads, guidance counsellors, staff in remedial departments, chaplains and, as far as possible, a cross-section of subject teachers was interviewed.

Evaluation Procedures, 1992-93

In October, 1992 the evaluators were asked to prepare an Interim Evaluation Report that would assist the Department of Education in making decisions about the future of the HSCL scheme. Issues for the Interim Evaluation Report were identified by Department of Education personnel in conjunction with the evaluators. For the preparation of the report, 11 schools were visited (6 primary and 5 post-primary), and interviews were conducted with co-ordinators and principals. Two members of the Department of Education Management Committee of the HSCL scheme and one representative of a teachers' union were also interviewed. The Report was presented to the National Steering Committee at the end of February, 1993.

Primary; Six selected schools

The six selected primary schools were visited in January, 1993 as part of the process for the Interim Evaluation Report. The co-ordinators also completed a bi-monthly Progress Record for each of the schools. The schools were visited in June, 1993 when co-ordinators and principals were interviewed. A final visit was made to the schools in November, 1993 when co-ordinators completed an Annual Progress Record for the 1992-93 school year.

Primary; All schools

Co-ordinators in the 79 participating schools were asked to complete an Annual Progress Record for each school they served for the 1992-93 school year. Co-ordinators representing 73 schools did so. This gave details of courses and activities for parents; numbers of parents involved; allocation of co-ordinators' time; home visits; effects on schools, teachers, parents, and pupils; Local Committees; and overall effectiveness of the HSCL programme in the school.

Post-Primary Schools

Five post-primary schools were visited in January, 1993 as part of the process for the Interim Evaluation Report. Six of the schools were visited in May, 1993 when co-ordinators completed an Annual Progress Record for the 1992-93 school year. The Annual Progress Record was posted to co-ordinators in the remaining seven schools and was returned for all but one school (n=12).

6. HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HSCL SCHEME

Summary

Before the HSCL scheme was introduced all primary schools had some basic structures in place to facilitate home-school relationships. Despite this, it was recognized that more was needed. Some schools had relatively few structures or activities and all probably needed to expand the range of activities in which they were engaged. The structures were mainly related to school governance and communication between school and home. Parents were also involved in extra-curricular activities in some schools but had little involvement in situations closer to the learning-teaching situation. Involvement by primary schools with community organisations was not common.

Similar structures were in place in post-primary schools. In addition, the existence of a pastoral care structure meant that post-primary schools could sustain a wider range of contacts with homes (e.g., through chaplains, career guidance teachers, counsellors) than primary schools. Post-primary schools, particularly those in the vocational education sector, had greater contact with agencies outside the school than primary schools.

Primary Schools

Information on home-school structures and relationships in schools at the beginning of the scheme was obtained in a School Profile which was completed by school principals.

All schools in the scheme had some basic structures in place to facilitate home-school relationships. All but two had a Board of Management with parental representation. In something over 20% of schools, more than half the members of the Board were parents. In the remaining schools, parents' representation was lower. In addition, two out of every five schools had parent committees.

All but one (junior) school held parent-teacher meetings during the school year 1989-90. The most usual practice was to hold a meeting once or twice in the year. Meetings were held more frequently for parents of children in first and sixth classes than for parents of children in other grades. The purposes of parent-teacher meetings were described (in order of frequency) as to discuss pupil progress, to discuss pupil problems, preparation for Confirmation, preparation for First Communion, to inform parents about school procedures, and to discuss the curriculum (all of which purposes were reported for more than half the schools). Less frequently cited purposes were to discuss school problems or to discuss school programmes.

Apart from parent-teacher meetings, parents were given the opportunity in all schools, with one exception, to discuss their children's work or problems by appointment with the class teacher.

Communication between school and home began at an early stage in the majority of schools. Over three-quarters of schools invited parents to visit the school before their first child started to attend. In a slightly smaller number, written information was sent to parents before their first child started school.

Written communication with homes was maintained as children progressed through school. All schools sent reports concerning children's work and/or behaviour to parents for pupils from second class upwards. Practically all schools sent such reports for pupils in lower grades also. In most cases, the reports were sent once or twice a year, though a few schools sent reports more frequently.

Another procedure employed by schools to encourage parental contact was the holding of 'open days.' About three out of every five schools organized functions to bring parents into the school. The most popular function was a play or concert (in about three-quarters of schools with open days). The next most popular function was sports (in 3 out of 5 schools), followed by display of children's work, invitation to classrooms, prize-giving, and exhibition of project work, all of which were mentioned by about one-third of principals.

About half the schools had a room for use by parents. In a majority of these schools (4 out of 5), teachers availed of the room to make contact with parents. Most frequently, the reason teachers went to the room was to discuss their class group with parents. Less frequently, they dropped in for a chat or attended social activities.

Parents in most schools (4 out of 5) also provided assistance in the work of the school, particularly in extra-curricular activities. The most common activity of parents involved helping in school outings (at junior-grade level in 72% of schools, at middle-grade level in 57% of schools, and at senior-grade level in 32% of schools). Parental involvement in other activities was considerably less frequent. Further, it generally decreased from junior to senior classes. Parental activities included helping with craft work in the classroom (in 16% of schools at junior and middle grades and in 7% at senior grades) and with playground supervision (in 14% of schools at junior level, in 9% at middle level, and in 5% at senior level). Parents helped in the school library in less than one school in ten. In a small number of schools, parents took small groups of children for reading and, in one school, they took them for mathematics.

While many schools offered opportunities for parents to come into the school, teacher visits to pupils' homes to talk to parents were rare, being reported for only two schools.

These analyses indicate that some structures were in place in all schools at the beginning of the scheme to deal with home-school relationships. The structures were mainly related to school governance (distal activities) and communication between school and home (intermediate activities). Parents were also involved in some schools in extra-curricular activities (intermediate activities). Parents had little involvement in situations closer to the learning-teaching situation (either at home or at school) (proximal activities). Neither was involvement by schools with community organisations (distal activities) common.

Post-Primary Schools

Information on home-school-community structures and relationships in schools at the beginning of the HSCL scheme was obtained in a School Profile which was completed in January 1992 by school principals (n=13).

Communication between Schools and Homes

Communication between school and home had begun, in the majority of schools, at an early stage of the students' second-level education. All but two schools sent written information to parents before their first child started to attend the school. This had been the practice in most schools for at least four years. A wide range of information was sent to parents. The most common types were information pertaining to (in order of frequency) the curriculum courses offered, school rules, extra-curricular activities, guidance services, books, school structures, and school entry.

All but one of the schools invited parents to visit the school before their first child started to attend. In the majority of cases this visit took the form of a presentation of information about the school (n=9) or a meeting with staff (n=4). Other types of visit reported included meeting with senior staff, exhibition of students' work, and meeting with principals/year heads/individual staff members.

Written communication with homes was maintained as students progressed through school. Approximately half of the schools sent written reports concerning students' work and/or behaviour to parents. For students at Junior Cycle level, less than half of the schools sent reports to parents once a term. Two schools sent reports once a month in second and third Junior Certificate year. Almost all schools also sent such reports for students at Senior Cycle level, either once or twice a year or once a term. Two schools sent a report for students in Leaving Certificate 1 and 2. One school never sent a report for students in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP).

Information about changes in school policy, curriculum, school programme, rules/discipline, and school finance was communicated to parents through (in order of frequency) a letter from the principal (11 schools), discussion at parent-teacher meetings (11 schools), discussion at parent committee meetings (9 schools), discussion at general meetings of parents (8 schools), or through an occasional newsletter (1 school).

Serious behaviour/conduct problems were dealt with by (in order of frequency) parental involvement in behaviour management (all schools), or suspension or behaviour contracts with students (12 schools). Less frequently, students were referred to counselling agencies or a transfer to another school was negotiated. In eleven schools, the staff was responsible for drawing up the school behaviour/discipline policy. The Board of Management was involved in the process in four of the schools and parents were consulted in four other schools.

Parent-Teacher Contacts

In nine schools, all teachers used homework notebooks as a means of communication with parents. In three schools, only some teachers used notebooks. Notebooks were not used at all in one school. In all cases where notebooks were used they were used when a student did not complete homework or was not punctual and, in almost all the schools, notebooks were used when a student did not bring in books/materials or for querying absences.

Parent-teacher contacts which occurred in the schools were described (in order of frequency) as parental discussion of their child's work or problems by appointment with a subject teacher, parental visits to the school at the teacher's request, parent-teacher meetings, open days in the school (e.g., sports day, exhibitions of work, school concert or play), periodical meetings between parents and teachers, period of ordinary school time allotted to meetings between teachers and parents/guardians, and teacher contacts with parents if they called to the school where there were no special arrangements. (All of the above were reported for more than half of the schools.) Less frequently cited contacts were home visits by teachers, meetings between teachers and parents which occur outside school and where student progress is discussed, and coffee mornings.

All of the schools held parent-teacher meetings during the school year 1990-91. The frequency of these meetings varied with the school year/class concerned. Most schools had held parent-teacher meetings once that year for parents of first year students preparing for the Junior Certificate examination. Two schools had held such meetings twice for this level. All schools held parent-teacher meetings at least once in the year for parents of second year Junior Certificate students. Ten schools held meetings once for parents of third year Junior Certificate students and two schools held such meetings twice. The numbers were similar for the schools (n=4) which offered the Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) School Certificate course (levels 1, 2, and 3). All but one school held parent-teacher meetings once in the year. At the senior cycle level, the most usual practice was to hold a meeting once a year, though some schools held meetings twice a year for parents of students preparing for the Leaving Certificate examination.

The purposes of parent-teacher meetings were described (in order of frequency) as to discuss pupil progress, to discuss pupil problems, to discuss the curriculum (e.g., Junior Certificate), to discuss new programmes in which the school was involved (e.g., literacy programme), and orientation to the school. Less frequently cited purposes were to discuss school problems or examination results and simply to allow parents and teachers to meet.

Another procedure employed by schools to encourage parental contact was the holding of 'open days.' All but three of the schools organized functions to bring parents into the school. Half of the schools did so once a year. The most popular function was an exhibition of project work completed by the school (in eight of the schools which held open days). The

next most popular function was a display of work undertaken by individual students (in three-quarters of schools with open days), followed by open days where parents/guardians were invited into classrooms to see students' work, school prize-giving day, sports day, and a school play or concert.

Some principals cited parental reluctance to turn up and lack of teacher time as the most significant problems in their schools relating to contact with parents. Less frequently cited problems were parental lack of understanding of the educational system, parental fear of schools and the fact that contacts with parents were more likely to be one-way descriptions of problems on behalf of the school than discussions of such problems between parents and school personnel. In many schools, a lack of time was cited as the main reason for not visiting students' homes. Less frequently cited reasons were respect for people's privacy, lack of confidence in dealing with parents, personal safety, and lack of skills in dealing with parents.

Pastoral Care Structures

Prior to the appointment of the HSCL co-ordinator, all of the schools had structures in place for contacting parents about problems. All schools had a formal pastoral care system in place for between 3 and 20 years. Details of contacts with parents are provided in Table 6.1.

Contacts about students' learning difficulties were undertaken in the main by the class tutor, year head, guidance counsellor, remedial teacher, principal, or subject teacher (all these were involved in more than half the schools). Contacts regarding students' behaviour problems/discipline were undertaken by the class tutor, year head, guidance counsellor, vice-principal, or principal (again in more than half the schools). Half the schools also cited the remedial teacher or chaplain in relation to this type of contact. In most of the schools it was the class tutor and year head who undertook contacts with parents pertaining to attendance or time keeping while some principals and vice-principals were also involved (in fewer than half the schools). The three school personnel who made most of the contacts about students' backgrounds (e.g., medical, family) were the class tutor, the principal, and the chaplain. Less than half the schools also cited the year head, guidance counsellor, and vice-principal in this context. Contacts about students' personal problems (e.g., bereavement, substance abuse, depression) were undertaken in the main by (in order of frequency) the principal, guidance counsellor, class tutor, chaplain, year head, and vice-principal. In most schools the principal undertook contacts about students' problems relating to the law while the chaplain and vice-principal did so to a lesser extent. In more than half the schools, the class tutor and the year head made a regular appointment with parents for a monitoring or progress check. Again, in the majority of schools, it was these two members of school staffs who were involved in information giving (e.g., about progress or conduct). Finally, in one school, the principal,

Numbers of Schools in which School Personnel made Contacts with Parents

PURPOSE OF CONTACT	SCHOOL PERSONNEL								
	Class Tutor	Year Head	Guidance Counsellor	Remedial Teacher	Vice Principal	Principal	Chaplain	Subjec Teache	Not relevan to school
Student learning difficulties	11	9	9	11	6	8	2	10	
Student behaviour problems/discipline	11	10	7	6	10	11	6	5	-
Student attendance/time keeping	9	11	-	-	4	5	2	-	-
Student background (e.g., medical, family)	8	5	5	1	5	9	8	1	-
Student personal problems (e.g., bereavement, substance abuse, depression)	8	6	9	2	6	10	8	1	-
Student problems relating to the law (e.g., theft, drugs)	4	5	5	-	7	9	6	-	-
Regular appointment for monitoring or progress check	9	8	2	4	2	1	1	3	-
Information giving (e.g., about progress or conduct)	11	9	3	5	7	6	2	4	-
Other									
School building programme	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-

Table 6.1

vice-principal, chaplain, and remedial teacher had been in contact with parents about the school building programme.

The above contacts with parents were arranged by (in order of frequency) letter, telephone, note with student, parents dropping in to the principal, or a home visit by the teacher.

In all but two of the schools, parents met the principal when requested to do so. For most schools it was reported that parents also initiated contacts with the school. In all but one school, parents met the principal when they wanted to discuss a particular problem. On other occasions when parents contacted the school, they were referred to (in order of frequency) the guidance counsellor, vice-principal, class tutor, year head, remedial teacher, and chaplain and, to a lesser extent to the resource teacher, schools psychological service, and counselling agencies.

Parent Involvement in School-Based Activities

Parents/guardians were involved in school-based activities with teachers in more than half of the schools and the structures for this involvement had been in place for at least three years. The activities included (in order of frequency) school outings (at junior cycle level in five schools, at senior cycle in three schools), helping with the school library (two schools), sports (two schools), book saving scheme (one school), transportation of school teams (one school), and fundraising (one school). Parents were not involved in curricular activities in any of the schools.

Home Visits

Another procedure used by a majority of the schools (n=10) though not very frequently in most schools, to encourage home-school relationships was home visits which were undertaken mainly by (in order of frequency) the chaplain, class teachers, special needs teachers, principals, remedial teachers, vice-principals, and resource teachers. In two schools, regular visits to the home were made by the chaplain and school staff. The main purposes of the visits were (in order of frequency) to solve and discuss problems; to deal with absenteeism; the organization of choirs, drama, and school trips; and pastoral visits.

Parents' Room

Two of the schools had a room for use by parents for at least eight years. However, in neither case was this room free for parents to use as often as they wished. In both schools the parents' room was used for individual parent meetings with school personnel. In one school the room was also used for counselling activities and it was reported that all school personnel led parent discussions in the parents' room and that all school personnel (except the guidance counsellor) met parents in the parents' room to discuss school problems. In this school also, class tutors met parents/guardians in the parents' room to discuss class groups. In the other

school, parent committee meetings were held in the parents' room and school personnel only used the room to meet parents to discuss a class group.

Parental Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

All schools in the scheme had some basic structures in place to facilitate parental involvement in decision-making. All but two schools had a Board of Management with parental representation for a least five years before the HSCL scheme began. In addition, all but one of the schools had parent committees for between 3 and 15 years. One school had a 'partnership group' in place for four years.

In all but two of the schools with Boards of Management, 20% of the members of the Board were parents. All of the Boards met regularly during the 1990-91 school year. Six Boards met once a term, three met twice a term and two Boards met once a month. It is interesting to note that the parent committees also met regularly, nine of them meeting once a month and three meeting once a term.

Principals classified the role of parent members of Boards of Management in relation to school matters in terms of degree of parental involvement. The results are presented in Table 6.2. In just over half (n=6) the schools which had Boards of Management, the roles of parent

Table 6.2

Number of Schools in which the Role of Parent Members of Boards of Management Relating to School Matters was Classified in Terms of Degree of Parental Involvement

	ROLES				
SCHOOL MATTERS	Passive	Consultative	Leading	Chair Working party	No role
School policy	3	8	-	-	-
Curriculum	6	4	-	-	1
School programmes	3	7	-	-	1
Rules/discipline	1	10	-	-	-
School finance	6	4	1	-	-
School maintenance	5	5	1	-	-
Other					
Building programme	-	-	2	-	9

members of the Board were classified as 'passive' in relation to curriculum and school finance. In just under half the schools (n=5), parent members' role in relation to school maintenance was classified as 'passive,' with a classification of 'consultative' given to this role

in five other schools. The roles of parent members of Boards of Management in more than half the schools were classified as 'consultative' in relation to (in order of frequency) school rules/discipline (10 schools), school policy (8 schools), and school programmes (7 schools). In only four schools were parents reported as having a 'leading' role in relation to (in order of frequency) the building programme (n=2), school finance (n=1), and school maintenance (n=1). In no school were parent members reported to have had a leadership role in a working party or sub-committee.

When the roles of members of parent committees in relation to school matters were classified by principals in terms of degree of parental involvement, a similar pattern emerged (see Table 6.3). The roles of members of parent committees were classified as 'passive' in relation to curriculum (8 schools) and school maintenance (8 schools) in more than half the schools with parent committees. In just under half the schools (n=5), parent roles were classified as 'passive' in relation to school programmes and school finance. Parent roles were classified as 'consultative' in relation to (in order of frequency) school rules/discipline (9 schools), school policy (8 schools) and school programmes (6 schools), all reported for at least half the schools with parent committees. In just under half the schools (n=5), parent roles in relation to school finance were classified as 'consultative.' In seven schools parents were reported as having a 'leading' role in relation to fund-raising (n=2), school building (n=2), adult education (n=1), extra-curricular activities (n=1), and school uniform (n=1).

Table 6.3

Number of Schools in which the Role of Members
of Parent Committees Relating to School Matters
was Classified in Terms of Degree of Parental Involvement

SCHOOL MATTERS	ROLES			
	Passive	Consultative	Leading	No role
School policy	4	8	-	-
Curriculum	8	4	-	-
School programmes	5	6	-	1
Rules/discipline	3	9	-	-
School finance	5	5	-	1
School maintenance	8	2	-	1
Other				
Fund-raising	-	-	2	10
School building	-	-	2	10
Members liaise with teachers	-	1	-	11
Adult education	-	-	1	11
Extra-curricular activities	-	-	1	11
School uniform	-	-	1	11

From this, it seems that, in these schools, parents, whether as members of Boards of Management or of Parent Committees, have tended mainly to have a 'consultative' role in relation to school policy and rules/discipline. To date, principals have seen them as having a 'leading' role in matters relating mainly to school finance/fund-raising and to building programmes.

Consultation with Parents

Principals were asked to report the frequency with which all parents were consulted prior to changes in school policy, curriculum, school programme, rules/discipline, and school finance. The responses are shown in Table 6.4. Two schools were reported as always consulting all parents prior to changes in school policy, curriculum, school programmes, and rules/discipline. One of these schools also reported always consulting all parents prior to changes in school finance. Three schools reported never consulting all parents prior to

Table 6.4

Number of Schools in which Parents were Consulted
at Varying Frequency in Relation to School Matters

	FREQUENCY OF CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS			
SCHOOL MATTERS	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
School policy	2	1	6	4
Curriculum	2	1	5	5
School programme	2	1	3	7
Rules/discipline	2	3	4	4
School finance	1	1	2	9

changes relating to any of these matters and, in a fourth school, parents were only consulted prior to changes in rules/discipline, though this was only 'seldom' done. The remaining six schools varied in their patterns of consulting parents, but, for the most part, they reported consulting parents only seldom or never. In nine schools parents were never consulted prior to changes in school finance and they were seldom consulted about finance in two schools. This seems to be inconsistent with the previous information that parents are viewed as having a leading role in relation to school finance.

Communication Between Schools and the Community

Most of the schools (n=11) had frequent contact with voluntary/statutory personnel during the 1990-91 school year. The personnel most frequently contacted were (in order of frequency) social workers (10 schools), community gardaí (9 schools), Department of Education psychologist (3 schools), health nurses (3 schools), school attendance officers (3

schools), Juvenile Liaison Officers (3 schools), and teen counsellors (2 schools). The purposes of these contacts varied from (in order of frequency) dealing with problems (reported for a total of ten school personnel); to student referral for counselling (reported for a total of five personnel); to meeting students to break down barriers (five community gardaí, one community youth officer, and one Juvenile Liaison Officer); and school attendance problems (two attendance officers and one community garda).

In addition, school personnel in ten of the schools had contact with voluntary/statutory agencies during the school year. The agencies most frequently contacted were (in order of frequency) FÁS, Health Boards, Youth Services, and CERT. The main purposes of these contacts related to placement in courses and information talks for students.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF HSCL PROGRAMMES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary

Analyses of activities in schools during the first year of the scheme identified three categories of activity: proximal (i.e., closely related to the teaching-learning situation), intermediate (i.e., related to home-school communication or parenting), and distal (i.e., related to parent involvement in school governance or support or to school/co-ordinator involvement in the wider community). On average, primary co-ordinators devoted most of their time (almost a third) to courses and activities for parents (mostly mothers). The most popular courses and activities during the second and third years of the scheme were related directly to children's education (e.g., classes in children's school subjects to equip parents to help with homework, paired-reading programmes). Other popular courses and activities included those to develop parents, parenting courses, and courses and activities in home management. Co-ordinators spent over a quarter of their time on home visits and a tenth on individual meetings with parents. Less time was devoted to meetings and contacts within the school with principals (7%), teachers (8%), and pupils (3%). Contacts with agencies or individuals in the community occupied 9% of co-ordinators' time. Some parents organized activities such as swimming and art and craft classes for children and others helped with school events. Parents in some schools managed structures for HSCL programmes (e.g., parents' room, crèche) and parents were also members of school governance committees. Parents also assisted in the classroom and in the school (e.g., shop, library, toy library). By the third year, parents in most schools were involved in recruiting others for courses and activities. The range and extent of teacher involvement in parental activities varied between schools. In four of six schools which had been selected for more detailed study in the second and third year of the evaluation, parents helped in classrooms with reading, writing, maths, and art and crafts, though this involvement was confined almost exclusively to junior level classes. Other activities in which teachers were involved with parents included paired-reading programmes, curriculum enrichment activities, and talks for parents on various topics.

Activities in 1990-91

Information on the functioning of programmes was obtained for each school from a School Profile completed by school principals, Progress Records completed by co-ordinators, and interviews with co-ordinators and principals.

For the analysis of 1990-91 activities, the number of separate activities which each school engaged in (as recorded in any of the above sources) was calculated. These activities ranged from informal contacts with parents (e.g., chatting to them on the street) to formal training sessions designed to enable parents work with a teacher in the classroom. In all, 369 separate activities were recorded. The activities were assigned to 25 categories, which then were further reduced to three categories. In establishing the final three categories, learning and teaching activities were regarded as the focal point of the categorization. The first category was described as proximal and an activity was assigned to it if it was closely related to the teaching-learning situation (e.g., parents involved in classroom activities, educational activities being carried out in the home). The second category was called intermediate and an activity was assigned to it if it was related to home-school communication or activities, or parenting courses (e.g., written and oral communication from school to home, talks to promote self-development, or parenting skills). The final category was called distal and an

activity was assigned to it if it was related to parent involvement at the level of school governance or support (e.g., membership of a parents' committee) or to school/co-ordinator involvement in the wider community (e.g., contact with community agencies). Each school was assigned a score for proximal activities, a score for intermediate activities, and a score for distal activities.

Analyses were carried out to determine if any distinctive patterns were discernible in the way in which schools had constructed their HSCL programmes. Because the proximal, intermediate, and distal measures or scales comprise a different number of items, the measures were normalized to permit comparisons between them. This was accomplished by first summing the items making up each scale. Following this, the lowest of the range of school values was subtracted from the school's raw score which was then divided by the range. For each scale, this gave a number between 0.0 and 1.0, which represented an overall level of activity on the scale. Means and standard deviations are given for the three scales in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1

Means and Standard Deviations on Three School Activity Scales

Scale	Mean	SD
Proximal	0.48	0.26
Intermediate	0.52	0.27
Distal	0.54	0.21

The next task was to see if schools differed from each other on the three scales. Of particular interest was whether identifiable groups of schools would emerge with different patterns of scores. The technique used for this task was cluster analysis. Following the analysis, it was possible to distinguish between six clusters of schools in terms of their programme activity. These can be categorized as

(i) high activity levels over all (proximal, intermediate, and distal) variables (n=6);

(ii) moderate level of activity over all variables (n=21);

(iii) a relatively high level of activity on proximal variables, but not on other variables (n=4);

(iv) a relatively high level of activity on intermediate variables but not on other variables (n=3);

(v) an overall low level of activity, but distinguishable from (vi) in its greater emphasis on proximal activities; and

(vi) an overall low level of activity, but distinguishable from (v) in its greater emphasis on distal activities.

Mean (and standard deviation) values on the proximal, intermediate, and distal scales for the six clusters are presented in Table 7.2.

In a separate exercise, the National Co-ordinator and the Evaluator rated the programmes in each individual school on a scale from 1 (indicating the most successful) to 5 (indicating the least successful). The correlation between the ratings was .75. The ratings achieved by the schools identified in the six-cluster analysis were examined. All schools in the high overall activity category were found to have received above average ratings (3 of them received ratings of 1 from both raters). Schools high on the proximal scale had also received above average ratings. Schools in the overall moderate and intermediate high categories had received average ratings while all schools in the overall low activity categories had received average or below average ratings, mostly the latter.

Table 7.2

Means and Standard Deviations on School Activities for Six Clusters of Schools Identified in Cluster Analysis

			Proximal		Intermediate		Distal	
		N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.	Overall High	6	.83	.10	.89	.09	.75	.14
2.	Overall Moderate	21	.51	.14	.62	.12	.66	.11
3.	Proximal High	4	.90	.11	.60	.03	.41	.19
4.	Intermediate High	3	.51	.15	.92	.04	.43	.05
5.	Overall Low (Prox+)	4	.50	.08	.28	.17	.15	.13
6.	Overall Low (Dist+)	18	.21	.13	.24	.16	.46	.16
	Total	56	.47	.26	.52	.27	.54	.21

The findings of these analyses suggested that it was reasonable to reach two conclusions. First, despite a good deal of similarity across individual schools, a distinction could be drawn between schools, particularly in terms of their level of activity, but also in terms of the focus

of the programmes which they had implemented. And second, on the evidence thus far available, it was reasonable to identify programmes which had been identified as high in general activity and ones which had been identified as high in proximal activity as models for the further development of home-school-community programmes.

Based on these analyses, six schools were selected for more detailed study during the second and third years of the evaluation. Five of these schools had been found to have high levels of activity (two had overall high, three had high proximal) and the sixth had an overall moderate level of activity, which, however, might be considered satisfactory given that the co-ordinator had spent only one day per week in the school. All six schools had also received above-average ratings of success from both the National Co-ordinator and the Evaluator. A further consideration is selecting the schools was the representation of different geographical areas in the scheme (i.e., Cork, Limerick, and inner and outer areas of Dublin) and the inclusion of different types of school (i.e., single sex, mixed, junior, all-through).

Activities in 1991-92

This section contains descriptions of the provision of courses and activities in 78 primary schools, the types of leadership roles adopted by parents within schools in the HSCL scheme, and teachers' descriptions of the activities (in the six selected schools) in which they were involved with parents.

Courses and Activities

Co-ordinators were asked to list the courses and activities offered to parents in each school they served. Certain kinds of courses and activities had proven to be more popular than others. Table 7.3 contains a list of the courses and activities that were reported for more than 10% of primary schools. These were designed to develop parents' general skills in four categories (in order of frequency): involvement of parents in their children's education; parents' own development; parenting; and home management.

Courses and activities related to the involvement of parents in their children's education were offered in almost all schools (n=72). These included classes in English, Irish, mathematics, and oral Irish aimed at helping parents to help their children with school work (n=41) and paired-reading programmes (n=23). In addition, parents also became involved in a wide range of activities in schools. The most popular of these were parents assisting in the classroom (n=27), attending First Communion/Confirmation meetings (n=16), and assisting with the school/class library (n=12). A new development during the second year of the scheme was the setting up of parent and child groups (n=4) in which parents (usually mothers) engaged in leisure activities such as music and swimming with their children.

Table 7.3
Most Popular* Courses and Activities (within Specified Categories)
for Parents in Primary Schools, 1991-92

COURSE/ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS (N=78)
Parent involvement in children's education	**72**
Classes in English, Irish, Maths, Oral Irish (to help with homework)	41
Parents assisted in classroom	27
Parents involved in paired-reading programme	23
First Communion/Confirmation meetings	16
Parents helped with school/class library	12
Courses to develop parents	**69**
Self-development courses	48
Personal development	30
Relaxation	12
Coping skills/stress management/assertiveness	11
Leisure courses	68
Crafts/sewing/knitting	32
Aerobics/keep fit/dancing/yoga	26
Swimming	16
Art/painting	10
Parent education	20
Computer course for parents	10
Parenting	**56**
Parenting/teen parenting	42
Parenting and sex	16
Talks for parents on drug/solvent abuse	12
Talks on Stay Safe programme	9
Home management courses	**56**
Cookery/microwave cookery	40
Health programmes	21
First aid/safety in the home	11
Home management	9

*those reported for more than 10% of schools

Note: There is overlap in the numbers of courses/activities per category as some schools offered more than one course or activity in a given category.

Courses and activities to develop parents were provided in most schools (n=69) and encompassed self-development courses, leisure courses, and educational courses. Self-development courses, which were offered in almost two-thirds of schools (n=48), included, in order of popularity, personal development (n=30), relaxation (n=12), and coping skills/stress management/assertiveness (n=11). Leisure courses and activities for parents were offered in almost all schools (n=68). In order of popularity, these included courses in crafts, including knitting and sewing (n=32), aerobics/keep fit/dancing (n=26), swimming (n=16), and art/painting (n=10). Educational courses for parents were less popular than either self-development or leisure courses, being offered in only a quarter of schools (n=20). Only one educational course (computers), was offered in over 10% of schools (n=10).

Courses in the parenting category were offered in almost three quarters (n=56) of primary schools. Within this category, parenting, including teen parenting, was the most popular course, offered in more than half the schools (n=42). Courses on specific aspects of parenting were also popular, i.e., parenting and sex (n=16), talks on drug/solvent abuse (n=12), and talks on the Stay Safe Programme (n=9).

Courses and activities in the home management category were offered in almost three-quarters (n=56) of schools. These included courses in cookery/microwave cookery (n=40), health programmes (n=21), first aid/safety in the home (n=11), and general home management (n=9). Courses in home maintenance/DIY and woodwork were introduced to the HSCL scheme during the second year. It may be that these courses represent initiatives to involve fathers in the project in response to acknowledgement of the need for their greater involvement.

The emphasis on practical skills for parents in courses and activities is in keeping with teachers' perceptions that practical home management skills and skills on how to help children with schoolwork are likely to be most beneficial to children at school. Further, the effects of the programme on parents as perceived by co-ordinators often related directly to classes or activities in these practical areas and these effects are described elsewhere.

Parents in Leadership Roles in Schools

Co-ordinators reported that parents had leadership roles in 60 schools. However, there was considerable variance in their perceptions of what constituted a leadership role. While some regarded helping in classrooms, fundraising, and helping with activities such as a school tour/concert as leadership activities, others did not. Again, some co-ordinators regarded membership of Boards of Management and Parent Committees as fulfilling leadership roles while others did not.

Principals' reports of the role played by parents on Boards of Management do not support the view that parent members have a strong leadership role. Fewer than half the principals (n=24) of first cohort schools in the HSCL scheme said that the role of parents in

relation to school policy was consultative, 22 said that parents had a consultative role in relation to school rules, and only 12 said that parent members of the Board of Management had a consultative role in relation to curriculum issues. Fewer than 10 principals thought that parents played a passive role in relation to these areas while the others felt that parents played no role at all.

The leadership roles reported by co-ordinators included parental involvement in activities with or for children, activities with or for parents, and school governance and advocacy. Since parents in many schools were involved in more than one kind of leadership role there is overlap in the numbers reported here.

Activities With or For Children. Parents acted as paired-reading tutors or helped in classrooms in 24 schools. Helping in classrooms took various forms but usually parents led or supervised small groups of children with informal activities such as art and crafts, knitting and sewing. Parents ran, or helped to run, the school library or toy library in 14 schools.

Parents organized activities such as swimming and art and craft classes for children (10 schools), helped with school events (outing/concert/Mass/Confirmation meetings) (8 schools), and games and yard supervision (3 schools). Parents also ran a savings scheme (2 schools), book rental scheme (2 schools), school shop (3 schools), and a weekly disco for children (1 school).

Activities With or For Parents. Parents facilitated courses for other parents in 17 schools, helped the co-ordinator to organize courses for parents (one school), and encouraged other parents to attend school activities (one school). Examples of courses facilitated by parents included Parenting/Know Your Child, home maintenance, cookery, crafts and sewing/knitting. In one school parents ran a library for other parents in the school.

Parents managed the structures that facilitated the involvement of parents in schools and in the HSCL programme in 10 schools (i.e., the Parents' Room/Drop-in Centre, play group, and crèche). Parents in one school organized a social night for 'teachers and their helpers' (i.e., those parents who assisted the teacher in the classroom). In this school teachers' helpers were clearly considered by co-ordinators to fulfil leadership roles and that this was also recognized by other parents.

Parent Involvement in School Governance. Parents helped with fundraising in 17 schools and were members of school governance committees (Board of Management, Parents' Council/Committee, Local Committee, Summer Project Committee, Crèche Committee) in 20 schools.

Activities for Parents Which Involved Teachers in Six Selected Schools

The range and extent of teacher involvement in parental activities varied between the six selected schools and, in one school, teachers were not involved in any activities with parents.

Teachers and parents worked together in a variety of activities. One type of activity involved parents in the classroom helping with reading, writing, maths (especially with junior infants), and art and crafts (including knitting, jewellery making, and pottery). In all, 28 teachers involved parents in their classrooms. Twenty-five of these were working in two of the six schools. In one school, two teachers involved parents and in another, one teacher did. There was no parent involvement in the classroom in the remaining two schools. Table 7.4 provides a breakdown of parent involvement in the classroom by grade level. It is clear that involvement was confined almost exclusively to junior level classes (i.e., from junior infants to second class).

Table 7.4

Number of Teachers in the Six Schools who had Parents Involved in the Classroom by Grade Level, 1991-92

GRADE LEVEL OF TEACHER	NUMBER OF TEACHERS (n=28)
6th class	1
5th class	-
4th class	-
3rd class	1
2nd class	7
1st class	2
Senior Infants	9
Junior Infants	8
Total No. of Teachers in Grades	96

In one school, parents took small groups of children outside class for computer work and Junior Infant activities. For Junior Infants, groups of six parents took their own children out of class for two half-hour sessions each week over a six-week period. The activities were organized by the teacher who trained parents to work with the children.

Other activities in which parents were involved with teachers included paired-reading programmes (5 schools), the organization of activities such as swimming and drama (2 schools), attendance at courses or talks given by teachers such as pre-school preparatory talks, Irish class, talk on curriculum, basic maths class (2 schools), homework club (1 school), and group meetings with teachers (2 schools). In one instance, a teacher was involved with parents in organizing a toy library. Table 7.5 provides data on the numbers of teachers who were involved in each of the above activities in the six selected schools.

Table 7.5

Activities which Involved Teachers and Parents and
Number of Teachers who were Involved in Each Activity, 1991-92

PARENT ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS (n=52)
Activities outside classroom	15
Paired-reading programme	14
Organized activities for children	10
Courses/talks given by teachers	6
Homework club	4
Group meeting with teacher	2
Involved in toy library	1
Total No. of Teachers in Grades	96

Teachers made a number of suggestions as to how HSCL courses/classes could be made more relevant to teachers and pupils in the future. Some teachers (n=12) suggested training or classes for parents to enable them to help their children with homework or schoolwork. Five of these were from one school in which considerable training of parents for classroom involvement had taken place and they felt that this should be continued and expanded. Others (n=10) suggested that the emphasis in HSCL programmes should be to develop initiative among parents to organize activities (e.g., sports or extra-curricular activities for children) within their own areas. Teachers in the six schools were also in favour of the continued provision of parenting courses (n=7) and courses on health, hygiene, nutrition, or home management (n=7), which they felt would help parents to improve the home environment of their children.

Activities in 1992-93

Co-ordinators were asked to list the courses and activities in which parents were involved and the numbers of parents who attended each course and activity in each school they served. Valid responses were received for 73 schools. It should be noted that, since some co-ordinators served more than one school, there is some overlap in the reported number of parents participating in the courses and activities offered in these schools as some parents may be counted twice.

Co-ordinators' responses indicated that certain kinds of courses and activities were more popular than others. Table 7.6 contains a list of the courses and activities that were reported for more than 10% of schools. There appeared to be a heavy emphasis on the provision of

Table 7.6

Most Popular* Courses and Activities (within Specified Categories)
for Parents in Primary Schools, 1992-93

Course/Activity	Number of Schools (N: 73)	Number of Parents
Parent involvement in children's education	**54**	**1,746**
Classes in English, Irish, Maths, Oral Irish (to help with homework)	34	506
Parents involved in paired-reading programme	21	607
Parents helped with school/class/toy library	13	218
First Communion/Confirmation/Graduation meetings	11	415
Leisure courses	**54**	**1,631**
Crafts/sewing/knitting	38	554
Aerobics/keep fit/dancing/yoga	34	658
Art/painting/pottery	15	93
Gardening/flower arranging	14	169
Swimming	8	157
Parents' education	**38**	**483**
Computer course	15	191
Literacy classes	13	94
Courses for the Junior and Leaving Certificate	13	135
Child care training course	8	63
Self-Development	**33**	**627**
Personal Development	25	289
Cultural trips	11	338
Parenting	**52**	**1,148**
Parenting/Teen Parenting	52	688
Talks on Stay Safe Programme	13	460
Home Management Courses	**50**	**990**
Cookery/Microwave Cookery	39	521
First Aid	13	172
Health Programmes	12	156
Home Management	8	141

*those reported for more than 10% of schools

NOTE: There is some overlap in the numbers for courses/activities per category as some schools offered more than one course or activity in a given category and some parents attended more than one course.

courses and activities which developed parents' general skills in four categories. These were (in order of frequency) involvement of parents in their children's education; parents' own development (including leisure, educational, and self development courses); parenting; and home management.

Courses and activities relating to the involvement of parents in their children's education were offered in almost three quarters of schools and were attended by 1,746 parents (there is some overlap as one parent may be involved in two or more activities and in relation to more than one child). Activities included classes in English, Irish, Mathematics, and Oral Irish aimed at helping parents to help their children with homework (47% of schools); a total of 506 parents participated in these classes. In 29% of schools, 607 parents were involved in paired-reading programmes; in 18% of schools, 218 parents helped with the school, class, or toy library; and in 15% of schools, 415 parents attended First Communion, Confirmation, or Graduation meetings.

Courses and activities to develop parents were offered in most schools and encompassed leisure courses, educational courses, and self development courses. The most popular leisure courses and activities for parents were offered in almost three quarters of schools. In order of popularity these included, crafts/sewing/knitting classes (38 schools) attended by 554 parents; aerobics/keep fit/dancing/yoga classes (34 schools) attended by 658 parents; art/painting/pottery classes (15 schools) attended by 93 parents; gardening/flower-arranging classes (14 schools) attended by 169 parents; and swimming classes (8 schools) attended by 157 parents. More than half the schools (n=38) offered the most popular educational courses. These were (in order of frequency) computer courses (15 schools) attended by 191 parents; literacy classes (13 schools) attended by 94 parents; courses for the Junior and Leaving Certificate (13 schools) attended by 135 parents; and childcare training courses (8 schools) attended by 63 parents. Self-development courses were offered in 45% of schools. These included personal development courses (25 schools) attended by 289 parents and cultural trips (11 schools) attended by 338 parents.

Courses in the parenting category were offered in 71% of schools. Within this category, parenting (including teen parenting) was the most popular course and was offered in 52 schools and attended by 688 parents. Talks on the "Stay Safe" programme (13 schools) were also popular and were attended by 460 parents.

Courses and activities in the home management category were offered in over two thirds of schools. These included in order of popularity, cookery/microwave cookery classes (39 schools) attended by 521 parents; first aid classes (13 schools) attended by 172 parents; health programmes (12 schools) attended by 156 parents; and home management classes (8 schools) attended by 141 parents.

A comparison of the most popular courses and activities provided for parents in primary schools in the 1991-92 and in the 1992-93 school years indicates that during 1992-93 there was a decrease in the number of schools providing classes in English, Irish, Mathematics, and Oral Irish (Table 7.7). There was also a decrease in the First Communion, Confirmation, and Graduation meetings provided in schools. There was, however, an increase in the number of schools that involved parents in paired-reading programmes, and in those that involved parents helping with the school, class, or toy library.

A comparison of the number of schools providing leisure courses and activities in 1991-92 and in 1992-93 indicates that there was an increase in courses such as crafts/sewing/knitting; aerobics/keep fit/dancing/yoga; art/painting/pottery; and gardening/flower arranging.

From 1991-92 to 1992-93, there was an increase in the number of schools providing educational courses for parents. The courses included computers; literacy classes; courses for the Junior and Leaving Certificate; and childcare training courses.

From 1991-92 to 1992-93, there was a decrease in the number of schools providing self-development courses in personal development; relaxation; and in coping skills, stress management, and assertiveness, but an increase in the number of schools providing cultural trips for parents.

A comparison of the number of schools providing courses in the parenting category from the 1991-92 to the 1992-93 school year indicates that there was an increase in courses such as parenting/teen parenting and talks on the 'Stay Safe' programme. There was a decrease in the number of schools providing courses on parenting and sex and of talks for parents on drug and solvent abuse.

There was an increase in two of the courses offered in the home management category between 1991-92 and 1992-93. These included courses in cookery/microwave cookery and in first aid. There was a decrease in the number of schools providing health programmes and home management classes.

Number of New Parents

Of those parents that were involved in courses and activities, co-ordinators were asked to report the total number of parents who were 'new' to the HSCL programme for the 1992-93 school year (i.e., those who had not previously been involved). It is clear that there was a great deal of variation between schools in the numbers of new parents which ranged from none (in 4 schools) to 100 (in 1 school), the average being 30.

When the numbers are grouped into four quartiles, we find that in the lowest quartile, the number of parents new to the HSCL programme ranges from 0 to 8; in the second quartile, it ranges from 10 to 23, in the third quartile from 24 to 48 and in the fourth quartile

Table 7.7

Comparison of the Most Popular Courses and Activities for Parents in Primary Schools in 1991-92 and in 1992-93

Course/Activity	Number of Schools 1991-92 (N: 72)	Number of Schools 1992-93 (N: 72)
Parent involvement in children's education		
Classes in English, Irish, Maths, Oral Irish (to help with homework)	37	34
Parents involved in paired-reading programme	18	20
Parents helped with school/class/toy library	8	12
First Communion/Confirmation/Graduation meetings	18	11
Leisure courses		
Crafts/sewing/knitting	27	37
Aerobics/keep fit/dancing/yoga	25	34
Art/painting/pottery	13	15
Gardening/flower arranging	5	14
Swimming	12	8
Parents' education		
Computer course	10	15
Literacy classes	5	13
Courses for the Junior and Leaving Certificate	4	13
Child care training course	1	8
Self development		
Self-development	29	25
Relaxation	12	6
Coping skills/stress management/assertiveness	16	7
Cultural trips	5	11
Parenting		
Parenting/Teen parenting	40	52
Talks on Stay Safe programme	8	13
Parenting and sex	14	7
Talks for parents on drug/solvent abuse	10	5
Home Management Courses		
Cookery/Microwave cookery	37	39
First Aid	9	13
Health programmes	18	12
Home management	11	8

NOTE: For purposes of comparison, the information reported here is for 72 schools (including the six selected schools) for which complete data was available for both school years.

from 50 to 100. The range in the number of new parents in the top two quartiles (24-100) is much greater than that in the lower two quartiles.

Parent Involvement in Schools

Apart from attending courses and activities some parents were also involved in various aspects of the running of HSCL activities. One such aspect was the recruitment of other parents which was seen as central to the growth and expansion of the HSCL programme in schools. Co-ordinators in 90% of schools (n=64) involved parents in telling others about courses and activities and in encouraging friends and neighbours to get involved. There was great variation between schools in the numbers of parents who actually helped recruit other parents, ranging from none (in 7 schools) to 30 (in 1 school). In 41% of schools (n=29) between 1 and 5 parents helped recruit others and in 38% of schools (n=27) between 6 and 10 parents helped. In the remaining 11% of schools (n=8), between 12 and 30 parents helped recruit others to the HSCL programme.

In two-thirds of schools (n=48) parents had also taken responsibility for maintaining the Parents' Room and running the crèche. (In some schools a FÁS worker was available to work in the crèche.) The number of parents with this responsibility ranged from 1 (in 1 school) to 12 (in 3 schools), the most frequently reported number being 2 parents (in 15 schools). In schools where 12 parents were involved in this capacity it was on a rota basis.

In about three-quarters of the schools (n=47) parents helped in the running of parent courses. This generally meant taking responsibility for keeping attendance records (a requirement for VEC funded courses), collecting money (where required) from participants, providing refreshments, and ensuring that the room was tidied afterwards. Once again, the numbers of parents varied from 1 parent (in 2 schools) to 13 parents (in 2 schools), the most frequently reported number being 3 parents (in 14 schools).

In about half the schools (n=35) parents acted as presenters or facilitators of parent courses. In most cases (25 schools) this involved either one or two parents. However, in two schools, seven parents acted as presenters or facilitators of parent courses.

Co-ordinators reported the numbers of parents who had helped with extra-curricular and curricular activities, both at school level and at classroom level. In all but five schools, parents had been involved at one level or the other.

Parents were reported as being involved in school-based activities in 87% of schools. (Other estimates of parent involvement give a figure of 85%.) The most popular of these activities included (in order of frequency) helping with the school library (including visits to the library and toy library) (18 schools), school sports (including sports days) (13 schools), school concerts or plays (12 schools), paired reading in the school (as distinct from paired reading at

home with own children) (11 schools), accompanying children to swimming and on school tours (each in 10 schools), and knitting/craft work and cookery (each in 5 schools).

A further breakdown indicated that, in 69% of schools, parents had helped with extra-curricular activities in the school, while in 62% of schools, parents had helped with curricular activities in schools. The numbers of parents involved varied quite a lot between schools. Between 1 parent (1 school) and 35 parents (1 school) had helped with extra-curricular activities in schools, the most frequently reported number being 10 parents (in 11 schools) and the average being 7 parents. Between 1 parent (2 schools) and 70 parents (1 school) had helped with curricular activities in schools, the most frequently reported number being 10 parents (in 6 schools) and the average being 10 parents.

Parents were reported by co-ordinators as having been involved in classroom-based activities in 65% of schools (other estimates put this at 63%). The most popular of these included (in order of frequency) reading (including story telling, pre-reading activities, and taking groups for paired reading) (25 schools), art (including crafts) (23 schools), knitting (10 schools), library activities (5 schools), and computer activities (4 schools).

Further analyses indicate that, in almost half (48%) the schools, parents had helped with extra-curricular activities in classrooms, while, in 42% of schools, parents had helped with curricular activities in classrooms. Again, the numbers of parents varied a lot between schools. Between 1 parent (2 schools) and 36 parents (1 school) had helped with extra-curricular activities in classrooms, the most frequently reported number being 8 parents (in 6 schools) and the average being 4 parents. Between 1 parent (1 school) and 35 parents (2 schools) had been involved in curricular activities in classrooms, the most frequently reported number being 6 parents (in 5 schools) and the average being 6 parents.

Another aspect of parent involvement in HSCL activities was membership of school committees (e.g., Parents' Council, Board of Management), membership of Local Committees, and fundraising. There was a great degree of variation in the numbers of parents involved as members of school committees, ranging from none (in 11 schools) to 40 (in 1 school). Most frequently (in 21 schools), two parents were members of school committees.

In about two-thirds of schools (n=46), parents were involved in fundraising activities. This included general fundraising for the school and was not always directly related to the HSCL programme in the school. On average, eight parents were involved, though in three schools as many as 40 parents were involved.

There were only two schools in which no parents were involved in any of the above activities. Again, there was great variation in the numbers of parents involved, ranging from 1 parent (in 1 school) to 164 parents (in 1 school), the average being 42 parents. In 50% of schools 28 parents or fewer were involved in the activities described above.

Co-ordinators' Allocation of Time (1992-93)

Co-ordinators were asked to indicate what percentage of their time (for each school) they spent on each of a number of specified tasks during the 1992-93 school year. Their responses reflected some variation between individual co-ordinators. However, the information presented here reflects the average amount of time for all co-ordinators. The largest portion of co-ordinators' time (26%) was spent on home visits and, when taken together with individual meetings (usually in the school) with parents (10%), indicates that co-ordinators devoted just over a third of their time (36%) specifically to visiting and meeting parents (Table 7.8).

Just under a third (31%) of co-ordinators' time was occupied with parent courses and activities. The time covered organizing courses for parents (16%), acting as course presenter/facilitator (9%), and organizing other activities (e.g., coffee mornings, outings) (6%). A similar use of time was apparent during the second year of the scheme (1991-92) when co-ordinators reported that the provision of courses for parents was one of the three activities that took most of their time.

Meetings and contacts within the school occupied just under a fifth (18%) of co-ordinators' time. These included (in order of frequency) meetings/contacts with teachers (8%), with principal(s) (7%), and with pupils (3%).

Co-ordinators spent almost one tenth (9%) of their time in making contacts with agencies or individuals in the community. Finally, a small amount of time (2%) was taken up with arranging funding for the HSCL programme. The remaining time (4%) was occupied with (in order of frequency) reports/accounts/records (10 co-ordinators), meeting other co-ordinators (including cluster meetings and inservice) (6 co-ordinators), preparation and planning (5 co-ordinators), Parents' Association/Local Committee (4 co-ordinators) and toy library/crèche (2 co-ordinators). It is interesting to note that just over a quarter of the co-ordinators noted that administration and planning took up part of their time.

To determine whether or not there were differences in co-ordinators' allocation of their time according to the number of schools they served, a one-way analysis of variance was carried out for each of the specified tasks (described above) with the variable 'Number of schools served.' The variable 'Number of schools served' was made up of four categories: (i) single schools served by one co-ordinator; (ii) two adjacent schools (i.e., junior and senior or boys' and girls' schools on the same campus) sharing one co-ordinator; (iii) two separate schools (i.e., either in separate areas or serving different families in the same general area) sharing one co-ordinator; and (iv) schools sharing a co-ordinator with more than one other school.

Table 7.8

Mean Scores (and SDs) for Schools Relating to Assocation of Co-ordinators' Time by Numbers of Schools Served by Co-ordinator

	1 Single schools		2 Two adjacent schools		3 Two separate schools		4 More than two schools					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	df	p	Diff (p < .05)
Individual meetings with parents	13.25	9.19	10.21	6.32	8.80	5.16	8.91	5.11	1.12	3,57	0.35	
Home visits	24.83	6.42	23.82	7.80	33.20	9.08	25.00	15.81	2.40	3,57	0.08	
Meetings/contacts with school principals	6.42	3.12	5.83	4.30	9.20	4.89	9.69	6.70	2.76	3,63	0.05	
Meetings/contacts with teachers	7.58	5.71	7.86	6.97	8.80	3.62	8.18	5.60	0.08	3,58	0.97	
Meetings/contacts with pupils	4.33	3.85	2.97	2.92	2.80	1.75	3.18	2.52	0.73	3,58	0.54	
Meetings/contacts with community agencies or individuals	9.50	5.32	7.93	3.52	7.90	3.28	12.00	6.58	2.84	3,63	0.05	
Organizing courses for parents	16.83	13.50	16.00	9.91	9.10	4.18	15.94	12.28	1.26	3,62	0.30	
Organizing other activities for parents	3.67	2.23	7.32	6.44	5.10	3.90	3.44	4.37	2.61	3,62	0.06	
Acting as course presenter	8.83	7.88	10.07	11.15	10.40	8.20	3.75	4.66	1.93	3,63	0.13	
Arranging funding	2.25	2.42	2.35	2.21	1.30	2.00	1.88	3.59	0.44	3,63	0.72	

There were overall significant differences only on two of the tasks, 'Meetings/contacts with school principals' and 'meetings/contacts with community agencies or individuals.' However, no two groups of schools were significantly different from each other for either of these tasks (Table 7.8). This analysis indicates that, on average, for each school, co-ordinators allocate the same percentage of their time to various tasks regardless of the number of schools they serve. It should be remembered, however, that although the percentages of time may be similar, the amount of time this represents is actually much less for schools that share a co-ordinator with more than one other school.

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF HSCL PROGRAMMES IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary

Co-ordinators at post-primary level followed a pattern similar to that of primary co-ordinators in targeting specific groups of parents during the first year and subsequently broadening the focus of HSCL activities. As a group, post-primary principals seemed well informed and aware of the aims and objectives of the HSCL scheme. Co-ordinators used many strategies to reach uninvolved parents, the most common being home visits. As at primary level, there was a heavy emphasis on courses and activities for parents including courses in self-development (e.g., assertiveness), leisure (e.g., photography, swimming), parenting, and education (e.g., computers, English, Irish, Maths, typing). Access to tutors for courses was easier at post-primary level, where many tutors were from the VEC sector. There was less involvement of parents in paired-reading programmes and in classroom activity than at primary level. While about half the staff interviewed were sceptical about how parents could be integrated into classroom work, about the same number were open to this type of parental involvement, particularly in relation to remedial work, practical subjects, and career guidance. Parents involved in HSCL programmes included many that were described as lacking in confidence as well as those who had high levels of skills and confidence. As at primary level, the vast majority of parents involved were women. Parent involvement in school governance included membership of parent associations and activities related chiefly to fundraising and advising on HSCL activities. As at primary level, core groups of parents, with whom co-ordinators worked closely, tended to become involved in post-primary schools and were members of the Local Committee or parent associations.

Initial Programme Focus

This section of the report is based on interviews conducted in January 1992 with 10 of the 13 co-ordinators in post-primary schools in the Dublin area. Co-ordinators in the remaining three schools were interviewed at a later stage and their responses were similar to those presented here.

During the interviews, co-ordinators were asked to describe the initial focus of their work. Four co-ordinators had chosen initially to target members of parent committees within the school. Activities planned for these parents included computer courses (in two schools), literacy, teen parenting, assertiveness, a lone parents group and woodwork. Four had decided to target the parents of first year students and were planning coffee mornings and meetings to get to know the parents (one co-ordinator planned to work with the parents in encouraging their children to work towards doing well in the Junior Certificate examination). Other co-ordinators chose to target parents of incoming first years (especially those from primary schools within the HSCL project), fifth year students (as co-ordinator had been their class teacher and knew the parents well), third years (to explain options for post-Junior Certificate), and parents of remedial students or students who were causing disciplinary problems. One co-ordinator was also visiting a family in which the father had died and another family in which the student had cancer.

Co-ordinators noted that many parents feel unable to cope with either the subject matter or the organization of the school at second level. They were conscious of the need to support the parents in this regard and some had organised talks/meetings/courses accordingly. Courses in teen parenting, as mentioned above, were intended to support parents in dealing with issues related to adolescent children, which was another need identified by parents.

Since they were just beginning their work, most of the co-ordinators had not reached the stage of considering issues that might arise from dealing with students of varying achievement levels and expectations or from dealing with students in different curriculum tracks. However, they noted that parents of low-achieving students were less likely to attend meetings or to respond to invitations to come to the school. One co-ordinator felt that issues for parents would vary with the achievement levels of their children. For example, parents of weaker students might require assistance in helping the child with homework while parents of high achieving students would need to be made aware of the importance of motivating the child to see the value of doing well in examinations. Of course, some issues would be common to both sets of parents, e.g., discipline problems (though the causes might vary), adolescence, explaining the running of the school, and the expectations for parents and students.

None of the co-ordinators had taken on the role of following up on students who regularly miss school, as this task was the responsibility of other staff members (e.g., class tutor, year head, vice principal, posts of responsibility). However, in some instances co-ordinators had visited the homes of such children to encourage the parents in dealing with specific problems.

The extent of social problems varied from school to school, though in most areas there is a certain amount of petty theft and vandalism. In some areas also, co-ordinators were concerned at the level of substance abuse among students (alcohol, aerosols, petrol, gas and, in one area a considerable hash problem). Co-ordinators felt that they might have some role in liaising with other staff and local agencies in addressing these problems. Teen pregnancy was also seen as an increasing problem, though in the majority of cases the girls were over fifteen and left school on becoming pregnant. Some co-ordinators expressed an interest in developing some form of support for these teenage mothers since their children will be attending primary school in the near future.

Emerging Programme Focus

When they were interviewed towards the end of the 1991-92 school year, co-ordinators expressed a much clearer view of their role. They had also developed more definite ideas about the directions in which they intended to expand the programme during the second year.

Several mentioned the need to involve school staff and to develop their awareness of parents' needs and they planned to do this in various ways. One co-ordinator planned to show staff a video of a parent discussion in which (contrary to staff expectations that such discussions would be negative) they expressed very positive views of the school and of the contributions of staff members. One co-ordinator expressed a need to find out staff perceptions of the co-ordinator's role, while another had developed this and had asked staff to complete a questionnaire about various aspects of the HSCL programme and their expectations for the work.

Some co-ordinators expressed a need to expand the programme, both in terms of range of activities and of range of parents being reached. They planned to target different groups of parents during the second year (e.g., parents of students in junior classes, parents of students in first year remedial classes, parents of Junior Certificate students, members of Parent Committees). Some intended to try to meet more parents and planned to establish structures, such as coffee mornings, to do this. Several also intended increasing the amount of home visits they did.

Co-ordinators expressed an intention to find out more about parents' needs and fears in relation to the school and to be available to give feedback about children and to discuss problems. They planned to increase the range of courses offered through HSCL to include parenting, life skills (parallel sessions with parents and children), how to help with homework, among others. Finally, one co-ordinator expressed the intention to develop a more prominent leadership role for parents in the school.

Perceived Objectives

In May 1992, when principals were asked to state the objectives of the HSCL scheme, just over half identified the strengthening of communication between the school, parents, and the community as an objective. This could be taken to relate to the second aim of the project which is 'to promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.' Although they were quick to point out that relationships develop slowly and that they were not sure of the long-term effects of the programme, the principals affirmed that contacts between home and school were being enhanced. One principal pointed out, however, that parents' more pressing problems (e.g., financial, health, family) precluded their availing of the opportunity to attend school activities.

Another objective of the project, as seen by principals, was that the school should become a resource for the community and vice versa. This is a further reflection of the second aim as stated above. In particular, principals felt that the school should become more

involved in the problems of the home and they felt that this objective was being met through links with various social services.

Three principals felt that the HSCL programme grew out of an awareness of the relative failure of children because of lack of parental involvement in schools. An objective of the programme in their view then, would be to encourage parent self-development and confidence in the hope that this would affect children's attitudes and educational performance. The principals reported more parental and community involvement in their schools and one principal attributed this to the work of the co-ordinator. These ideas reflect two other project aims: '(i) to maximise active participation of the children in the project schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk,' and '(ii) to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational process and to assist them in developing relevant skills.'

Closely linked with these objectives is the further objective expressed by principals that the programme should create opportunities for parents, whose previous contacts with the school tended to be of a negative nature, to be involved in the school on a positive basis. All of the principals who stated this objective felt that it was being met. The opening up of the school was deemed a positive experience for both parents and teachers. As an example of this, one principal cited the setting up of a new parent-teacher association with 'very positive people' representing various areas in the locality. One factor which seems to create positive attitudes in such an association is the large social element in meetings, particularly in evening classes.

As a group, principals seemed well informed and aware of the aims and objectives of the HSCL scheme. The only aim to which they did not refer was that of dissemination of project outcomes throughout the school system and this may be because they do not view this as their responsibility.

A further aim of the HSCL scheme which is to enhance children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level, and their life long attitudes to learning had not been enunciated at this stage and was added in conjunction with the extension of the scheme to second level.

Methods of Contact with Parents

Co-ordinators reported that families generally live in the local area. However, many students attending inner city schools live in several different areas. One co-ordinator also reported that some students come to the school from country areas.

In sending out general invitations to coffee mornings or meetings, most co-ordinators reported using letters (either sent with students or posted) as the means of contact. These letters were often followed up by visits to some of the homes and some co-ordinators phoned

parents. Co-ordinators tried to meet parents at meetings of the parent association/committee, through adult education activities in the school, through visiting local community centres, or through visiting the parents' room in the local primary schools. They also reported building on relationships with parents of former students and on incidental contacts with other parents in the school (e.g., cleaners).

By the end of their second year in the scheme, co-ordinators in 12 post-primary schools reported using many strategies to reach parents who were not involved in HSCL activities. The most common of these included making home visits (11 schools), advertising courses/activities in the schools'/parents'/local newsletter (6 schools), sending letters home advertising courses/activities (4 schools), making visits to sixth class pupils in primary schools (3 schools), and going to parent-tutor meetings (3 schools). One co-ordinator mentioned that the two parents who were attending a Leadership Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations also made home visits with the co-ordinator. Other strategies included sending information letters about public talks to households (2 schools), inviting 'other' parents to view parents' work in the school (2 schools), holding an adult education open day (1 school), inviting parents to become involved in class meetings (1 school), and inviting parents 'to bring a friend' to courses/activities in the school(1 school). Co-ordinators reported meeting more parents through an A.G.M. (1 school), informal meetings held at school (1 school), a prize-giving day (1 school), coffee mornings (1 school), through the paired-reading programmes (1 school) and the parents' council (1 school). In one school, a co-ordinator invited parents to talk at meetings about the courses they took. In another school, a co-ordinator took over first year enrolments to meet new parents. Liaising with community agencies was also used as a strategy by co-ordinators to reach more parents. For example, public talks held in schools were publicised by local community agencies in one school. In another school, the St Vincent de Paul Society asked parents to attend cookery classes provided in the school. One co-ordinator reported that providing DIY courses for fathers in schools helped bring fathers into the school.

Activities in 1991-92

From interviews with post-primary school principals and co-ordinators it was clear that, during 1991-92 it was mainly co-ordinators who decided on HSCL activities in schools. However, in nine schools, he/she did so in consultation with the principal. In general, the principal seems to have acted in a supervisory or supportive role, while the co-ordinator developed ideas and plans. In most schools the co-ordinator consulted with parents about planned activities. Playing a minor role (e.g., referring students) in the decision-making process were (in order of frequency) year heads, chaplains, remedial teachers, other teachers, organisers of adult education classes, vice-principals and counsellors. School committees

(some of which have parent members) and pastoral committees were mentioned by three principals but they did not seem to figure prominently in the decision-making process.

Half of the principals had helped to initiate some HSCL activities in their schools. Two principals were instrumental in setting up a parents' council/association, while other activities initiated by principals included a cycling project, computer classes, and home visits by co-ordinators to parents of students who did not come for enrolments.

Parent involvement during the 1991-92 school year consisted mainly of attendance at courses/classes run in response to parents' expressed needs. These included courses in teen parenting (6 schools), computers (4 schools), cookery (3 schools), assertiveness (2 schools), literacy (2 schools), English literature (2 schools), Maths (2 schools), home management, 'Helping you child through the Junior Certificate,' photography, drama, cycling, DIY, aerobics, social studies, woodwork, French, typing, art and crafts, crochet, sewing, and pottery (each in 1 school).

The number of parents in a course group ranged from 2 (adult literacy) to 20 (parenting and cookery). In all, approximately 500 parents enrolled for courses, though there was a certain amount of overlap of attendees at courses. Co-ordinators also noted fluctuations in attendance. In two instances courses were discontinued due to a drop in attendance. The co-ordinators attributed this to untimliness of one of the courses (parenting) and to the fact that the instructor did not elicit preferences from the parents for a cookery class.

Of the 500 parents who attended courses, approximately 20 were men. The courses attended by men related to computers, woodwork, cycling, Maths, and DIY. Some men were also active in committee work.

Paired reading had been initiated in three schools, involving 12 parents. Several co-ordinators also held meetings with parents of incoming first year students. Other activities included organising a sixth year graduation, attendance at existing adult education courses, a night meeting on drugs education (250 parents attended), and individual queries on subject choices for students. One co-ordinator also organised regular coffee mornings for parents at which a guest speaker of their choice addressed a topic of interest followed by discussion.

When questioned about the characteristics of parents that tended to become involved and those that did not, co-ordinators offered a wide range of responses. Some said that it was the 'stronger' and least disadvantaged parents who got involved, in some cases those whose children were performing well in school (though there were exceptions to this) or those who placed a higher value on the benefits of education. In many instances, the fact that mothers may have young children prevented them from attending. Where possible, co-ordinators addressed this problem by providing crèche facilities. In other cases, women were busy with part-time work and family commitments. Again, in some cases, co-ordinators suggested that poor literacy skills prevented parents from approaching the school. Some of these parents

attended courses such as cookery and art and crafts as they seemed to find them less threatening. Thus it would seem that the type of activity offered in courses influences the type of parent who attends.

Most co-ordinators found it difficult to elicit a response from parents who were perceived by the school to lack interest in their children's education. However, some co-ordinators reported increased attendance following home visits to invite the person to attend. Some co-ordinators also initially targeted parents they knew from their teaching experience in the school. The implication would seem to be that where parents have made some connection with the school, they are more likely to attend courses or activities there.

An interesting trend noted by one co-ordinator was that parents from the immediate area (consisting of local authority housing) did not attend adult education classes. It was felt that they viewed these classes as something for those from outlying private housing and, as such, 'a step above them.'

In nine of the schools parents were active in committees, six of which had been established prior to the project. In most cases the co-ordinators have worked with existing committee members to improve their skills and level of input to the school. The numbers of parents involved at this level ranged from 5 in one school to 25 in another. In all, approximately 100 parents were involved in committee activities of some nature.

Activities in 1992-93

During the 1992-93 school year, there was again a heavy emphasis on parent attendance at courses and activities. Parents attended self-development, leisure, and educational courses and courses aimed to develop household/practical skills, aesthetic skills, and parenting skills. Parents also attended talks on various topics in schools (e.g., Introduction to post-primary school, talk on women's health issues).

Self-development courses that were offered to parents included (in order of frequency) personal development/assertiveness (3 schools) attended by 51 parents; cultural trips (2 schools) attended by 120 parents; life skills (1 school) attended by 43 parents; and relaxation (1 school) attended by 30 parents.

Leisure courses that were offered to parents included (in order of frequency) photography (2 schools) attended by 22 parents; yoga (1 school) attended by 30 parents; set dancing (1 school) attended by 27 parents; swimming (1 school) attended by 23 parents; basketball (1 school) attended by 15 parents; and jewellery making (1 school) attended by 11 parents.

Educational courses that were offered to parents included (in order of frequency) computers (7 schools) attended by 149 parents; Junior Certificate English (4 schools) attended by 41 parents; English (3 schools) attended by 37 parents; Irish (3 schools) attended

by 25 parents; Maths (2 schools) attended by 35 parents; Typing course (2 schools) attended by 19 parents; literacy classes (2 schools) attended by 7 parents; Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (1 school) attended by 15 parents; Primary drugs facilitation course (1 school) attended by 10 parents; and Junior Certificate French course (1 school) attended by 10 parents.

Courses aimed to develop parents' household/practical skills that were offered in schools included (in order of frequency) home management and cookery (5 schools) attended by 116 parents; knitting/sewing/dressmaking (2 schools) attended by 46 parents; DIY (2 schools) attended by 20 parents; upholstery (1 school) attended by 26 parents; and interior decorating (1 school) attended by 22 parents.

Courses to develop parents' aesthetic skills included (in order of frequency) art/ crafts/ceramics (7 schools) attended by 140 parents; flower arranging (4 schools) attended by 68 parents; and speech and drama (1 school) attended by 11 parents.

Courses to develop parenting skills included (in order of frequency) parenting (5 schools) attended by 48 parents; teen parenting (4 schools) attended by 55 parents; talks on sex education (2 schools) attended by 60 parents; and talks on substance abuse (2 schools) attended by 40 parents.

Two schools trained 17 parents to act as tutors for paired-reading programmes. In one school, two parents assisted teachers in sewing classes. Parents were also involved in other school activities (each in 1 school) such as helping to run a savings scheme (8 parents), helping to run a crèche (8 parents), No Name Club (7 parents), helping to prepare school lunches (6 parents), and helping to run a school library (5 parents). Parents also attended coffee mornings and some social functions during the year.

Co-ordinators in four schools reported that parents were active members of various clubs and groups (e.g., Walking club, Single Parent Support group, Killinarden group, Wake Up group). Fifteen parents were members of a Walking club 10 of those parents joined the club during the 1992-93 school year. Ten single mothers were members of the Single Parent Support group. The mothers were perceived by the co-ordinator to be vulnerable and marginalised young mothers (17 to 20 years of age). The Single Parent group received funds from the HSCL scheme where mothers were given the opportunity to attend adult education courses (e.g., crafts, self-development courses). Seven parents were members of the Killinarden group, two of those parents attended a Leadership Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations. Members of the Killinarden group shared their skills with other schools, held an induction course for parents with pupils in sixth class (Primary level), and set up a support group for parents of children in special education. Six parents were members of the Wake Up group, two of those parents attended a Leadership

Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations. Members of the Wake Up group planned and organised courses for parents.

Communication Between Home and School, 1992-93

Co-ordinators stated that there was a two-way communication between the home and the school in the 12 post-primary schools. One co-ordinator pointed out that there was not enough communication between the home and the school but efforts were being made to improve communication. Four co-ordinators remarked that the two-way communication had improved since the introduction of the HSCL scheme, and that parents who come to the school to voice their opinions are being listened to.

Eight co-ordinators found that for some homes communication between the home and the school was a problem. Two co-ordinators reported that approximately 5% of parents did not want to communicate with the school. One co-ordinator reported having difficulties communicating with approximately 60% of homes. In one school, a co-ordinator pointed out that without the support and encouragement offered by the HSCL scheme, over 50% of parents would feel threatened by the school. A co-ordinator in another school noted that communication between the home and the school was a problem due to the large number of staff members (approximately 60) and students approximately 800) in the school. The co-ordinator reported that information letters about courses and activities reached approximately 50% of homes and notes written into journals reached approximately 75% of homes. Lack of home telephones and poor postal service added to the problems of the two-way communication in the school.

One co-ordinator reported having difficulties communicating with approximately 20% of homes. The homes included homes without a phone, parents of troublesome students, parents with literacy problems, and parents who were working during the day. In one school, a co-ordinator noted that the homes where two-way communication was a problem were mainly homes where parents had literacy problems. A co-ordinator in another school mentioned that parents on the whole attended meetings, courses, and activities in the school and that a very small number of parents avoided any type of contact, even when home visits were made.

Co-ordinators reported that the two-way communication between the home and the school occurred through parent-teacher meetings (12 schools), year head/class tutor meetings (8 schools), telephone/appointments with staff members (4 schools), open days (3 schools), masses (3 schools), prize-giving/awards night (2 schools), incoming first year night (2 schools), a newsletter to parents (1 school), a party in the parents' room (1 school), report cards (1 school), paired-reading meetings (1 school), and disciplinary meetings (1 school).

Principals, vice-principals, co-ordinators, and staff members met parents through social activities such as a prize-giving/awards night, an incoming first year night, a parents' A.G.M., a party in the parents' room, masses, open days, and coffee mornings. Other meetings such as year head/class tutor meetings or disciplinary meetings involved specific staff members meeting parents.

Source of Funding for Courses and Activities

The main sources of funding for courses and activities offered to parents in schools were (in order of frequency) VEC funds (8 schools); HSCL funds (6 schools); parents' contributions (3 schools); funds from Area Partnership Companies (3 schools); Corporation funds (2 schools); Social Welfare Grants (2 schools); school funds (1 school); EEC funds (1 school); pupils' contributions (1 school); funds from St Vincent de Paul Society (1 school); funds from the Wake Up group (1 school); and a chairperson of a school's Board of Management (1 school).

Tutors Provided for Courses and Activities

The tutors for the courses and activities offered to parents in schools included (in order of frequency) VEC tutors (22 courses/activities); co-ordinators (20 courses/activities); teachers from local schools (13 courses/activities); parents (9 courses/activities); local people from the community (7 courses/activities); part-time/student teachers (5 courses/activities); Corporation tutors (4 courses/activities); guidance counsellors (3 courses/activities); sports instructors (3 courses/activities); parish priests (2 courses/activities); NALA (2 courses/activities); a doctor (2 courses/activities); a task force (1 course/activity); an addiction counsellor (1 course/activity); an instructor from an Area Partnership Company (1 course/activity); a Catholic Youth Council instructor (1 course/activity); and a retired religious brother working on a voluntary basis (1 course/activity).

Duration of Courses and Activities

Most of the courses and activities were either one hour, one and a half hour, or two hour sessions. Other activities took up a morning or an afternoon (e.g., savings scheme, crèche). Courses and activities ranged from 2 to 28 weeks in duration. A 28 week course usually took the form of a continuation of a particular course from the months of September to December (e.g., Maths 1) and January to June (e.g., Maths 2).

'Type' of Parent and Level of Parent Involvement in Courses and Activities

When questioned about the 'type' or characteristics of parents and the level of parent involvement in courses and activities, co-ordinators offered a wide range of responses. Nine

co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended courses in English, Irish, Maths, and French as lacking in skills, lacking in confidence, nervous and insecure. Co-ordinators noted a gradual growth in confidence in most parents over the duration of these courses. Co-ordinators reported that the level of parent involvement in these courses ranged from parents attending and participating in the classes to leading the classes and writing articles for a newsletter.

Six co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended computer courses as parents who were previously uninvolved and apprehensive about school activities and courses, but interested and motivated to do well. Co-ordinators in five schools remarked that the level of attendance by parents in the computer courses was excellent.

Four co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended a typing course, a creative writing course, a leadership training course, a counselling course, and a course on drug prevention as leaders who had high levels of skills and confidence. Parents who attended these courses were perceived by co-ordinators to be regular attendees and active participants.

Six co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended courses in home management and cookery and DIY as insecure and lacking in confidence, but were active participants. In another school, parents at these courses were competent people who were active attendees. A co-ordinator in one school reported that some of the parents who attended a home management and cookery course were chosen so that they could improve their skills.

Eleven co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended leisure and self-development courses and courses aimed to develop aesthetic skills as a mixed group of people both in terms of social skills and self-confidence. The level of parent involvement in these courses ranged from parents attending and participating in classes to parents organising and leading courses.

Eight co-ordinators described the 'type' of parents who attended courses in painting and teen parenting as a mixed group of people who ranged from being shy, nervous, and lacking in confidence, to being confident, interested in, and leading the courses. A co-ordinator in one school stated that following the completion of a teen parenting course, some parents went on to become leaders for other courses.

While the vast majority of parents involved in courses and activities were women, small numbers of men attended courses in computers, DIY, photography, typing, speech and drama, and set dancing.

Parent Involvement in Committees

Co-ordinators in eight schools reported that 121 parents were active members of committees. In six schools, a total of 79 parents were members of Parents' Associations or Committees; in three schools, a total of 18 parents were members of Local Committees.

In seven of those schools co-ordinators described the parents who were members of the various committees and associations as active participants who were co-operative and confident leaders. In two of those schools co-ordinators pointed out that some of the parents who were members of committees were also participating in a Leadership Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations. In one school, eight parents who were members of a Parents' Association underwent formal training to become members, and six of those parents were also members of the Local Committee.

Co-ordinators stated that the parents on the various committees attended and led meetings on a regular basis; reported on issues at meetings and in newsletters; organised fundraising activities (e.g., crafts fair, sale of work); ran coffee mornings; advised and reported to co-ordinators on the running of HSCL activities; planned, organised, and led courses for parents; and reported to Local Committees.

Parent Involvement in HSCL Activities Throughout the Two Years of the HSCL Scheme, 1991-93

Of those parents that were involved in courses and activities in the 12 post-primary schools during the 1992-93 school year, co-ordinators were asked to report the number of parents who were involved in HSCL activities throughout the two years of the scheme (1991-93). Co-ordinators reported that there was a core group of parents in each school, who had regular contact with the co-ordinator in relation to HSCL activities throughout the two years of the scheme. Approximately 65 parents in eight schools were members of the core groups. The core group of parents were also members of either the sub-committee of the Local Committee, the parents' council, or the parents' association in the eight schools. They had regular meetings with the co-ordinator, gave advice on the running of the HSCL programmes, held talks for parents, organised fund-raising activities, and planned and organised courses for parents. Three co-ordinators pointed out that six parents (two parents in each school) of the core group were attending a Leadership Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations. There was no information available on the core group of parents in four schools. However, co-ordinators in these four schools did provide information on the number of parents who attended courses throughout the two years of the scheme. The numbers were 20, 45, 20, and 46 respectively for the four schools. That is, a total of 131 parents attended courses throughout the two years of the scheme in the four schools.

Number of New Parents, 1992-93

When asked to report the total number of parents who were 'new' to the HSCL scheme in ten post-primary schools during the 1992-93 school year, co-ordinators gave figures that summed to 502. A co-ordinator in one school noted that the parents (n=124) who enrolled in courses in the 1992-93 school year were all 'new' to the HSCL scheme. In this school, the parents that attended courses during the 1991-92 school year were given the opportunity to attend adult education courses in an Adult Education Centre in the school, namely, Clondalkin Adult Morning Education (C.A.M.E.). The centre was run separately from the school There was no information available for the number of new parents in two schools but a co-ordinator in one of the schools stated that a small number of new parents enrolled in courses.

9. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY LEVELS IN THE SCHEME

Summary

Relationships and co-operation between primary and post-primary levels in the HSCL scheme were very good. The area of most co-operation related to the transition of students from primary to post-primary schools. As far as possible, co-ordinators at both levels avoided overlap in dealing with families and communicated information to each other where relevant. Factors which differentially affected the implementation of HSCL programmes at primary and post-primary levels include the structure and organization of schools, accessibility of schools to parents, availability and needs of parents of children who are at different stages of development.

At the end of the 1991-92 school year all post-primary co-ordinators (n=13) reported very good relationships and considerable co-operation between primary and post-primary levels in the HSCL scheme. By far the most frequently reported activities (reported by nine co-ordinators) related to dealing with the transition of pupils from primary schools to second level. Co-ordinators reported a range of such activities. Three said that they met teachers in primary schools to discuss incoming students (in one school this was done by the Year Head for first years). Individual co-ordinators reported the following activities: arranged sports day in second-level school for the sixth class pupils and their parents; worked with sixth class pupils to prepare them for second level (including preparation for entrance exams); gave feedback to primary teachers regarding entrance exam; met parents of sixth class pupils to talk about the school and HSCL; made a video of sixth class pupils; and brought sixth class pupils into the school to meet fourth year students.

Co-ordinators also reported sharing general information (n=1), information about families (n=2), and co-operating in the division of families for home visits (n=5). Five co-ordinators reported sharing of resources, including a school hall (n=1) and crèche facilities (n=2). Four co-ordinators noted that parents from both levels were referred to courses in all schools, one co-ordinator had linked with primary co-ordinators to advertise all HSCL activities; and in one school, co-ordinators from both levels jointly ran a parenting course. In another school a group consisting of members of the community planned to organize courses together with primary schools. One co-ordinator also reported that all co-ordinators in the area had worked together in developing a home management course.

All post-primary co-ordinators acknowledged the support and help, in terms of information, advice, and backup, from their colleagues at primary level. Not least important was the fact that awareness of the HSCL scheme (including courses and activities) among parents and within the community in general made it easier for them to begin their work. Co-ordinators also reported that the primary level of the scheme gave them a 'working model' to follow. Other contributions noted were the willingness of teachers at primary level to

promote the (post-primary) school, 'sharing' of parents on the Local Committee, and the opportunity to meet parents in the parents' room in the primary school.

Post-primary co-ordinators (n=4) reported that HSCL activities had given primary schools a link to post-primary that they would not otherwise have had and were helping to break down barriers between schools. This was viewed as beneficial in that primary teachers were interested in following up on pupils and parents of sixth class pupils were glad to have their anxieties reported to staff at second level.

In the Annual Progress Record for 1992-93 co-ordinators in the post-primary schools stated that they had regular meetings about the HSCL scheme with the co-ordinators in primary schools (12 schools). Two co-ordinators reported that there was no overlap in the courses provided in the primary and post-primary schools so that parents could choose to enrol in different courses in both schools. One co-ordinator reported facilitating meetings between teachers of sixth class pupils in the local primary school and first year students in the post-primary school. The co-ordinator also ran courses in the local primary schools. Parents were reported by one co-ordinator to have shared their skills between the primary and post-primary schools. One co-ordinator visited the homes of sixth class pupils with the co-ordinators of two primary schools. The co-ordinator also contacted parents who had children for Confirmation in the primary schools. In another school, the co-ordinator exchanged information and ideas and helped the co-ordinator in the local primary school to resolve problems in the school.

Perceived Differences Between Primary and Post-primary Levels in the HSCL Scheme

When asked to identify differences between primary and post-primary levels in the HSCL scheme, all post-primary co-ordinators agreed that there were differences, which they represented as being broadly related to characteristics of schools and of parents. These are presented under the following headings: structure and organization of schools; accessibility of schools to parents; availability of parents; and needs of parents. Co-ordinators also pointed out advantages and disadvantages arising from the identified differences and it should be noted that some individuals contradicted each other.

Structure and Organization of Schools

Eight of the 13 post-primary co-ordinators highlighted the structure and organization of schools as giving rise to differences in the implementation of the HSCL scheme at primary and post-primary levels. It was noted that, at post-primary level, schools and teachers tend primarily to be subject- and examination-oriented and that as a result, the role of teacher tends towards being that of subject specialist, which limits their ability to attend to students' personal development and problems. While many teachers were very positive towards

students and their parents, the pressure of preparing students for examinations must take precedence over other aspects of school life. Because of the specialized nature of the content at second level, co-ordinators reported that parent involvement in the classroom may be limited and would need careful consideration.

Because of the way post-primary schools are organized, teachers have greater flexibility in time than primary teachers, which allows co-ordinators time in which to meet them if necessary. However, since most second-level teachers are in contact with a much larger number of students, they do not get to know students as well as teachers do at primary level. Exceptions to this are class tutors (through pastoral care structures) who tend to know one class group very well and to take responsibility for a broad range of aspects of the school life of this group of students.

Because of the existence of pastoral care structures in most post-primary schools (which do not exist at primary level), co-ordinators usually have access to a team of people (e.g., remedial teacher, guidance counsellor, chaplain, year heads, class tutors, vice principal, and principal) who may be familiar with the backgrounds of individual students. Co-ordinators pointed out that this allows them to refer students more easily, that discipline problems (dealt with through the pastoral care system) are not seen as part of their role (though often mentioned by primary co-ordinators as a perceived aspect of their role), and that it offers greater potential for involving and liaising with staff about HSCL activities. While most co-ordinators view the availability of other staff members as an advantage, some noted that it is sometimes difficult to liaise with all relevant staff and that the information from individual staff members is not always complete since they often are familiar with only certain aspects of a problem.

One co-ordinator noted that the longer school day (at second level) means that she has more time in which to meet with local community agencies and that it is easier for community agencies and individuals to contact her. A very good scheme of adult education into which the co-ordinators may link exists at second level.

Accessibility of Schools to Parents

Just under half of the post-primary co-ordinators (n=6) noted differences between primary and post-primary schools in the access which they provide to parents. This issue is closely related to the structure and organization of schools. Co-ordinators reported that the number of teachers in the school and the different roles they play (e.g., under the pastoral care system) often created confusion among parents about who to contact about a problem or concern. They also noted that parents find it difficult to establish a relationship with individual teachers. However, one co-ordinator felt that, on the contrary, the broad range of staff may make it easier for parents to find one member to whom they may relate well.

Co-ordinators highlighted the fact that many parents find the post-primary school threatening or intimidating since they themselves may not have experienced education at this level. It was felt that this also gives rise to feelings of helplessness or inadequacy in terms of helping and supporting their own children's education at this level. Co-ordinators expressed the importance of ensuring that parents' confidence is enhanced and that they be made aware that, at this level, parenting skills are more important than knowledge of subject matter.

Availability of Parents

Six post-primary co-ordinators highlighted the fact that parents of students at post-primary level are unlikely to drop in to the school, particularly since they usually do not leave children at school or collect them in the evenings. This means that there are fewer opportunities for co-ordinators to make informal contacts (like those reported by co-ordinators at primary level in meeting parents of infant pupils). Co-ordinators mentioned this particularly in relation to establishing initial contacts with parents. The fact that parents do not normally have a reason to come to the school on a regular basis also raised a question for some co-ordinators (n=3) about the value of a parents' room in the school, particularly if it were to take the form of a drop-in centre for parents. Some co-ordinators believed that students at second level do not want their parents in the school and said that children had asked their parents not to come during break times when they would be seen by other students. However, other co-ordinators reported that students were delighted to see their parents coming to the school.

Needs of Parents

Eight post-primary co-ordinators highlighted the needs of parents as distinguishing primary from post-primary schools. They noted that since post-primary schools often draw students from a variety of communities, this results in a broader catchment area for their work, giving rise to a need to link with several primary schools. Obviously, the needs of parents may vary from area to area and this is something that co-ordinators have had to take into account in planning HSCL activities.

Co-ordinators also noted that since parents of students at post-primary level are likely to be older, on average, than parents of primary school pupils, they are likely to have different views of their own needs and those of their children. It was felt, for example, that older parents tend to be more aware of their own needs and less preoccupied with those of their children (co-ordinators at primary level report great demand for courses in aspects of the curriculum) and, as a result tend to want activities that contribute to their own development (e.g., literacy, examination courses) and, in some cases as a step towards employment (e.g., computer skills). Another aspect of this issue (noted by two co-ordinators) is that parents of older children tend to feel that their guiding role for their children has diminished and perhaps even that their role as parent is complete. This may make it more difficult to

motivate them to become involved in their children's education. It should also be noted that co-ordinators at primary level reported that they had difficulty in helping some parents to realise that they needed help with parenting skills. On the other hand, some post-primary co-ordinators felt that parents' demands for courses and activities did reflect their preoccupations as parents of teenagers (e.g., courses on teen parenting, relationships, sex education, homework, and examinations).

10. HOME VISITS

Summary

Home visits were perceived to be central to the HSCL scheme at both primary and post-primary levels. They were considered to be the most effective strategy to reach parents who had no other contact with the school. Visits were also valuable in building relationships between co-ordinators and parents, in raising and maintaining the co-ordinator's profile in the community, and in providing a link between home and school for teachers. Three overall purposes of home visits were to deal with issues relating to children, to involve parents in HSCL activities, and to provide support for families. There was a great deal of variance in the amount of time co-ordinators spent on home visits. During the third year of the scheme, the average amount of time spent by primary co-ordinators was 26 percent.

Primary Schools

Home Visits in Co-ordinator's Overall Role

Home visits were perceived by co-ordinators to be highly desirable. The part such visits played in their overall role was frequently characterized by words and phrases such as essential, vitally important, and a major part of their work.

Visits to the homes of all parents were perceived to be valuable since personal communication between the co-ordinator and parent was viewed as much more effective than written notes that teachers might send home. Co-ordinators also suggested that a deeper level of communication occurs between the parent and the co-ordinator in the parent's home than in the school. Home visits were considered to be the best way to gain the trust and co-operation of parents (6 schools).

During 1991-92, in 17 schools, home visits were considered the most effective means of forging links with parents who did not, or would not, come to the school. Visits to homes were a particularly important way to contact parents of children in senior classes as these parents did not usually leave their children to school or come to collect them and so were less likely than parents of children in junior classes to have any incidental contact with the co-ordinator in the morning or evening.

Co-ordinators offered various suggestions about why communication between parents and co-ordinators was better when it occurred in homes. Parents were more welcoming and more open as individuals (5 schools) when they were at home and, as a result tended to speak openly (4 schools). Co-ordinators (in 10 schools) reported that home visits were viewed by parents as a sign that the school cared about them and their families. One co-ordinator's perception was that parents were glad that the school was making a real effort to meet them and listen to them, and, in turn, parents were reported to have 'listened better' to what the co-ordinator said.

Because of the greater openness that seemed to characterize exchanges between parents and co-ordinators during visits to homes, co-ordinators (in 6 schools) reported greater ease in

building relationships with parents. In one school, parents were reported to be more likely to become involved in programmes if they were visited at home.

Home visits played a large part in raising and maintaining the co-ordinator's profile in the community (9 schools in 1991-92). One co-ordinator (who served 2 schools) stated that visiting homes had helped to clarify the co-ordinator's role by portraying it to parents as non-threatening and supportive. However, one co-ordinator who served four schools pointed out that the co-ordinator's role could be viewed negatively by parents if they perceived such visits as occurring only in certain homes (e.g., the homes of disruptive children).

As in previous years, home visits were perceived to be central to the HSCL programme in schools in 1992-93. All co-ordinators felt that such visits were of some importance for the success of the HSCL programme. For more than half the schools (56%) co-ordinators rated home visits as 'Very important,' for just over a quarter of schools (26%) they were rated as 'Important,' and for just under a fifth of schools (18%) home visits received a rating of 'Somewhat important' to the success of the programme.

When asked in 1992-93 to rate the extent to which home visits contributed to various aspects of the HSCL programme in their school(s) (e.g., addressing issues related to children, involving parents in activities), co-ordinators felt that for most aspects of the programme, and for a majority of schools, home visits contributed at least to some extent (Table 10.1). This would seem to support their perception that home visits are central to the HSCL programme. As would be expected, home visits contributed 'to a great extent' to building deeper relationships with all parents (in 63% of schools), to providing a link between school and home for teachers (in 49% of schools), to making contact with all parents (in 47% of schools), to recruiting parents for courses and activities (in 47% of schools), to making contact with parents who otherwise would not come to the school (in 44% of schools), and to building deeper relationships with those same parents (in 43% of schools).

While the proportion of schools in which co-ordinators regarded home visits as having contributed 'to some extent' to issues related to children might seem high (particularly the 90% of schools for which home visits were perceived to have contributed to children's scholastic progress), co-ordinators stressed that the number of children involved was quite small.

Purposes of Home Visits

Most co-ordinators gave a few reasons for visiting parents at home, which can be grouped into three overall purposes: to deal with issues relating to children; to involve parents in HSCL activities; and to provide support for families.

Table 10.1

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Rated the Extent to Which They Perceived Home Visits as Contributing to Specified Aspects of the HSCL Programme in School(s), 1992-93

	Percentages of schools					
	To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Addressing issues related to children						
Child's behaviour at school	23	(16)	68	(48)	10	(7)
Child's attendance at school	15	(11)	69	(50)	15	(11)
Child's scholastic progress	3	(2)	90	(62)	7	(5)
Child's other problems (e.g., emotional, physical)	24	(17)	66	(47)	10	(7)
Involving parents in HSCL activities						
Recruiting parents for courses/activities	47	(34)	48	(35)	6	(4)
Maintaining involvement in courses/activities	33	(24)	49	(36)	18	(13)
Receiving feedback on courses/activities	28	(20)	49	(35)	23	(16)
Providing general support for families						
Making contact with all parents	47	(34)	43	(31)	11	(8)
Making contact with parents who did not come to the school	44	(32)	53	(39)	3	(2)
Building deeper relationships with all parents	63	(45)	28	(20)	9	(6)
Building deeper relationships with parents who did not come to the school	43	(31)	57	(41)	0	(0)
Providing support with problems, illness, etc.	33	(24)	58	(42)	8	(6)
Addressing issues related to teachers						
Providing a link between school and home for teachers (i.e., meeting parents teacher cannot meet, passing on information about family)	49	(36)	51	(37)	0	(0)
Getting teachers input to the programme (i.e., teachers requested home visits, helping teachers to involve parents in their school work)	15	(10)	64	(44)	22	(15)
Support regarding discipline problems	18	(13)	63	(46)	19	(14)

Many co-ordinators reported two or even three different reasons for carrying out home visits that directly related to children. The most frequently reported purpose of visiting homes in relation to children in 1991-92 was to comply with the request of a teacher (22 schools) or a principal (9 schools). In 1992-93 on average, about 15% of their home visits were requested by the principal(s) while about 22% of visits were requested by teachers. Visits in response to requests from school staff usually took place when a parent had not responded to requests by school personnel to meet them to discuss issues such as children's educational difficulties, school attendance or behaviour, or when the teacher had suspected some difficulty in the home.

In 1991-92, co-ordinators also visited homes to discuss children's school attendance (18 schools), behaviour at school (15 schools) and educational difficulties (8 schools), to mediate in disputes between school/home/other children (8 schools), to meet parents of incoming children (7 schools), and to make contact with parents of neglected children (4 schools). Home visits were also the focus of a link with post-primary schools. In three schools, co-ordinators visited homes to discuss second-level options with parents of sixth class pupils. On a broader level, they went to homes in connection with children's referrals to specialists and agencies, usually to inform parents of appointments (six schools) and to follow up on referrals (six schools). Co-ordinators also took sick children home (six schools).

Co-ordinators also visited homes to recruit parents to courses (38 schools) and to other HSCL activities (e.g., coffee mornings, paired reading) (19 schools). Home visits were considered to be important for making initial contact with parents (2 schools) and for getting to know them (4 schools) and this was particularly true for parents who had not heard about the HSCL programme. A co-ordinator who served two schools saw home visits to parents of incoming children as a way of initiating a relationship with parents before their child started school, thus providing a vital link between home and school from the beginning of the child's schooling.

Finally, co-ordinators visited homes to provide support of some kind for children's families (in 64 of the 72 schools in 1991-92). In 32 schools, home visits were carried out to provide ongoing support for families by developing and strengthening relationships with them. Homes were also visited to make contact with new families in the area or with parents the co-ordinator would not usually meet, to get to know parents, and to build up relationships of trust and co-operation with them. In a further six schools, co-ordinators visited because parents had asked them to discuss problems or to provide information. In 18 schools, the purpose of co-ordinators' visits was to support families in crisis or parents with specific difficulties. Such difficulties included family problems, parents' personal problems, parents' illness, and family bereavements.

In 1992-93, co-ordinators were asked to report the percentage of home visits that they made for various specified reasons. About 35% of visits were related to general contact with families. This included contact with new parents and families (15% of visits), contact with parents who did not come to the school (9% of visits), and support for parents with family or personal problems (6% of visits). About 29% of visits were related to children and included discussion of school progress or problems (5% of visits), discussion of child's behaviour at school (4% of visits), discussion of child's attendance (4% of visits), gaining consent for or arranging assessment, referral, or placement for a child (4% of visits), advising parent on helping with child's schooling or homework (4% of visits), and discussion of other problems (e.g., emotional, physical) child had (4% of visits). Twenty-two per cent of home visits were related to parent involvement in the HSCL programme. Such visits were mainly to inform parents about courses or activities and to recruit them (13% of visits) and to follow up on non-attendance at courses or activities (5% of visits). Finally, about 15% of home visits were related to support for schools and teachers, mainly to provide a link between home and school (i.e., meet parents teacher cannot meet, share information about families) (8% of visits).

Time Spent on Home Visits

Co-ordinators who served a total of 15 schools reported the amount of time they spent on home visits in 1991-92. In these schools, time spent on home visits ranged from no time (2 schools) to 60% of time (2 schools). Two co-ordinators (one serving one school, the other serving two schools), who spent 60% of their working time doing home visits, considered them to be an essential aspect of their work. One co-ordinator who spent 50% of her time doing home visits felt that she would like to increase this amount in the future. In cases where co-ordinators did not carry out any home visits for a school, it was usually because of time constraints.

Although co-ordinators, on average, spent 26% of their time on home visits during the 1992-93 school year, for a majority of schools (70%), co-ordinators felt that the amount of time spent visiting homes was not adequate. For almost three-quarters (73%) of the schools in which home visiting was not regarded as adequate, co-ordinators felt that they visited 50% or less of those homes they would like to have visited. For just over a fifth (22%) of schools, co-ordinators reported visiting between 51 and 75% of those homes, while co-ordinators were satisfied for only 6% of schools that they had visited 76% or more of the homes they would like to have visited.

Issues Addressed During Home Visits

In 1991-92, co-ordinators in 47 schools reported that they always succeeded in addressing their intended purpose during a home visit, while co-ordinators in 23 schools did not. Most co-ordinators gave reasons why they were or were not successful in addressing what they had intended during home visits. The reasons related to the relationship between the co-ordinator and parents, time limits on home visits, and parents not being at home when the co-ordinator visited.

The relationship between the co-ordinator and parents affected whether or not it was possible to achieve the intended purposes of home visits. Co-ordinators who always achieved their purpose had already built up a high profile in their area and were known by parents (17 schools). They also said that they had built relationships of friendship, honesty, and trust with parents. Parents continued to be welcoming and open towards co-ordinators, even when the messages to be relayed were negative, for example, when a parent was being informed about a child's educational or behavioural difficulties at school (11 schools). Co-ordinators who had always addressed their intended purpose reported that they always made a point of telling parents the intended purpose of their visit even if the problem could not be solved at that stage because of other more pressing concerns in the home. One co-ordinator pointed out that home visits served multiple purposes and that, even if the co-ordinator's purpose was not addressed, another purpose - that of building up trust and co-operation among parents - could always be met.

The emergence of more pressing problems during the course of a home visit was a crucial factor in determining the outcome of a visit. It would seem that the reaction of the co-ordinator to an unexpected situation determined whether or not he or she succeeded in achieving an intended purpose and, indeed, whether the purpose was still valid. The reactions of co-ordinators to finding out about more significant problems in the home varied. Among those who managed to address their original purpose even where more significant problems became apparent, some co-ordinators (serving five schools) would just mention their original purpose at the end of the visit and arrange to visit the parent again shortly afterwards. One of these co-ordinators would also begin to deal with the new problem by referring parents to other personnel or agencies who could help them.

In 18 schools, the co-ordinator's intended purpose became secondary to the problems that emerged during the visit because parents were not interested in, or responsive to, the co-ordinator's intended purpose. This was because they had their own problems which left them unable to deal with their children's needs. When it became obvious that parents already had enough to cope with, co-ordinators often delayed communication of negative messages. They believed that, at such times, all the parent needed was someone to listen.

Co-ordinators (serving 5 schools) who always managed to address their intended purpose reported that they considered the time limits on visits, planned well in advance, and worked within that plan. Co-ordinators serving four schools reported that they could not address the intended purpose of a home visit because parents were often not at home when they called to see them. Another co-ordinator reported that many parents would not answer the door to the co-ordinator.

Post-Primary Schools

Co-ordinators reported that the main purposes of home visits during the 1992-93 school year included targeting parents of first year students for relevant information about incoming first years (8 schools); encouraging parents of first year students to join HSCL activities (8 schools); informing, creating links, and offering support to parents in the local area (7 schools); targeting homes where absenteeism of students was a problem in school (7 schools); making home visits to parents as requested by staff members (5 schools); making home visits to parents who participated in courses and activities in the school (5 schools); targeting homes where communication between the home and the school had broken down (3 schools); making home visits as requested by parents (3 schools); visiting parents whose children were involved in special projects (2 schools); making social visits (2 schools); visiting disadvantaged parents who live far away from the school (1 school); and making follow-up visits to parents who dropped out of courses in school (1 school).

When asked to comment on the part home visits play in the overall role of the co-ordinator, eleven co-ordinators stated that home visits were an essential element for the success of HSCL programmes. One co-ordinator stated that home visits helped reach parents who felt threatened by the school, in particular those parents who did not participate in HSCL activities. The co-ordinator also noted that home visits helped to identify the needs of parents and helped to build relationships between parents and the co-ordinator and in turn the school. Two co-ordinators noted that home visits played an important role in establishing the HSCL scheme in the community. One co-ordinator reported that the majority of parents became involved in HSCL activities as a direct result of home visits. Home visits were perceived by the co-ordinator to break down barriers, identify problems, and help parents overcome their problems. Two co-ordinators pointed out that the role of home visits was becoming increasingly significant as parents began to view the school as a more open place. Three co-ordinators found that home visits played an important role as the initial contact with parents. They believed that home visits helped them to get to know and establish a level of trust with parents on a personal level. Parents were perceived by the co-ordinators to be appreciative of the visits and to be more open to co-ordinators in their own environment.

One co-ordinator pointed out that although home visits were time-consuming they were used as a basis for parent involvement in all HSCL activities. Five co-ordinators found that they spent a lot of their time making home visits. One co-ordinator remarked that one day a week was not enough time to devote to home visits and would like to spend more time making home visits. Another co-ordinator felt that home visits should play a more central role in their work and that parents should be encouraged to help with home visits.

11. LOCAL COMMITTEES

Summary

The purposes of Local Committees are listed. It was envisaged that such committees would be comprised of representatives from schools, parents/families, and local statutory and voluntary organizations and would play a key role in determining the focus of HSCL programmes as well as being a forum for communication between parents, school staff, and members of community agencies. A major problem in developing Local Committees seems to have been a lack of understanding of the role and function of the body. The National Co-ordinator worked closely with co-ordinators, principals, and chairpersons in addressing various concerns. In general, teachers had very little knowledge of the role or operation of Local Committees in their schools. At the end of the third year of the scheme, Local Committees serving 33 primary and 4 post-primary schools had been established. Factors identified by co-ordinators in primary schools as having contributed 'to a great extent' to the success of a Local Committee were parent awareness of HSCL, support from the principal, degree of co-operation and effort of committee members, and community awareness of HSCL. The role played by Local Committees in HSCL programmes varied greatly and included involvement in organizing of courses and activities for parents and raising awareness of the needs of families in the area. Local Committees also provided a forum for liaison with community agencies, though the extent to which this was successful varied in different areas.

At the outset of the scheme, precise details about the nature and composition of Local Committees were left for decision to the National Steering Committee. It was expected, however, that representatives from schools, parents/families and local statutory and voluntary organizations would make up the membership (Pilot Project on Home-School-Community Liaison). It emerged that the issue of Local Committees generated much concern among some principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and local co-ordinators. Following discussion at a National Steering Committee meeting in September 1990, a sub-committee was formed 'to formulate proposals regarding Local Committees.' In their report to the National Steering Committee, the sub-committee concluded:

> the concept of Local Committees is one
>
> (a) that may emerge over time as parents develop;
>
> (b) that local co-ordinators should keep in mind as a possible development in a year or so; and
>
> (c) should be postponed until various overlapping informal groups, engaged in specific projects, would develop parents to a suitable level.

At the October 1990 meeting of the National Steering Committee, concern was expressed 'that it might take up to two years before all these committees would be operational' and it was agreed to give the issue further consideration at the November meeting.

Following discussions at the December and January meetings of the National Steering Committee, a draft document, Home/School/Community Pilot Project Local Co-ordinating Committees, was presented at the March meeting. This document was presented during preliminary meetings with principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and local co-

ordinators about the formation of Local Committees in their areas. The contents of the document were also presented to local co-ordinators during the February 1991 inservice course. According to this document a Local Committee, representative of the three groups, home, school, and community, would be established 'in each project area' and would be 'related to primary education in its activities.' The document outlined the 'purpose' of such a 'local co-ordinating committee' as follows:

(a) to help co-ordinate the work of the various agencies in the area towards the purpose of developing home/school/community links;

(b) to enable parents as a group to have an input into the development of the project in their own area;

(c) to receive reports from the local co-ordinator and to advise her/him of specific community needs;

(d) to support the local co-ordinator as an important home/school/community resource;

(e) to identify a group which would generate acceptance and support for new ideas and strategies;

(f) to ensure greater community "ownership" of the project and wider community support for it;

(g) to participate in the ongoing evaluation of the various aspects of the project in its own area;

(h) to liaise with the National Steering Committee through the National Co-ordinator;

(i) in co-operation with local schools to set targets for partnership in the project; and

(j) to comply with overall policy guidelines from the National Steering Committee.

The document An Explanatory Memorandum for Schools contains one further point of clarification relating to what is meant by each project area:

> In some instances a local group may represent a small number of schools serving a defined geographical area. In other instances a Local Committee may serve a wider area. It will be open to Local Committees to form sub-committees on an ad hoc basis to consider certain issues.

From the outset, the underlying philosophy of the HSCL scheme has been that work carried out in individual programmes/schools/areas should be directly related to the needs of that area as identified by representative Local Committees working with local co-ordinators. Thus, a Local Committee was identified as one source for determining the focus of

programmes as well as being a forum for communication between parents, school staff, and members of community agencies.

During the first year (1990-91) of the scheme, there was some delay in establishing Local Committees. By the end of the school year, 25 primary schools had done so. It was decided that co-ordinators and schools should receive support from the National Co-ordinator in establishing Local Committees and in ensuring that they functioned as intended. During the second year, two post-primary schools linked with existing Local Committees, though there were some difficulties experienced. Therefore, further development of Local Committees was deferred to the third year of the scheme, at the end of which 33 primary schools had set up a Local Committee. The number of parents involved as members of Local Committees was generally between two and seven per school.

A major problem in developing Local Committees seems to have been a lack of understanding of the role and function of a body which is essentially voluntary with no obvious associated authority or power. Further, since other committees often existed in many areas, the need for a further committee was not always obvious. Some confusion arose about how much power to give parents and about the extent to which partnership should be extended beyond the parent-teacher-child relationship to the discussion of other issues. Other difficulties arose in the choice of parents, as some were viewed as having another agenda, in the reluctance on the part of parents to serve on a committee (either because of fear of schools, lack of confidence in their ability to do so, or because of membership on various other community committees), and in training selected parents in committee skills.

Poor attendance also proved to be a problem because of lack of time on the part of many members and, perhaps, because of a feeling that very little was being accomplished. In some cases also, an emphasis on the formalities of running a committee meant that very little time was devoted to getting things done. It also proved difficult to establish ownership of the committee among the various individuals and to identify leadership within the group. Further, given the presence of a large number of professionals on committees, it was easy to give parents the impression that they were being excluded through the use of jargon with the result that they hesitated to put forward their views.

Apart from membership or representation on the committee and links established by individual co-ordinators, very few local committees developed links with other agencies. This probably reflects the fact that the committees was not perceived as having any official function or status.

Despite difficulties, the concept of the Local Committee was seen by school personnel to be good in itself and no other arrangements were suggested that would fulfil its envisaged role.

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, three co-ordinators (serving a total of 5 schools) felt that Local Committees served as a vehicle for parents to provide input to HSCL programmes 'to a great extent' and attributed this to the involvement of parents in planning and evaluating programme activities and to the fact that parents provided feedback from people in the community.

Co-ordinators felt that Local Committees served as a vehicle for parent input 'to some extent' in 18 primary schools. One co-ordinator indicated that Local Committees did 'not at all' serve as a vehicle for parent input to HSCL programmes (two schools). This was attributed to principals' lack of support for the scheme and to the fact that principals controlled 'the flow of information to and from parents.'

Teachers' Knowledge of the Local Committee

During 1991-92, teachers in the six selected schools were asked if a Local Committee had been set up for their school and to describe the role of the committee with regard to HSCL activities. From their responses it is clear that teachers were not aware of the operation of a Local Committee, much less its role in the organization of the HSCL scheme at local level. This was true even of teachers in schools where Local Committees had been set up.

Seventy-nine of the 96 teachers were unable to say whether or not a Local Committee had been set up in their school. Of the 17 teachers who gave a response, 6 answered incorrectly that a Local Committee either had or had not been set up for their school. Only five teachers specified a role for the Local Committee regarding HSCL activities. Mostly the role of the committee was seen in terms of encouraging and enhancing wider community involvement and of providing a forum for the ideas and suggestions of different parties (e.g., co-ordinator, parents, principal).

At the end of the 1992-93 school year, where a Local Committee had been established, co-ordinators felt that the Committee had been 'Very effective' in directing the HSCL programme in 21% of primary schools, and 'Somewhat effective' in 64% of primary schools, while co-ordinators serving 14% of schools felt that the Local Committee made no difference. However, no co-ordinator felt that the HSCL programme would have been better without the Local Committee.

For primary schools that had a Local Committee (n=26), co-ordinators were asked to rate the extent to which various factors (e.g., support from principal, functioning of Local Committee) affected the success of the Local Committee in directing HSCL programmes in their school(s) during 1992-93 (Table 11.1). Overall, there was a lack of discrimination in the responses. However, the factors identified by co-ordinators as having contributed 'to a great extent' to the success of a Local Committee were (in order of frequency) parent

Table 11.1

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Rated the Extent to Which Specified Factors Affected the Success of Local Committees in Schools, 1992-93

	Percentages of schools									
	Contributed to success				Hindered success				Not relevant	
	To a great extent		To some extent		To some extent		To a great extent			
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Support from principal	42	(11)	54	(14)	4	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Support from Board of Management	28	(7)	36	(9)	0	(0)	0	(0)	36	(9)
Teacher awareness of HSCL	8	(2)	56	(14)	8	(2)	0	(0)	28	(7)
Parent awareness of HSCL	48	(13)	48	(13)	0	(0)	0	(0)	4	(1)
Community awareness of HSCL	37	(10)	48	(13)	0	(0)	0	(0)	15	(4)
Functioning of Local Committee	0	(0)	41	(11)	19	(5)	4	(1)	0	(0)
Degree of co-operation and effort of committee members	37	(10)	56	(15)	7	(2)	0	(0)	0	(0)

awareness of HSCL (in 48% of schools), support from principal (in 42% of schools), degree of co-operation and effort of committee members, and community awareness of HSCL (each in 37% of schools).

Local Committees at Post-Primary Level

Local Committees were established in four schools, the earliest having been set up in January 1992 and the most recent in April 1993. Two second-level schools linked with existing Local Committees during the first year of the HSCL scheme at second level, and two Local Committees were set up during the second year. In one of the other nine schools that

did not have a Local Committee, the co-ordinator reported that efforts were being made to establish a Local Committee where parents could become members and help with HSCL activities in the school.

Co-ordinators were asked to give an account of the role the Local Committee played in the HSCL programme in schools. Six co-ordinators stated that the Local Committee was responsible for organizing courses and activities for parents, inviting people into the school to become involved in HSCL activities, giving publicity to HSCL activities in the community, providing parents with responsible positions (e.g., teaching parents how to chair a meeting), attempting to make the school a parent-friendly environment, and networking with community agencies. One co-ordinator pointed out that the Local Committee was playing an increasingly larger role in the planning of and in the decision making of HSCL activities. The co-ordinator also mentioned that the needs of parents and families were made apparent to the school through the Local Committee.

When asked to comment on the extent to which the Local Committee served as a vehicle for parents to provide input to the HSCL scheme, four co-ordinators reported that parents' input was through verbal contact with the Local Committee where parents made suggestions about HSCL activities. Two co-ordinators pointed out that a parents' association and a sub-committee served as a vehicle for parents to provide input for the HSCL scheme. One co-ordinator reported that plans were made to open the Local Committee to more parents and put a suggestion box in the parents' room.

Co-ordinators at second level reported that the Local Committee liaised with local community agencies such as Area Partnerships Companies (2 schools), community gardaí (2 schools), youth organisations (2 schools), a school's Board of Management (1 school), Coolock Joint Care Services (1 school), the school attendance officer (1 school), a family centre (1 school), a resource centre (1 school), a primary school (1 school), and the VEC (1 school). Members of the Local Committee included school principals (2 schools), school managers (2 schools), parent representatives (2 schools), community gardaí (2 schools), and a school attendance officer (1 school).

12. CO-ORDINATORS' WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

Summary

Co-ordinators contacted a variety of community agencies and individuals. The pattern of contacts changed throughout the first three years of the scheme. At the end of the third year, the agencies/individuals that were contacted by the greatest number of schools were the Vocational Education Committee, social worker, community garda, public health nurse, child and family guidance centre, area partnership company, and Cork and Dublin Corporations. Such contacts were generally perceived to have contributed in some way to the success of the scheme. However, the most valued contributions were judged to have come from agencies which one would expect to provide services relating to the long-term development of parents and communities. Also relatively frequently named were agencies concerned with the economic and social development of areas.

Contacts With Community Agencies/Individuals, 1990-91

During the 1990-91 school year 31 co-ordinators serving 56 schools were asked to complete bi-monthly Progress Records on three occasions (January/February; March/April; and May/June 1991). The Progress Records contained a list of statutory, nonstatutory, and voluntary agencies/individuals, and each co-ordinator was asked to state how often in each time period had they been in contact with the listed community agencies/individuals. Twenty-nine co-ordinators reported making contact with the same community agencies/individuals over the three time periods. No data were available for two co-ordinators.

Co-ordinators contacted a variety of community agencies/individuals including public health nurses, social workers, health clinics, playgroups/nurseries, the VEC, Juvenile Liaison Officers, community gardaí, the Health Board, school attendance officers, voluntary youth organisations, family resource centres, library services, the St Vincent de Paul Society and youth services (Table 12.1). Community agencies/individuals were contacted at least once during May/June 1991 or once a week during this period by the co-ordinators (n=29).

When asked to give an account of the outcomes of their community contacts, co-ordinators (n=29) stated that contacts were at an introductory 'get to know you' level. For example, initial contacts with community agencies/individuals were made to publicise and explain the aims and objectives of the HSCL scheme; to outline the role of the co-ordinator; to establish relations with community agencies/individuals; to gain information on their services; to seek funding for courses/activities; to seek resources for courses/activities; and to establish a better working relationship between the school and community agencies/individuals. Community contacts were also made to share information about families, children, and the local area; to obtain advice and support for the HSCL scheme; to arrange meetings to discuss the needs of the local area; to organise events, activities, and courses; to organise fund-raising activities; to plan HSCL programmes; and to set up referral systems for parents and pupils. Towards the end of the year, improved relationships were

Table 12.1

Number Of Co-ordinators Who Contacted Community Agencies/Individuals, 1990-91

Community Agency/Individual	Number of Co-ordinators (N=31)
Public health nurse	23
Social worker	21
Health clinics	21
Playgroups/nurseries	19
VEC	17
Juvenile Liaison Officer	17
Community gardaí	16
Health Board	16
School attendance officer	15
Family resource centre	13
Library services	12
Youth services	11
FÁS	11
Community health officer	9
Public health doctor	9
Community welfare officer	7
Local TD	7
Residential care worker	7
Travellers' Liaison Officer	6
Social welfare officer	5
Family development nurse	5
Housing placement officer	2
Voluntary Agency/Individual	
Youth organisations	15
St Vincent de Paul Society	12
Sports organisation	9
Local community council	9
ISPCC	8
Parents under stress group	4

reported for co-ordinator and community agencies/individuals, the co-ordinator and parents, and parents and staff. Other benefits noted were greater networking and sharing of information and resources; increased parent involvement in courses/activities in the school; increased involvement of specific community agencies/individuals (e.g., community gardaí, social worker) in the school; greater organisation of courses/activities; and more stable contact with community agencies/individuals in relation to HSCL programmes in schools. Six co-ordinators stated that due to the improved relationships between the school and community agencies/individuals, their schools have developed an improved image and higher profile in the community in relation to caring about their pupils.

Contacts with Community Agencies/Individuals, 1991-92

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, co-ordinators in 72 schools listed the three local agencies or individuals with whom they had most contact in the course of their work. In one school, the co-ordinator, who served two schools, reported that she had very little regular contact with agencies. In the other schools, contacts with agencies and individuals varied according to local service provision and availability. Most co-ordinators' contacts were grouped into four main categories. These were (in order of frequency) contacts with voluntary helping agencies, health and social service agencies, agencies related to parents' education, and local community initiatives (Table 12.2).

Contacts with voluntary helping agencies were the most common type reported for 38 schools. These included youth organizations, the Catholic Social Service Conference, and the Mater Child and Family Guidance Clinic. Contacts with representatives of health and social service agencies were reported for 37 schools. In this category, contacts with the public health nurse and social worker were most frequent. Contacts in relation to parents' education with the VEC and Dublin Corporation were reported for 30 schools. Contacts with local community workers and representatives of local development initiatives were reported for 21 schools. These included the local community development association, women's group, parish centre, and parish sister. Of other contacts reported by co-ordinators, contact with community gardaí/Juvenile Liaison Officers/school attendance officers were most frequent.

Contacts with Community Agencies/Individuals, 1992-93

Co-ordinators were asked to list the community agencies and other relevant community workers with whom they had contact during the 1992-93 school year. They were also given a list which contained a number of specified purposes for each contact with an agency and an individual and were asked to tick the purpose(s) of the contact(s) for each agency and individual listed. The number of contacts with community agencies and individuals varied between schools and ranged from 2 (in 1 school) to 18 (also in 1 school). The average

Table 12.2

Number of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Contacted
Local Agencies/Individuals, 1991-92

AGENCY	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS (N=72)
Voluntary Helping Agencies	38
Youth Organizations (e.g., Catholic Youth Council, Youth Services)	15
Catholic Social Services Conference (provide Family Resource Centres)	13
Mater Child and Family Guidance Centre	6
Mental Health Association worker	4
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)	4
Barnardo's	3
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	2
Outreach	1
St Vincent de Paul Society	1
Health and Social Service Agencies	37
Public Health Nurse	15
Social Worker	11
Social Services Centre	6
Eastern Health Board	4
School Psychologist	4
Child Guidance Service	3
Speech Therapist	3
Local clinic	1
Child Care Services	1
Day Care Centre	1
Irish Dental Foundation	1
Local dental health clinic	1
Adult Education	30
Vocational Education Committee	23
Dublin Corporation	11
Local Initiatives	21
Women's group	6
Community Development Association Project/Worker	5
Parish Centre	6
Parish Sister	7
Parish Priest	3
Community workers (unspecified)	6
Informal, professional support group	2
Other	17
Community Garda/JLO	6
School Attendance Officer	2
Play group teacher/assistants	2
Local coffee shop	2
Stay Safe Team	1
Gardening Club	1
Community Arts and Education Group	1
Course tutor	1
Individual parents	1

Note: There is overlap in the numbers in each category since co-ordinators in some schools contacted more than one agency/individual in the category.

number of community contacts was 10. It is possible that the number of spaces provided (i.e., 10) in the Annual Progress Record influenced the number of community contacts listed by co-ordinators.

Table 12.3 contains the number of schools for which co-ordinators contacted various community agencies and individuals and the purposes of the contacts. The contacts listed are those that were reported for more than 10 schools. The agency/individual which was contacted by the greatest number of schools was the Vocational Education Committee, followed by the Social Worker, and Community Garda. A smaller but still substantial number of schools contacted a public health nurse and a child and family guidance centre. The most frequent reasons given for contacting an agency or individual were to apply for funds or resources (from the local VEC) and to promote networking (through a social worker). The pattern of contacts indicates that the activities of the co-ordinator were focused primarily on the development and resourcing of HSCL programmes. However, in a considerable number of schools, contacts were with agencies/individuals who would be likely to provide emergency or 'fire-brigade' type services to deal with the problems of children or of families. Agencies/individuals associated with such action that were contacted by co-ordinators include community garda, a public health nurse, a child and family guidance centre, a health board, a juvenile liaison officer, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Department of Social Welfare, and speech therapist, psychological services, and a school attendance officer.

Co-ordinators were asked to list the number of local community initiatives and agencies with whom they had contact during the 1992-93 school year. Local community initiatives included agencies or individuals that provided services in the local area. The services provided included youth services; women's centres; mothers' groups; community development projects; and education and training groups among others. In Inner City Dublin North co-ordinators listed 25 local agencies that they had contacted; in both Tallaght and Finglas co-ordinators had contacted 11 such agencies; in Clondalkin 10 local agencies had been contacted; in Ballymun co-ordinators contacted 8 local agencies, in Inner City Dublin South the number of agencies was 7 while in outer Dublin City North there were 4 local agencies contacted by co-ordinators. Outside of Dublin co-ordinators had contacted 11 local agencies in Cork, 7 local agencies in Limerick, and 6 local agencies in Galway.

Extent to Which Various Community Agencies and Individuals Contributed to the Success of the HSCL Scheme

Co-ordinators were asked to rate the extent to which each community agency and individual had contributed to the success of the HSCL scheme. Table 12.4 lists the

Table 12.3

Number of Schools for which Co-ordinators Contacted Community Agencies or Individuals and the Purposes of the Contacts, 1992-93

		Purposes of contacts												
Agency/Individual	Number of Schools (n:73)	Information on services	Networking	Referrals for pupils	Sharing information about families	Funding application	Resources for courses/activities for parents*	Local meetings	Literacy needs	Publicity for HSCL programme	Absenteeism of pupils	Courses for pupils	Meeting parents	Other
Vocational Educational Committee	45	25	16	0	0	35	36	12	28	16	0	1	4	0
Social Worker	44	23	33	27	29	1	4	14	0	14	13	2	6	0
Community Garda	42	23	27	7	21	1	8	23	1	16	20	10	6	1
Public Health Nurse	30	26	21	20	25	1	10	14	2	14	6	5	12	5
Child & Family Guidance Centre	27	15	12	27	19	0	0	3	0	8	2	1	1	1
Area Partnership Companies	23	17	12	0	0	13	12	10	7	14	2	0	3	2
Cork & Dublin Corporations	21	11	5	0	0	4	21	3	0	2	0	0	1	0
Health Board	17	13	17	11	8	0	8	12	0	4	5	3	3	0
Juvenile Liaison Officer	17	11	14	6	16	0	2	7	0	6	6	3	2	1
St Vincent de Paul Society	17	14	12	0	10	5	4	7	0	7	0	0	2	0
Parish Team	17	13	17	2	10	0	8	16	2	16	0	1	8	0
Department of Social Welfare	16	4	3	0	2	14	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Literacy Scheme	13	9	9	0	1	0	3	4	13	5	0	0	3	0
Playschool/Pre-school	13	4	9	5	10	0	4	6	0	7	0	2	7	0
Speech Therapist	12	9	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barnardo's	12	7	4	5	2	1	7	0	0	1	1	3	1	1
Psychological Services	11	2	2	11	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2
Attendance Officer	10	4	10	10	10	0	1	4	0	1	10	2	3	0
FÁS	10	4	4	0	0	7	5	2	2	4	0	0	0	0

*(facilities, teachers, funding)

Table 12.4

Number of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Rated the Extent to Which Various Community Agencies and Individuals* Contributed to the Success of the HSCL Scheme, 1992-93

		Number of schools		
Agency/Individual	Number of Schools that Contacted Agency/ Individual	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
Vocational Educational Committee	45	26	11	8
Social Worker	44	9	31	4
Community Garda	42	8	30	4
Public Health Nurse	30	9	21	0
Child and Family Guidance Centre	27	8	17	2
Area Partnership Companies	23	12	8	3
Cork and Dublin Corporations	21	15	6	0
Health Board	17	10	6	0
Juvenile Liaison Officer	17	4	13	0
St Vincent de Paul Society	17	5	9	3
Parish Team	17	12	4	1
Department of Social Welfare	16	2	9	5
Literacy Scheme	13	6	7	0
Playschool/Pre-School	13	4	9	0
Speech Therapist	12	2	9	1
Barnardo's	12	1	6	5
Psychological Services	11	2	8	1
Attendance Officer	10	3	7	0
FÁS	10	4	2	4

*Agencies and individuals listed here are those that were reported for more than 10 schools

community contacts that were reported for more than 10 schools. Co-ordinators tended to rate most of the community agencies and individuals as contributing either 'to a great extent' or 'to some extent' rather than 'not at all' to the success of the HSCL scheme. Contacts made by co-ordinators with various community agencies and individuals were generally perceived to have contributed in some way to the success of the HSCL scheme.

The community agencies and individuals that co-ordinators rated as contributing 'to a great extent' to the success of the HSCL scheme were the Vocational Education Committee, Cork and Dublin Corporations, Area Partnership Companies, parish teams, and Health Boards. Those rated as having contributed 'to some extent' to the success of the HSCL scheme were social workers, community gardaí, public health nurses, child and family guidance centres, Juvenile Liaison Officers, and Vocational Education Committees.

Effects on Community-Related Aspects

In relation to effects on community-related aspects of HSCL programmes in schools, co-ordinators reported that, for most schools specified changes were true 'to some extent,' while for about a third of schools these changes were true 'to a great extent' (Table 12.5). In general most schools were reported as having become more of a focal point in the community as a result of the HSCL scheme. For almost all schools, parents were reported to have become more aware of and to have made more use of local services or agencies, while for 80% of schools, co-ordinators reported that the HSCL scheme had contributed to increased community spirit in the area. For the schools (n=14) for which this was not true, other unrelated factors such as increased crime in the area may have influenced the rating. For most schools, co-ordinators seemed to be of the view that co-operation among agencies had also improved either 'to some extent' (61% of schools) or 'to a great extent' (27% of schools).

Building Bonds Between the School, Homes, and the Community, 1992-93

When asked if there were efforts made to build common bonds between the school, homes, and the community, eight post-primary co-ordinators reported that the school had become more involved with homes and the community since the HSCL scheme began. Three co-ordinators reported that efforts were made to build bonds between the school and the home but efforts to build bonds with the community were still in their infancy.

During the 1992-93 school year co-ordinators reported contacting St James' Hospital (2 schools), parents (2 schools), the Fountain Resource centre (1 school), the school attendance officer (1 school), a youth organisation (1 school), the mental health group (1 school), local primary services (1 school), Coolock Joint Care Services (1 school), a local librarian (1

Table 12.5

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Reported Changes in Community-Related Aspects of the HSCL Programme in Schools, 1992-93

	Percentages of schools					
	To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
School became more of a focal point of the community	28	(20)	62	(44)	10	(7)
Parents became more aware of local services/resources	36	(26)	58	(42)	6	(4)
Parents made more use of local services/resources	21	(15)	69	(50)	10	(7)
Greater community spirit in the area	29	(21)	51	(37)	19	(14)
Greater co-operation among community agencies	27	(19)	61	(43)	11	(8)

school), legal services (1 school), the Juvenile Liaison Officer (1 school), a social club (1 school), the No Name club (1 school), and a Parents' Association(1 school) in order to build bonds between the school, homes and the community. One co-ordinator stated that rooms were available in the school for parents' and community agencies' use. In one school, a co-ordinator attended a pantomime run by a ladies choral group and a retirement party for two principals in an attempt to build bonds between the school and the community. In another school, to help build bonds between the school and the home, parents with first year students were invited to explore their needs from the school. The co-ordinator in this school participated in activities in the community and community agencies were invited to participate in school initiatives.

Nine co-ordinators reported that there was a sharing in the decision-making of issues in their schools. Parents (3 schools), a Parents' Council (1 school), a Parents' Association (1 school), a Parents' Committee (1 school), parents on a school's Board of Management (1 school), a Local Committee (1 school), and community agencies (1 school) were consulted in the decision-making of specific issues in nine schools. Issues such as courses/talks for parents (3 schools), parents organising a school disco (2 schools), parents organising the

school uniform (2 schools),parent involvement in school policy documents (e.g., code of discipline, review of school rules) (2 schools), parents organising a field day (1 school), parents organising students' graduation day (1 school), availability of facilities for parents' use(1 school), and organising a community workshop on education (1 school) were discussed jointly before a final decision was made in schools. Other issues included discussing the needs of individual students (1 school), families who need specific support (1 school), encouraging people to become involved in HSCL activities (1 school), setting up an out of school project (1 school), and the possibility of providing French to all streams in school (1 school).

Three co-ordinators stated that there was no sharing in the decision-making of issues in their schools. Although parents were not consulted in these schools when final decisions were made on specific issues, in one school, the co-ordinator hopes that parents will be involved in making decisions about the schools' code of discipline during the 1993-94 school year. In another school, a co-ordinator hopes that a Local Committee will be set up during the 1993-94 school year where decisions on specific issues can be jointly discussed.

Two co-ordinators reported that efforts to reach agreement on goals, ideals, and aspirations were beginning to happen in their schools (e.g., links with local primary schools) and efforts were reported to be ongoing in another school. Four co-ordinators gave an account of the efforts that were made to reach agreement on goals, ideals, and aspirations in their schools. One co-ordinator pointed out that parents' opinions and reactions about specific issues were voiced at staff meetings before any final decisions were made. A co-ordinator in one school remarked that parents who were attending a Leadership Training course run by the National College of Industrial Relations were encouraged to voice their opinions on issues in the school. One co-ordinator reported that due to the lack of communication between the school and homes about the Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programme provided in the school, meetings took place between parents and teachers to clarify the development of the curriculum and the value of the VPT programme. In one school, a co-ordinator reported that community meetings discussing the needs of the general area (e.g., how money should be spent) took place. Meetings with women's' groups also took place with the aim to identify and clarify the role of the co-ordinator. Agreement on specific issues was reached at these meetings. Five co-ordinators stated that there were no efforts made with parents, the school, and community agencies to reach agreement on goals, ideals, and aspirations in their schools.

13. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary

Having the co-ordinator as a resource to liaise with parents and the community outside the school was perceived to be a major advantage of the HSCL scheme. In most schools, increased contact occurred between parents and teachers and there tended to be less conflict and greater co-operation and consultation on school issues. In over four-fifths of schools, space was made available and, in 60%, the school timetable was modified to accommodate and facilitate HSCL work and parent activities. The HSCL programme was also discussed at staff meetings in many schools. In 60% of schools, co-ordinators reported that the HSCL programme had helped to improve relationships among staff. In four out of five schools, the school was perceived to have a higher profile in the community and, in some schools, contact with community agencies had grown.

Impact on Schools, 1991-92

Information on the impact of HSCL programmes on schools during 1991-92 was obtained in Annual Progress Records completed by co-ordinators in participating schools. The impact on schools is described in the context of the co-ordinator as a resource in the school, changes in relationships within the school and between the school and the community, and changes in school organization and activity to accommodate the HSCL programme.

Specific changes were described for only a small proportion of schools. Rather than focusing on changes in the organization and activity of the school, many co-ordinators reported changes in the ethos of their school(s) or in specific elements that contributed to these changes (e.g., changes in school relationships, perceptions and attitudes of parents/teachers towards parental involvement in schools).

Co-ordinator as a Resource in the School

From the responses of co-ordinators it emerged that the HSCL co-ordinator in each school acted as a resource person in various ways. Co-ordinators in 16 primary schools described ways in which their presence in the school served as a resource to school staff, to parents and families, and to pupils.

The co-ordinator was seen as a resource to teachers in a number of ways. He/she was someone who could visit parents if the teacher had difficulty contacting them, who could talk to parents informally, and provide a fuller picture of family backgrounds to teachers. The presence of the co-ordinator in the school meant that there was someone at hand to deal with the daily issues, problems, and concerns of teachers and pupils. In one school, home visits were seen by the co-ordinator as a major way of coping with problems. One co-ordinator mentioned acting as a resource to the school principal by meeting parents in the school, a task which would otherwise have to be dealt with by the principal alone.

The co-ordinator was seen as a resource to parents (one school) in that he/she had the time to meet parents informally, talk to them, and elicit their perceptions of the school. The co-ordinator was aware of services within the community and, as such, could work with families and identify and address parents' educational, leisure, and support needs and, where necessary, engage the help of relevant agencies outside the school.

The co-ordinator was seen as a resource to pupils in two ways. Firstly, he/she was in a position to build up closer links with parents, the benefits of which might be expected to filter down to their children's education. Secondly, the co-ordinator could provide services to help pupils with both educational and non-educational difficulties, for example, by arranging referrals for educational, psychological, or medical assessments.

Changes in Relationships Within the School and Between the School and the Community

The HSCL scheme was perceived by co-ordinators to have brought about changes in relationships within the school and in the schools' interaction both with parents and with the broader community. These changes are described in terms of changes in the parent-teacher relationship and changes in the school-community relationship.

Effects of the HSCL scheme on the parent-teacher relationship were reported for 30 schools. In seven schools, co-ordinators noted that the programme provided an opportunity for parents and teachers to work together for the benefit of children and, in the remaining 23 schools, co-ordinators described some of the benefits. They noted that, since the HSCL scheme began, barriers between parents and teachers were being broken down, parents and teachers were getting to know each other as individuals, and more positive and co-operative relationships were being established. For example, more contact and more friendly exchanges occurred between parents and teachers, there was less conflict, aggression, and 'negative vibes' between the two groups, and there was greater co-operation and consultation on school issues (17 schools). Parents and teachers understood each others' situations better and could now see more clearly how to complement each other (6 schools).

Co-ordinators in 15 schools reported consequences of changes in the parent-teacher relationship, all of which were positive. Co-ordinators in three schools remarked that parents now had a definite purpose for being in the school, sometimes taking on activities previously dealt with by teachers (e.g., organizing social nights or family days). Co-ordinators in a further 12 schools pointed out that parent involvement in the school was now being considered normal, even down to the presence of buggies (in 1 school). It was no longer unusual to see parents coming and going in the school and teachers were reported to be 'getting more used to this.'

Effects of the HSCL scheme on the school-community relationship were reported for 17 schools in all. Since some co-ordinators mentioned more than one effect on the school-community relationship, there is overlap in the numbers presented in this section.

A co-ordinator who served two schools reported that the HSCL programme provided opportunities for community education that had not widely existed before its inception. As a result of the programme, co-ordinators in seven schools believed that their schools no longer worked in isolation, had become more integrated into the communities they served, and were helping to develop community spirit. For example, co-ordinators stated that the school was now a focal point of the parish or a resource to the community. Co-ordinators reported a greater awareness of the school and a more positive attitude towards it within the community, with more local people getting to know the co-ordinator, asking about programmes, and helping out at the school.

Changes in School Organization and Activity to Accommodate the HSCL Scheme

Co-ordinators were asked to describe the main changes that had occurred in their school(s) as a result of the HSCL scheme with a view to eliciting, and thus monitoring, changes in the structure and/or organization of schools to accommodate the scheme.

Reported changes in school organization and activity to accommodate the HSCL programme in individual schools included the provision of activities to involve parents in the school, increased contact with outside agencies and individuals (e.g., Health Boards, psychologists, speech therapists, social workers), and the provision of facilities to support parent involvement in the school (e.g., parents' room, drop-in centre, crèche, play group).

Co-ordinators in nine schools described the advantage of having some space in the school, particularly for a parents' room. One co-ordinator stated that having a parents' room was invaluable in involving parents in the school.

Impact on Schools, 1992-93

In the Annual Progress Record for 1992-93, impact on primary schools was described by co-ordinators in terms of changes in: school structure; school organization; staff relationships within the school; and school role in the community.

School Structure

In 82% of schools (n=60), co-ordinators reported and described changes in the structure of their schools to accommodate HSCL work. In 18% of schools (n=13), co-ordinators reported no changes in the structure of their schools.

In 60 schools, space was made available to accommodate co-ordinator's HSCL work and parent activities. Space provided included a room to serve as an office for co-ordinator's and HSCL work (18 schools); a room to serve as a class for parents' courses (12 schools); a room to serve as a drop-in centre and/or parents' room (37 schools); a room to serve as a crèche or playroom (16 schools); and a room to serve as an adult library (2 schools). Resources for parents' use were also provided (e.g., computers, woodwork materials, cookery materials, art and crafts materials, and tea and coffee making facilities) (8 schools).

Co-ordinators pointed out that rooms such as the school hall (6 schools), classrooms (5 schools), the school library (5 schools), the cookery room (4 schools), the computer room (4 schools), the staff room (3 schools), the art room (2 schools), the kitchen (2 schools), the woodwork room (1 school), the secretary's office (1 school), the principal's office (1 school), the storeroom (1 school), the cloakroom (1 school), and a doctor's room (1 school) were made available for HSCL work in schools. Co-ordinators in three schools stated that funds were made available to establish and refurbish rooms for HSCL work. Co-ordinators in two schools reported that a room was built in each school especially for HSCL work.

School Organization

In 59% of schools (n=43), co-ordinators reported and described changes in the organization of their schools to accommodate HSCL work. In 40% of schools (n=29), co-ordinators reported no changes in the organization of their schools.

Co-ordinators in 43 schools reported that efforts were made in schools to accommodate and facilitate parents and co-ordinators on the school timetable. The school timetable was modified to allow parents to use the school hall (10 schools), the cookery room (4 schools), the school library (3 schools), the staff room (1 school), the school gym (1 school), the kitchen (1 school), the computer room (1 school), the television room (1 school) and a classroom (1 school) for various activities and classes. Teachers in eight schools were reported to have rearranged their class timetables to accommodate parents helping in the classroom (e.g., paired reading, knitting, art and crafts). Four schools were reported to have rearranged their school timetable to facilitate parents running school facilities (e.g., library, book shop, savings scheme).

Efforts were also made in the organization of schools to accommodate and facilitate co-ordinators' work in the HSCL scheme. Time was made available for co-ordinators at staff meetings in six schools to discuss the role and aims of the HSCL scheme. Arrangements were made for co-ordinators in seven schools to have regular meetings with teachers and principals on an individual basis. A co-ordinator serving two schools reported meeting and planning with principals, school staff, and Boards of Management to timetable and co-

ordinate HSCL activities. One co-ordinator stated that the principal and a religious sister working on a voluntary basis took time once a month to go to Local Committee meetings.

Staff Relationships Within the School

In 59% of schools (n=43), co-ordinators reported and described changes in staff relationships within their schools. In 38% of schools (n=28), co-ordinators reported no changes in staff relationships within their schools.

Co-ordinators in 43 schools believed that the HSCL programme brought about positive changes in staff relationships within their schools. Co-ordinators reported that relationships had improved among staff in 18 schools, between staff and co-ordinators in 11 schools, and between co-ordinators and parents in 14 schools.

Staff were perceived by co-ordinators in 17 schools to be more open, tolerant, friendly, willing to initiate activities, and willing to discuss matters with each other. Members of staff in one school were perceived by the co-ordinator to be more conscious of the collective role of staff within the school. Staff were reported in 14 schools to have had an interest in and involvement in the overall structure and progress of the HSCL scheme since its inception.

Co-ordinators in 11 schools noted an improvement in the relationship they had with staff. Members of staff in three schools were perceived to have a good understanding of the role and difficulties of the HSCL work of co-ordinators.

Co-ordinators in 14 schools reported improved attitudes and relationships between staff and parents. Staff were perceived in 12 schools to be more open to parent involvement in classrooms and in school activities. Co-ordinators in four schools noted that staff were more willing to share ideas and plan for parent involvement in classrooms and in school activities. Co-ordinators in three schools noted that teachers were open to parents' perspectives on issues. Inservice training and staff development days were organized by co-ordinators in seven schools and presented by outside facilitators. Following training, staff in two schools were perceived to be more understanding and helpful with family problems associated with disadvantage.

Not all co-ordinators reported improved staff relationships within their schools. A co-ordinator serving two schools felt a loss of bond of friendship with members of staff since the introduction of the HSCL scheme because of having to serve more than one school (i.e., going to three staff rooms). One co-ordinator found that while some members of staff were supportive of the HSCL scheme, others were not interested in the HSCL scheme. One co-ordinator mentioned that, prior to the introduction of the HSCL scheme, staff were involving parents in school activities, but since the introduction of the scheme some staff were less inclined to involve parents in school activities.

School Role in the Community

In 81% of schools (n=59), co-ordinators reported and described changes in their schools' role in the community. In 18% of schools (n=13), co-ordinators reported no changes in their schools' role in the community.

Co-ordinators reported that, since the introduction of the HSCL scheme, schools had a higher profile in the community (13 schools) and were viewed as a resource centre by community agencies and members of the community (17 schools). Co-ordinators in 11 schools reported liaising more with community agencies since the introduction of the HSCL scheme. Co-ordinators stated that community agencies held meetings in schools (3 schools), had public notices in the school to advertise local events (3 schools), used school resources (2 schools), and supported the work of HSCL programmes in the schools (5 schools).

HSCL programmes were perceived by co-ordinators in 19 schools to have brought about positive changes in that schools were now viewed by community agencies and members of the community as having an important role to play in the community. The co-ordinators stated that this was due to the availability of co-ordinators to make constant contact with and attend local meetings with community agencies and members of the community.

A co-ordinator serving two schools stated that, since the introduction of the HSCL scheme, a more structured approach was adopted in co-ordinating meetings with community agencies. Furthermore, the co-ordinator and the community agencies discussed how to work best with the school to broaden, clarify, and develop the role of the school within the community. A co-ordinator serving two schools noted that community agencies used the schools as a means of contacting parents and of recruiting them for activities, events, and courses in the local area.

14. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary

Teachers in most primary schools were perceived to have become more positive towards parental involvement in schools. Co-ordinators reported that teachers had increased understanding of parents' backgrounds and of the difficulties they faced, and a greater appreciation of parents' talents and abilities. Teachers found that parents had become easier to contact and problems easier to deal with. Parents, in turn, found it easier to approach teachers. As a result of the HSCL scheme, teachers reflected on the role of parents in school and in education and, more specifically, on ways in which they might involve parents in the school or classroom. There was great variance among teachers in their attitudes to parent involvement in the classroom and in the type of involvement they would allow. In general, they agreed that the role of parents, particularly in the classroom, needed to be well thought-out and structured and developed with considerable input from teachers. In more than half the primary schools, at least some teachers had involved parents in a variety of activities, from accompanying children to swimming to helping in classroom activities. Some teachers in more than half the schools also helped out with HSCL activities.

One of the important aspects of the HSCL scheme is the opportunity it affords teachers to meet and get to know the parents of their pupils. In spite of the fact that the school day is highly structured with very little time for staff to interact even among themselves, the very fact that parents are in schools means that teachers meet them, see them in corridors, and in many cases, work with them.

In this section the effects of the HSCL scheme on teachers are examined from the perspectives of co-ordinators and of teachers themselves.

Impact on Teachers as Described by Co-ordinators

At the end of 1991-92, the effects of HSCL programmes on teachers were described by co-ordinators in terms of changes in both teachers' attitudes and behaviours regarding parental involvement in the school.

Changes in Teachers' Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement in School

Co-ordinators rated changes in teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in the school since the HSCL programme began. Based on their own judgement and knowledge of staff in the schools they served, co-ordinators assessed whether the overall attitude of all teachers (in each school served) had become more positive, more negative, or had not changed. In Table 14.1, it can be seen that teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement were perceived to have become 'much more positive' in 13 schools, 'a little more positive' in 39 schools, 'not changed' in 10 schools, and 'a little more negative' in one school. In no school were teachers' attitudes deemed to have become 'much more negative' overall. In general, it is clear that changes in teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in school were positive.

Co-ordinators for 49 schools gave details of specific changes in teachers' attitudes. Teachers were perceived by co-ordinators to have become more open to parent involvement in the school and less defensive towards parents. Teachers were also perceived to be less critical of, and more friendly towards parents, less threatened by them, and more open to new ideas and suggestions regarding their involvement in the school. Principals and teachers now realized that communicative relationships between the child's home and the school were important and that parents had a contribution to make to the education of their children.

Co-ordinators for 15 schools reported changes in the attitudes of teachers towards parents as individuals. The changes most frequently reported referred to teachers' greater understanding of parents' backgrounds and of the difficulties they faced, greater consciousness of parents' attitudes and aspirations, and a greater appreciation of parents as

Table 14.1

Co-ordinator's Ratings of Changes in Teachers' Attitudes
Towards Parental Involvement in School

RATING OF ATTITUDE CHANGE	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
Much more positive	13
A little more positive	39
Not changed	10
A little more negative	1
Much more negative	0
Multiple rating	8
No rating	1
Total	72

individuals with needs and talents of their own rather than just as parents of their pupils. Further, as a result of increased awareness of children's home backgrounds, teachers were reported to show more sympathy and tolerance to children.

Co-ordinators also noted positive changes in teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in classrooms. For example, some teachers who initially had reservations about having parents in classrooms were now perceived to be very pleased with such involvement.

Teachers of senior classes had enquired about programmes that would involve parents in their classrooms.

Co-ordinators in nine schools gave reasons why they thought a more positive change in attitudes had not occurred. The reasons included, in order of frequency, the fact that some teachers still had reservations about parental involvement, teachers' lack of opportunity to meet parents, and the fact that teachers who were quite willing to have parents involved were inhibited by the negative attitude of a principal towards parent involvement.

In only one school did a co-ordinator regard teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in the school as having become a little more negative overall. This inference was based on the way some teachers criticized the involvement of particular parents.

Difficulty in rating changes in teachers' attitudes was reflected in the multiple ratings offered by co-ordinators for eight schools. In each case co-ordinators said that they could not arrive at an overall assessment of changes in teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement that would apply to all teachers, since teachers differed in their attitudes. Thus, in these schools, while some teachers were positive and supportive of the programme and of the co-ordinators' work, others were not or had reservations about parent involvement in schools or in classrooms.

Changes in Teachers' Behaviours Regarding Parental Involvement

Co-ordinators in 48 schools reported positive behaviours of teachers regarding parental involvement. Teachers in 27 schools had involved parents in their classroom. In three of these schools, co-ordinators mentioned that there had been an increase in the numbers of teachers who had parents in their classrooms during the second year of the scheme.

Co-ordinators also reported positive behaviours of teachers outside their own classroom (20 schools). This evidence varied in its specificity. Some co-ordinators merely stated that teachers were involved in HSCL activities (3 schools) or helped set up HSCL activities (1 school). Others specified that teachers had involved parents in paired-reading (3 schools) or in extra-curricular activities, i.e., book fair, school play, school tour, swimming (11 schools), had put the co-ordinator in touch with a facilitator for a personal development course for parents (1 school), and had offered to give mathematics classes to parents (1 school). Other reported behaviours implied less direct teacher involvement with the HSCL programme (14 schools). For example, teachers offered new ideas for the programme (1 school), visited the parents' room socially (1 school), asked co-ordinators to liaise with homes (4 schools), or simply made less negative comments about the programme or about parental involvement (3 schools).

Impact on Teachers as Described by Teachers

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, teachers in the six selected schools were asked about the impact of HSCL programmes on them. Their responses are described under five headings: benefits to teachers of parent involvement in activities; benefits of the co-ordinator as support for the teacher; teachers' perceptions of changes in role as class teacher as a result of HSCL programmes; the circumstances under which teachers would be willing to have parents involved in classroom-based activities in the future; and difficulties with parent involvement.

Benefits to Teachers of Parent Involvement in Activities

Teachers were of the opinion that parent involvement in activities in school helped both themselves and parents to get to know and understand each other better. Through informal meetings, teachers and parents were beginning to see each other as ordinary people and as individuals rather than as members of a group. This was particularly the case when parents and teachers worked together in the classroom; teachers indicated how they had gradually become less wary of parents when they realized that parents were there to help and not to criticize. They also became aware of and appreciated what parents could contribute. They saw how parents' skills and talents (e.g., in art and crafts, computer activities), could be useful to the teacher and how teachers might even learn from parents in some instances. Teachers suggested that parents had come to understand the difficulties in dealing with large numbers of pupils and that parents could also see how their own children behaved in class, how they reacted to another adult, and the problems they might cause the teacher. Teachers also suggested that parents had begun to realize that teachers care about their pupils and had gained some understanding of what teachers are trying to achieve in schools.

With improved parent-teacher relations, problems became easier to deal with, parents were easier to contact, and parents found it easier to approach teachers. One teacher described how an open meeting with all the parents in her class had first been difficult as parents were very defensive, but eventually resulted in discussion and sharing of ideas. Another teacher attributed improved attendance at her parent-teacher meetings to the increased involvement of parents in activities in the school.

At a more general level, teachers suggested that if parents are involved in and enjoy activities in school then they are more likely to be involved with children at home and to support the teacher's work. It was clear from teachers' comments, however, that support for the teacher was more obvious and more practical if parents were involved in classroom-based activities. A major benefit to teachers accrued when the number of pupils they had to deal with was reduced when parents took children for computer activities, for junior infant activities, or for reading or writing. These practices allowed the teacher to give individual attention to 'weaker' pupils. Teachers found such assistance particularly useful when children

were being taught a new concept, when the presence of a parent to monitor the progress of most children allowed the teacher to repeat the concept with 'weaker' pupils. At other times it was the parent who worked or played (e.g., stories, jigsaws, word games) with 'weaker' pupils leaving the teacher free to concentrate on activities with the rest of the class. When parents helped in class with activities such as art and crafts or knitting, the children got to do a lot more than they would have without the assistance of the parent. Parents' assistance eased the workload of the teacher so that teachers frequently described the help of the parent in terms of 'an extra pair of hands.' Teachers also derived a sense of support from knowing that a group of parents was available and willing to help on request.

Paired reading was one activity which reached parents that teachers would not normally see, i.e., parents who may not have been willing to participate in activities in the school. Parent participation in paired reading was considered to be a support to the teachers' work in school. Some teachers pointed out that they preferred activities that involved greater support from parents at home (e.g., encouraging parents to ensure that children did their homework) rather than having parents involved in other activities in school.

Benefits of the Co-ordinator as Support for the Teacher

More than half the teachers interviewed (n=52) made reference to either the benefits of having the co-ordinator as a backup or support (n=42) or mentioned this as an aspect of the co-ordinator's role (n=31).

Through home visits, the co-ordinator provided teachers with information on the background of children and teachers reported that this had helped them to understand the child better and to cope more effectively with the child in class. The availability of the co-ordinator to visit the homes of problem children took a lot of pressure off the teacher in addressing problems with difficult, disruptive, or troublesome children and in dealing with cases of non-attendance. Teachers also emphasized that with the co-ordinator as support they could share the responsibility of problem cases and that everything that could be done for the children was being done. One teacher mentioned how much it meant to her to have the support of the co-ordinator on the occasion of taking one child from her class to see a psychiatrist. Teachers also found the co-ordinator's availability invaluable in explaining teachers' perspectives to parents in the home and in reaching parents that they would not normally see.

The approach of following up on disruptive children suggests a 'fire brigade' service that may not be in keeping with the preventative philosophy of the HSCL scheme. While co-ordinators have been discouraged from providing this service, it seems that at times they find that some such activity is necessary, if only because of its obvious positive impact on teachers.

Teachers' Perceptions of Changes in Role as a Result of the HSCL Scheme

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, teachers (in the six selected primary schools) were asked if there had been any changes in their role as class teacher as a result of the HSCL scheme. Most teachers (n=57) did not perceive a change in their role as class teacher. Others (n=32) felt that there had been a change in their role as a result of the scheme, while some teachers (n=6) reported that a new dimension had been added to their work in the school but they did not see this as a change in their role as class teacher (Table 14.2).

Table 14.2

Number of Teachers who Indicated a Change in their Role as a Result of the HSCL Project

CHANGE IN ROLE	Total (n=96)
No change in role as class teacher	57
Change in role as class teacher	32
New dimension to work but not a change in role as class teacher	6
Question not applicable to teacher	1

Of the 32 teachers who perceived a change in their role, 23 referred to their involvement in activities with parents. The changes which they described related almost exclusively to classroom-based activities with parents (mostly in two schools) and the changes were generally described in terms of the implications of that involvement for them. For example, having a parent involved in classroom-based activities introduced additional responsibilities for the teacher such as sitting down with parents to explain junior infant activities, training parents for involvement in the classroom, and organizing parent-child activities. Having a parent in class also meant that the teacher had to learn how to cope with disciplining a child when the child's parent was present and how to allow a parent a certain amount of autonomy within the classroom. Other implications for the teacher of parent involvement in classroom-based activities included greater and better parent contact and greater awareness of the home dimension of children's lives.

Teachers' reactions to changes in their role arising from parent involvement in classroom-based activities were mostly positive. Fourteen teachers were completely positive in their reactions and described feeling more approachable as a teacher and more comfortable about asking parents to come into class. They also noted that children enjoyed the attention

of another adult, looked forward to a parent coming into class, and, in one case, a child gained confidence through his parent reading to him in class. Three teachers, who had initially felt threatened by the thought of a parent in class, reported being pleased about it. A fourth teacher, while she felt that parent involvement created extra pressure in class, was positive about that involvement as she felt less isolated than previously and each child in her class was now read to every day. Five teachers were somewhat negative about parent involvement and the changes it had brought for them, feeling that it put more pressure on teachers, that teachers did not have time for it, and that it was generally difficult to have parents in class. Two teachers were neither positive nor negative about the changes, describing parent involvement in the classroom as a new experience and simply as 'an extra pair of hands.'

Most teachers who saw no changes in their role as class teacher as a result of HSCL programmes did not explain their responses. However, of those that did, seven were not involved in activities with parents and five were. The reasons given by teachers who were involved but who saw no change in their role included the fact that they had been involved with parents prior to the HSCL programme (n=3) and that, despite having a parent in class, the teacher was still the boss and was respected by parents as the one in charge (n=2).

While most teachers who had parents involved in the classroom (23 of 29) perceived this as affecting their role as class teacher, only eight of the many teachers who used the co-ordinator as a support or back-up reported a change in their role. Clearly, having a parent involved in the classroom is a much more fundamental change for the teacher and arouses much more mixed feelings than using the co-ordinator as a back-up or support. Indeed, of all the activities introduced through the HSCL scheme, parent involvement in the classroom has proved the most controversial. One-third of the 96 teachers interviewed stated that they were not willing to have parents involved in classroom-based activities in the future. These teachers feel a threat to their professionalism, worry about parents becoming over-familiar and over-confident, and about breaches in confidentiality. However, despite the difficulties that parent involvement in the classroom obviously poses for some teachers, the remaining two-thirds were open to the idea of such involvement in the future. Indeed, 26 of these teachers had already involved parents in their classrooms. Only 3 of the 29 teachers who had parents involved in their classrooms were not willing to do so in the future because of the added pressure it had brought to their work.

Circumstances Under Which Teachers Would be Willing to Have Parents Involved in Classroom-based Activities in the Future

Teachers differed considerably in terms of the type of parent involvement they would allow in the classroom. Some would limit parents to a supervisory role and suggested that a

parent's contribution should be confined to helping with activities such as knitting or art and craft activities. Many teachers would not like to see parent involvement in more academic activities as they felt that parents would be more likely to make comparisons between children in relation to reading, writing, and maths than they would in relation to other activities. Some teachers felt that parent involvement in academic work was suited only to junior classes and thought that a role for parents was less obvious in senior classes. On the other hand, one teacher suggested that if parent involvement in the classroom began with junior level classes, it would work itself naturally up through the school. Other suggestions by teachers included having parents come in to describe their work, asking parents with knowledge of local history or geography to talk to children, or having parents show what they have made or explain things learned in courses in the school.

Teachers involved in activities with parents in the classroom and other teachers interested in such involvement pointed to the need for guidelines to be developed within the school if parent involvement is to be effective. Some guidelines suggested by teachers were as follows:

1. Teachers need inservice training to cope with parent involvement in the classroom. One teacher suggested that in providing this training the experience of teachers who have worked with parents in the classroom should be examined. Teachers need reassurance from other teachers that their position will not be threatened. It should also be recognized that some teachers would find it stressful to have a parent in the classroom and that, until a teacher is prepared to have a parent in class, no attempt should be made to impose parents.
2. Parents need to be trained and their role in class adequately defined so that it does not infringe on the role of the teacher. A role suggested by some teachers was that of teacher's aide. Parents should feel competent about what they are to do in class and they will need guidance about how to treat their own child in class.
3. An agreement on discipline between parents and teachers is needed. Teachers who have been involved with parents in class mentioned the initial strain of having a parent present and the fear of reprimanding the person's child. This aspect should be included in training for teachers and parents in preparation for parent involvement in class.
4. An agreed process of parent selection is needed to avoid jealousy among parents. Parents need to be carefully selected by school staff. One of the most important qualities for a parent is consistency in attendance. Teachers also need to be sure that a parent will maintain the confidentiality of classroom matters.
5. There should be a good working relationship between the parent and the teacher.
6. Parent involvement in the classroom works best with small-group activities.

7. Teachers should be provided with some evidence of the effectiveness of parent involvement in the classroom.

Difficulties with Parent Involvement as Described by Teachers

While two-thirds of teachers reported a willingness to have parents involved in classroom-based activities in the future, quite a number (n=24) reported difficulties with the idea. Objections were strongest in relation to parent involvement in the classroom, but teachers also had difficulties with general parent involvement in the school. Some teachers, particularly teachers who were not involved in programme activities, felt overwhelmed by the presence of parents in the school because of lack of understanding of what was happening and lack of preparation and training for involvement. Other fears expressed related to possibilities of threats to teachers' professionalism, to fears about parents taking over, and to parents perceiving the teacher's job as too easy. In this context, having parents in the classroom was seen as an extra burden or pressure. Teachers also emphasized that both parents and teachers need their own space within the school.

Teachers clearly need staff development and training to cope with the introduction of parents into schools. At a more basic level, they need to be provided with a persuasive rationale about why parents should be in the school or in the classroom and what exactly they can contribute.

Impact on Teachers, 1992-93

For more than half the primary schools, co-ordinators reported that 'all' or 'most' teachers had more informal interactions with parents in the school during the 1992-93 school year than previously (Table 14.3). This was also true for 'some' teachers in 44% of schools. In only 2 schools did co-ordinators report that this was true of 'no teachers.'

Teachers involved parents in their school work in various ways during the 1992-93 school year. Involvement ranged from accompanying children to swimming, covering school books, yard duty, and making costumes for concerts, to paired-reading, assisting with maths, reading, or computer activities, infant activities, and teaching knitting or cookery to older pupils.

In 14% of schools, 'all' or 'most' teachers had involved parents in their school work in various ways. This was also true of 'some' teachers in more than half (54%) the schools. However, in 31% of schools 'no teachers' had involved parents in their school work.

Co-ordinators reported that teachers also helped out with HSCL activities. These included (in order of frequency) paired reading (15 schools), art and crafts (6 schools), parent talks (5 schools), and library activities (5 schools). In six schools, teachers ran classes for parents (drama, cookery, computers, basic maths, and choir) and one teacher also did home visits.

Table 14.3

Percentages of Schools for Which Teachers were Reported to Have Been Involved in Specified Aspects of the HSCL Programme in School(s), 1992-93

	Percentages of schools							
	All teachers		Most teachers		Some teachers		No teachers	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Teachers had more informal interactions with parents in the school	20	(14)	33	(23)	44	(30)	3	(2)
Teachers involved parents in their school work in various ways	1	(1)	13	(9)	54	(38)	31	(22)
Teachers helped out with HSCL activities	6	(4)	9	(6)	53	(36)	32	(22)
Teachers offered advice and suggestions about HSCL	12	(8)	16	(11)	52	(36)	20	(14)

For over half (53%) the schools, 'some' teachers (sometimes as few as one) were involved. However, for a small proportion (6%) of schools, 'all' teachers were involved, mostly in Christmas parties and group meetings with parents. For a further 9% of schools, 'most' teachers were involved, while for almost a third, 'no teachers' were involved in HSCL activities.

From co-ordinators' responses, it would seem that, at the end of the third year, teachers were more likely to offer advice and suggestions about HSCL than they were at the outset of the scheme. In 28% of schools, 'all' or 'most' teachers had done this, while in more than half (52%) of the schools 'some' teachers had offered advice or suggestions. In one-fifth (20%) of schools 'no teachers' had done this. Co-ordinators reported that teachers had responded to questionnaires (2 schools), discussed HSCL at staff meetings (2 schools), and had proposed activities they would like (e.g., sewing class, book club, course for parents of disruptive children, toy library, discussion of school discipline with parents). Teachers were also helpful in indicating parents to target and, in one school, they offered ideas on how to contact community groups.

In general, teachers' attitudes towards HSCL programmes were reported to have become more positive overall. For more than half the schools (54%), teachers' attitudes were reported to be 'A little more positive,' while for a quarter of schools (25%) teachers were reported to be

'Much more positive.' In 16% of schools, teachers' attitudes had not changed, while in only 6% of schools were teachers' attitudes deemed to have become more negative.

Co-ordinators were asked to respond to questions about seven specific aspects of changes in teachers' attitudes and levels of awareness (Table 14.4). For almost two-thirds of schools, co-ordinators reported that 'all' or 'most' teachers were more aware than they had been of the co-ordinator as a resource in the school. For the same number of schools, 'all' or 'most' teachers were reported to have become more aware of the aims and nature of HSCL

Table 14.4

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators gave Ratings of Specified Aspects of Teachers' Attitudes to the HSCL Programme in School(s), 1992-93

	Percentages of schools								
Teachers were ...	All teachers		Most teachers		Some teachers		No teachers		Total
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	(n)
more aware of the co-ordinator as a resource	23	(16)	42	(29)	29	(20)	6	(4)	69
more aware of the aims and nature of HSCL programme	21	(14)	46	(31)	32	(22)	2	(1)	68
more aware of parents' role and contribution at home	30	(21)	33	(23)	30	(21)	6	(4)	69
more positive about parents' role and contribution at home	20	(14)	33	(23)	39	(27)	7	(5)	69
more tolerant of parents' presence in school	25	(17)	54	(37)	19	(13)	2	(1)	68
more positive about parents' role and contribution in school	16	(11)	22	(15)	49	(33)	13	(9)	68
more aware of parents' role and contribution in school	20	(14)	20	(14)	45	(31)	15	(10)	69
always very positive about HSCL	12	(8)	34	(23)	45	(30)	9	(6)	67

programmes. In most of the remaining schools, 'some' teachers were more aware of the co-ordinator as a resource and of the aims and nature of HSCL programmes. In only a small proportion of schools, co-ordinators reported that 'no teachers' were more aware of the co-

ordinator as a resource (4 schools) or of the aims and nature of the HSCL programme (1 school).

In two-thirds of schools, 'all' or 'most' teachers were reported to have become more aware of parents' role and contribution at home. In only four schools did co-ordinators feel that none of the teachers was more aware of this. For more than half the schools, co-ordinators reported that 'all' or 'most' teachers were more positive about parents' role and contribution at home. This was also true for 'some' teachers in 39% of schools, while in only 7% of schools were 'no teachers' reported to be more positive about parents' role and contribution at home.

In general, during the 1992-93 school year, 'all' or 'most' teachers were reported to have become more tolerant of parents' presence in school (79% of schools). There was only one school for which this was not the case and in the remaining 13 schools 'some' teachers had become more tolerant. In 40% of schools, 'all' or 'most' teachers were reported to have become more aware of parents' role and contribution in school, and this was true of 'some' teachers in 45% of schools. However, in 15% of schools, co-ordinators reported that no teacher was more aware of parents' role and contribution in school.

Teachers seem to have been slightly less positive about parents' role and contribution in school than they were about parents' role and contribution in the home. For 38% of schools 'all' or 'most' teachers were reported to be more positive about this aspect of HSCL programmes. For almost half the schools only 'some' teachers were reported to be more positive about parents' role and contribution in school, while for 13% of schools 'no teachers' were reported to be more positive about this.

In their rating of teachers' attitudes towards the HSCL programme in the 1991-92 Annual Progress Record, co-ordinators commented that it was difficult to rate a number of teachers as having become more positive since they had always been very positive towards HSCL. In light of these comments, in the 1992-93 Annual Progress Record, co-ordinators were asked to rate the extent to which teachers were 'always very positive about HSCL' (Table 14.4). There were valid responses for 67 schools. For almost half (45%) of those schools, co-ordinators reported that 'all' or 'most' teachers had always been very positive about HSCL. However, for more than half (53%) the schools, only 'some' teachers (30 schools) or 'no teachers' (6 schools) had always been very positive about HSCL.

To take account of the fact that many teachers were regarded as having always been positive about HSCL programmes and thus provide a better assessment of the extent to which teachers had changed their attitudes, co-ordinators' responses to the item 'Teachers were always very positive about HSCL' were crossed with responses to the seven more specific items, the responses to which have just been described. The procedure involved calculating the number of schools in three categories for each of the seven items, having taken account of

their responses to the item relating to being 'always very positive.' The categories were: (i) the number of schools that had received a more positive rating (i.e., indicating that 'all' teachers rather than 'most' teachers or 'some' teachers or 'most' teachers rather than 'some' teachers were perceived to have changed) on the specific item than on the 'always very positive' item; (ii) the number of schools that had received a more negative rating (i.e., indicating that 'some' teachers rather than 'most' teachers or 'all' teachers or 'most' teachers rather than 'all' teachers were perceived to have changed) on the specific item than on the 'always very positive' item; (iii) the number of schools in which there was no difference in the rating which they received on the specific item and on the 'always very positive' item.

Chi-square analyses of the data generated in this may indicate that there are significant differences on all the items (Table 14.5). Teachers in 29 schools did not change in their awareness of the co-ordinator as a resource. However, very few teachers were less aware. A similar picture emerges in the case of teachers' awareness of the of the aims and nature of the HSCL programme. Teachers in 27 schools did not change, while among the remainder, few became less aware of the aims and nature of the HSCL programme.

Table 14.5

Numbers of Schools in Which Teachers' Attitudes Have Changed to HSCL and Parents

	Became more positive	Became less positive	No change	$\chi 2$ (df::2)	p
Aware of co-ordinator as resource	29	9	29	11.95	<.01
Aware of HSCL	31	9	27	12.38	<.01
Aware of parents' role at home	32	9	26	12.76	<.01
Positive about parents' role at home	22	12	33	9.89	<.01
Tolerant of parents in school	37	4	26	25.32	<.001
Aware of parents' role in school	17	16	34	9.18	<.05
Positive about parents' role in school	15	19	33	8.01	<.05

Teachers tended to become more aware of parents' role and contribution at home. In the case of teachers' attitudes towards parents' role and contribution at home, co-ordinators' ratings indicated that such attitudes either had not changed or at any rate had not become more negative.

Teachers were perceived to have become more tolerant of parents' presence in schools; very few were perceived to have developed negative attitudes in this regard. However, the number of schools in which teachers did not change their attitudes to parents' role and contribution in school was significantly greater than the numbers who had become either more positive or more negative. A similar result was found for teachers' attitudes towards parents' role and contribution in school.

15. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary

Among the effects of the HSCL scheme in post-primary schools were the provision of courses and activities for parents, enhanced relationships with parents, improved links between parents and the school, a more friendly atmosphere in the school, and a more positive attitude within the community towards the school. The main change that occurred in post-primary schools to facilitate parental involvement was the provision of facilities such as a parents' room, office space for the co-ordinator, and access to school facilities in general. More than half the principals were involved at some level with parents, ranging from involvement with parents' associations to welcoming parents to HSCL courses. Much of the staff involvement with parents had been ongoing prior to the HSCL scheme and included meetings with parents, adult education (for which courses the teachers were tutors), school events, and extra-curricular activities for students. Very few teachers had parents involved in classrooms. Where this was the case, it included having parents as guest speakers, parent participation in group work in a life skills class, or parent supervision of exams. About half the principals were sceptical of parent involvement in classrooms and explained their reasons. However, half saw potential value in it, particularly in regard to remedial work, career guidance, counselling, home economics, and modules in a Vocational Preparation and Training course. The vast majority of teachers were overwhelmingly positive about involvement in school-based activities with parents, mainly in the areas of meeting and talking to parents, adult education classes, and extra-curricular activities for students. More than half the teachers interviewed were very open to future involvement with parents in classrooms and considered practical subjects to be most amenable to such involvement, as well as remedial work, life skills, careers classes, and project work. Teachers specified a number of conditions on which their involvement with parents would depend: availability of time, that their involvement should be confined to their area of expertise, and that programmes should be planned and structured. Various difficulties associated with parent involvement were outlined by teachers. The existence of numerous roles at second level meant that co-ordinators had to establish close links with a variety of personnel in order to avoid overlap and, in many instances, the roles complemented each other. Attitudes towards the HSCL scheme were generally positive and teachers were reported to have become more open towards parents and more sympathetic and understanding in their dealings with both parents and students.

Openness of Schools to Parents

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, 6 of the 13 post-primary co-ordinators classified their schools as being very open to parents and three of these stated that this had always been the case. Two said that their schools were becoming more open as a result of having more parents around. Others noted that, while teachers were very positive about seeing parents in the school (in some cases this was commonplace due to adult education courses), parents might still feel reluctant to visit the school unless they had a specific purpose for doing so. Co-ordinators also acknowledged the fact that the school was viewed by some parents, particularly those lacking confidence, as a busy and inaccessible place.

One co-ordinator felt that the enthusiasm of staff for the scheme was being slightly undermined by a management which was extremely controlling and traditional in its views of the role of parents. It was suggested that more work would need to be done with some persons in management positions for the scheme to reach its full potential.

Many of the co-ordinators noted the willingness of staff members to take on extra duties to facilitate the co-ordinator in his or her work. For example, staff sometimes had to do yard, toilet, or corridor duty while a co-ordinator attended meetings within the community. In cases in which co-ordinators had teaching responsibilities, staff had also been willing to take over their classes when they were away from the school for inservice courses, cluster group meetings, etc. In one school the timetable was re-scheduled to free the co-ordinator totally, requiring teachers to divide the 8 hours of extra work among them. Co-ordinators felt that it was unfair to expect this to continue and that some arrangement should be made to prevent it in the future.

Communication Between Staff and Co-ordinators

For the 1992-93 school year, co-ordinators gave an account of the structures in schools that facilitated communication between the co-ordinator and the principal, the year heads/counsellors/remedial teachers, and the entire staff team. Co-ordinators reported that they had both regular formal and informal meetings with principals in four schools and regular informal meetings with principals in eight schools. Co-ordinators in three schools stated that they met with principals to discuss new initiatives, HSCL activities, and HSCL funds. In one school, a co-ordinator presented a discussion document about the HSCL scheme to the principal but found that the principal was not interested in the HSCL scheme.

Co-ordinators reported that they had formal and informal meetings with year heads in 11 schools, remedial teachers in nine schools, and counsellors in eight schools. Twelve co-ordinators stated that they met with year heads/counsellors/remedial teachers as needed or when requested. Four co-ordinators reported that specific staff members met on a regular basis to discuss specific issues in the school. For example, in one school, fortnightly 'student care' meetings were chaired by the principal. In another school, weekly meetings were held with the guidance counsellor, the chaplain, and the co-ordinator to discuss issues in the school. In one school, the co-ordinator, the chaplain, the principal, and the year heads met regularly to discuss social problems, in particular, teen pregnancy. A co-ordinator in another school attended weekly meetings with a special needs team which included the counsellor, the remedial teacher, and the school psychological service.

Co-ordinators reported that they met with and informed staff members about the HSCL scheme through staff meetings (12 schools), informal meetings during lunch time (4 schools), staff newsletters (3 schools), notice boards in staff rooms (2 schools), a HSCL newsletter (1 school), and appointments with staff members (1 school). Twelve co-ordinators stated that time was given on the staff meeting agenda to allow for a report on and discussion of the HSCL scheme. One co-ordinator remarked that due to the lack of communication in the school, he was not informed of time given for discussion of the HSCL scheme on the agenda

of two staff meetings. As a result, the co-ordinator felt that he was unprepared to give an accurate report on the HSCL scheme at the staff meetings.

Changes in Schools

At the end of the 1991-92 school year, all principals were pleased with the progress of HSCL programmes and with the effects on their schools. When asked to describe the impact of the co-ordinator's work, almost all of them described positive effects. Examples of such effects ranged from practical ones, such as having organized courses for parents, to the development of a genuine partnership between the co-ordinator and parents. Principals mentioned an improved atmosphere in the school and improved relationships with parents, the development of a link between parents and the school and an increased awareness of problems together with opportunities for parents to discuss these with the co-ordinator.

Changes described by teachers and other staff tended to be descriptions of the implications that HSCL programmes had for the school. Staff said there was greater ease in contacting parents, a more friendly atmosphere in the school and a more positive attitude towards the school within the community. Parents were also perceived to be finding it easier to come to the school. Staff reported being more aware of what was happening in the community and being able to empathise more with students. One teacher stated that the HSCL programme had allowed the development of the school as a 'community school' in the true sense. Another reported that the community-based approach was extended through the co-ordinator's link with the primary school. Two teachers described how parenting courses, provided through HSCL programmes, were a new means of addressing problems with students (e.g., bad attendance) by changing parents' attitudes and providing them with new skills in dealing with their children.

When asked to describe the changes that have occurred in schools to facilitate parental involvement, principals all focused on the provision of facilities as the main change that has come about. Some also referred to changes in teachers' attitudes and these responses are reported elsewhere in this report.

As a result of HSCL programmes, parents' rooms have been established in five of the schools, sometimes at considerable cost to the school. Two schools had a parents' room for several years and in one school existing adult education facilities were available to parents. Three schools did not have space for a parents' room, though one had allocated the kitchen for parents' use and, in the other two schools, principals had tried to allocate classrooms for parents' courses, though in one case the room was only available on three mornings each week. Two co-ordinators expressed reservations about the need for a parents' room and in these schools parents also have access to classrooms for courses. One school had also set up crèche facilities.

For the most part, parents' rooms were used only for courses, meetings or celebrations and they do not tend to be used as drop-in centres. In several instances the rooms were too small to accommodate large numbers of parents. Some co-ordinators expressed concern that, due to increases in student enrolments, space might not be available in the school in future years. Some had already begun to enquire about the availability of rooms within the community though they saw this as undesirable since it might weaken the ties between the programme and the school.

Most schools had allowed access to any facilities required such as classrooms, cookery rooms, woodwork rooms, art rooms, computers, television and video equipment, school hall and school library. One co-ordinator expressed concern at the requirement of school management that school personnel be present when courses for parents are held in practical rooms. Teachers had been involved during the past year but may not wish to be in the future as it is not worth their while financially. The co-ordinator was concerned that, unless management would allow the employment of non-school personnel during the second year, courses might have to be discontinued.

Several of the schools also ran extensive adult education courses either at night or during the day and one school had made provision to open on one additional night each week to facilitate courses for parents.

Six of the co-ordinators reported having their own office space with access to a telephone (in some cases the office also doubled as the parents' room). All of these felt that these arrangements were essential for their work. Three co-ordinators shared office facilities with access to a phone and noted difficulties in meeting parents regarding confidential matters. One also expressed a need for some facility for storing confidential documents.

A further three co-ordinators worked out of the parents' room but had difficulty in gaining access to a phone which tended to make certain aspects of their job more time-consuming. Finally, one co-ordinator, who was working out of the staff room with access to a phone only once a week, expressed great difficulty in keeping records, in being able to make necessary contacts and in being contacted.

Principals' Involvement in School-Based Activities with Parents

More than half the principals (n=8) were involved in school-based activities with parents. The activities were (in order of frequency) as members of parents' associations and parent advisory councils, fundraising with parents, helping with sports activities, home visits, computer courses, welcoming parents to courses, organizing parties/discos, organizing socials, dropping in to morning sessions organised by co-ordinators, and helping some parents with problems.

About half the principals (n=6) expressed a wish to be involved with parents in school-based activities in the future. One principal saw himself in an advisory role, offering his opinions on what parents need. Another, who meets parents regularly, saw his role as one of supporting the co-ordinator. Yet another could not see any limit to his involvement with parents except in the area of discussion of a teacher's performance. One principal expressed a desire to become involved in some of the parenting courses.

Of those principals who could not envisage being involved in school-based activities with parents, one cited his role as 'the principal' as a barrier to involvement with parents and another cited time constraints. Finally, one principal expressed the hope that increasing parental involvement should lead to less involvement on his part (e.g., in organizing fund-raising activities, sports activities, social activities).

Staff Involvement in Activities with Parents

This section is based on interviews, conducted towards the end of the 1991-92 school year, with 193 members of staff (including subject teachers, guidance counsellors, remedial staff, chaplains and adult education officers) in the 13 post-primary schools. Staff were asked about the nature and extent of their involvement with parents, their willingness to be involved in the future, and conditions for such involvement.

Involvement in School-Based Activities

Of the 193 staff members interviewed, 101 stated that they were involved in school-based activities with parents (some mentioned involvement in more than one activity), 91 stated that they were not involved in any such activities, while one adult education officer stated that the question was not applicable to her. Most of the school-based activities in which staff members were involved with parents in May 1992 were activities in which they would have been involved prior to the HSCL scheme. Table 15.1 gives a breakdown of the numbers of staff involved in the various activities with parents. The most popular was meeting and talking to parents (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, on a one to one basis about an individual child, careers talks, introductory talks to parents of incoming first years). Adult education was the next most frequently mentioned and included courses in cookery (3 teachers), maths (2 teachers), parenting (2 teachers) and art, heritage, typing and word-processing, health education, life and social skills, flower arranging and swimming (each of which was mentioned by 1 teacher). Other popular activities were organising events with parents or attending events organised by parents (including socials, fund-raising events, variety shows, debutante or graduation dances, discos and merit award ceremonies) and extra-curricular activities with students (sports, including football, basketball, squash, cycling and tennis but also school tours and a foreign exchange visit in one school).

Since its introduction, the HSCL scheme has had some impact on staff members' involvement in school-based activities with parents. One example, mentioned by eight teachers, was the establishment of paired-reading programmes. One teacher described a 'pilot' paired-reading programme in her school with some first year students and three parents. She stated that paired reading was the first step towards bringing parents into the school rather than just going out to parents' homes. Two teachers mentioned the introduction of coffee mornings with parents as a new and more informal method of meeting with parents. One described the coffee morning as an attempt to break down the negative attitudes of parents towards the school by allowing parents the opportunity 'to just drop in and see how things are going.' Two other teachers stated how they 'drop in' to the parents' room in the school to say hello and to see what parents are doing.

Table 15.1

Number of Staff Involved in Various School-Based Activities with Parents in May 1992

SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF STAFF
Meeting/talking with parents	63
Adult education classes	18
Organising events with parents/attending events organised by parents	15
Extra-curricular activities with students	13
Paired reading	8
Board of Management	3
Home visits	3
Parents supervised study	1
Parents talked about careers	1
Newsletter	1
Partnership group	1
Activity Learning	1
Youth Horizons	1

Involvement in Classroom-Based Activities

Very few staff (n=15) stated that they were involved in classroom-based activities with parents. Furthermore the type of parent involvement described by most teachers was very limited and included parent supervision of exams, parents running the library, and parents assisting a teacher with puppetry. However, some teachers stated that parents had acted as guest speakers in the classroom (in career guidance, history, or social and personal development classes), had participated in group work in a life skills class, had been helpers for outdoor/adventure education, or were students in Leaving Certificate art classes.

Principals' Perceptions of the Value of Parent Involvement in the Classroom

When asked about the value of parent involvement in the classroom, about half of the principals expressed scepticism. One principal said that if parents were to become involved in the classroom, they would have to be as good if not better than the teachers. Another said that it would be difficult to identify people who could participate at this level, while yet another felt that there might be problems in a practical lesson when parents did not have the competence required. Two principals mentioned possible problems if parents needed to discipline somebody else's child. Two more principals said that the teachers in their schools would not like to have parents in their classrooms, though, teachers, in their responses, did not reflect these views.

Another principal cited the lack of understanding of parents of their role in education, in discipline and behaviour as another obstacle to parent involvement in the classroom. One principal said that parents would not be willing to go into the classroom as they were very apprehensive about drawing attention to their children in a way that might damage them. However, only one principal was absolutely opposed to parent involvement in the classroom as in his view it represented 'taking things too far.'

Half the principals saw some value in parent involvement in the classroom or at least were prepared to try it. One principal could see its value in developing links between the home and the school in that it would reinforce in the minds of parents and children that education is the responsibility of all concerned, not just the school. Principals felt that parents could be involved in (in order of frequency) remedial work, career guidance, counselling, home economics, talks (e.g., about drugs), modules in a Vocational Preparation and Training course, and in the exercise of any skill the parents had to offer which teachers did not have. However, one principal pointed out that this type of involvement would have to be nurtured very slowly with teachers.

Two principals felt that the paired-reading scheme had value in that it is purported to affect classroom reading performance and attitudes. It was also felt by one principal that

parents involved in the classroom could be instrumental in getting other parents involved in positive links with the school. Such involvement could also be beneficial in getting children accustomed to seeing adults in the school.

Principals, on the whole, were much more negative about parent involvement in the classroom than were school staff and they tended to overestimate the level of resistance that staff would have towards such involvement.

Future Involvement in Activities with Parents

Future Involvement in School-Based Activities

The majority of staff members (n=172) were very willing to be involved in school-based activities with parents in the future. Twelve were not willing to be involved and eight were undecided.

Staff described a number of conditions for future involvement in school-based activities with parents (see Table 15.2). The main condition described was the availability of time to participate in such activities and teachers emphasized their busy timetables. The type of difficulty that school-based activities with parents caused was described by a home economics teacher who had been released to give cookery classes to parents during 1991-92 but who would not be released in the same way during 1992-93.

Table 15.2

Number of Staff Expressing Various Conditions for Future Involvement in School-Based Activities with Parents

CONDITION	NUMBER OF STAFF
Availability of time	29
Activity in own area of expertise	11
Continuation of present activities	7
Any circumstances	7
Structured programme	5
Type of activity proposed	3

Other conditions for future involvement were that school-based activities would have to be in the staff member's own area of expertise or interest and that the programme of activities would have to be well thought out and well structured. Staff were also willing to continue

their previous involvement while others felt that they would make a decision based on the type of activity proposed.

The three main types of school-based activities in which staff would be willing to be involved with parents in the future included meeting and talking to parents, adult education classes, and extra-curricular activities for students. While these types of activities were already going on in the school, teachers described some new dimensions, which are described below. Other school-based activities suggested for the future included (in order of frequency) socials and fund-raising activities, paired reading, school administration, and supervision. There was an indication that some school staff were unwilling to move beyond what they perceived as traditional roles that parents could play in the school. Table 15.3 shows the number of staff that were willing to be involved in each type of activity.

Meeting and Talking to Parents

Many teachers would like more opportunities to meet and talk with parents with a view to getting to know and to understand them better. Teachers placed particular emphasis on the creation of more opportunities for informal and social contacts between parents and teachers

Table 15.3

Number of Staff Mentioning Various School-Based Activities in Which They Would be Willing to be Involved with Parents in the Future

SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF STAFF
Meeting/talking to parents	37
Adult education classes	34
Extra-curricular activities for students	26
Socials and fund-raising activities	5
Paired reading	4
Administration	2
Supervision	2

(e.g., coffee mornings and table quizzes). Teachers mentioned the need to encourage partnership, to build relationships, to establish rapport, and to make encounters enjoyable for parents and teachers. A suggestion made by one teacher was that the school should set up a

'drop-in centre' for teachers and parents so that parents would begin to see the school as a less 'formal' place. Teachers also commented on the need to move away from the negative conditions that pervade most existing contacts (i.e., children's problems and other difficulties).

Some teachers emphasised the need to improve the more formal meeting arrangements within the school such as developing the parent-teacher meeting beyond its existing format into something broader (i.e., that the meeting would not just involve the principal speaking to a group of parents or teachers). One teacher also commented that arrangements should be made so that the parents' committee would inform staff about what was going on in the community. In a similar vein, another teacher suggested that a joint parent-teacher committee be set up which would serve as a means of breaking down barriers on both sides.

Adult Education Classes

Adult education classes in which school staff would be interested in the future included adult reading/literacy (n=6), parenting courses (n=5), cookery/nutrition (n=3), self development/life skills (n=2), basic/travel French (n=2), health education (n=2), meditation, bible studies, assertiveness, drama, art and maths (each mentioned by one teacher). Some staff did not specify the kinds of classes in which they would participate. Interest in courses was related to the teacher's own expertise or subject area.

A new dimension to adult education suggested by three teachers was the training of parents with a view to helping the teacher in the classroom. For example, a home economics teacher in one school had given a cookery/nutrition class to parents during 1991-92 which comprised of a combination of demonstrations and practical cookery. The long-term objective of this class was to give parents the level of skill required to assist the teacher in practical home economics classes. Another practical aspect of this course was the fact that it was self-financing i.e., the food cooked by parents on the course was sold to students in the school and the proceeds used to buy ingredients for subsequent classes. Two art teachers also viewed adult education as an opportunity to train parents to help in the classroom. One suggested a 'runner course' for parents (i.e., on process/preparation of materials) so that they could work in a supervisory capacity with small groups of students in art class. The other encouraged a mother, who was studying art for the Leaving Certificate, to assist with practical art work.

Extra-curricular Activities

Many teachers expressed an interest in being involved with parents in the organization of extra-curricular activities for students, particularly sports activities (e.g., badminton, soccer and table tennis) but also school tours. Some suggested that parents should organise these

activities themselves. Two teachers also stated that parents should take charge of school teams.

An emphasis underlying all the school-based activities suggested for future involvement with parents was that of facilitating positive contact between parents and the school instead of contact only in relation to problems.

Future Involvement in Classroom-Based Activities

While few staff reported being involved in classroom-based activities with parents, over half of those interviewed (n=110) reported being very open to the idea of future involvement with parents in the classroom. Of the remaining 83 staff, 26 were undecided about such involvement as they were unsure what role parents would play or what they would do in class, 48 either did not want parents in their classrooms or could not see a role for parent involvement in class, while nine members of staff stated that the question was not applicable to them as they did not teach in a class (some guidance counsellors, adult education officers and chaplains). The subject areas in which teachers suggested that parents could be involved are listed in Table 15.4.

Table 15.4

Number of Staff Suggesting Various Classroom-Based Subjects and Activities in Which Parents Could be Involved

SUBJECTS/ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF STAFF
Practical subjects	25
Work with remedial/low achieving students	16
Life skills/Social Studies/Careers	15
Project work	11
Field trips	11
Extra-curricular activities	9
Non-academic subjects	6
Paired reading	6
Literacy/numeracy	5
Activities with Junior Cycle students	3

Teachers considered parent involvement in the classroom to be most amenable to practical subjects such as home economics (n=9), science (n=3), PE (n=3), woodwork (n=2), drama (n=2), 'social' maths and other activity-based subjects. Some teachers (n=16) suggested that parents could be involved in working with remedial or low achieving students. Several teachers (n=15) suggested that parents could participate in life skills, social studies or careers classes. Parent involvement was considered (by 11 teachers) to be very amenable to project-type work. For example, parents could contribute to students' Aer Lingus Young Scientist projects or to the setting up of mini-businesses within the school. They could also assist on field trips for geography or ecology and in life skills, social studies and careers classes. Some teachers (n=9) also proposed that parents be involved in extra-curricular activities.

Parent involvement in the classroom was considered by six teachers to be less feasible in the case of academic subjects. An exception to this was the suggestion of parent involvement in work with remedial or low achieving students. It was also suggested (n=5) that parents could work on numeracy and literacy with these students either on a one-to-one basis or with small groups. Parents could also be involved in paired-reading programmes (suggested by 6 teachers). A few teachers (n=3) suggested that parent involvement would be appropriate at junior-cycle level only and would be more difficult to implement at senior-cycle level. Two teachers suggested that parents should not be involved in examination classes.

Teachers made a number of suggestions as to possible roles for parents in the classroom. Several teachers (n=17) suggested that parents could act as a resource for the teacher by sharing their life experiences (e.g., in career guidance and life skills classes) or their skills (e.g., knitting and woodwork) with the class in ways that would complement or add to what the teacher did. Others (n=10) suggested that parents could act as assistants, aides, or helpers in the classroom. The idea that a class of students could be divided into groups with each group being taught by a different adult was mentioned by three teachers.

Several teachers (n=16) emphasised the need for parents to be trained for involvement in the classroom. Others (n=9) suggested that parents might simply act in a supervisory capacity or, alternatively, just observe what goes on in the classroom (i.e., the behaviour of students and the problems that teachers have to face).

A number of teachers (n=14) suggested that parental contribution to the classroom in the form of home support or back-up for the work of the teacher (i.e., encouraging the student to do homework or supervising homework) would be more effective than any form of parent activity in the classroom.

Teachers described a number of conditions necessary for the success of parent involvement in the classroom. These included:

- Activities should be well-structured (n=23). By this they meant that activities should be well thought out and planned and their progress closely monitored by school staff. Teachers pointed to the need for guidelines and solid ground rules, for adequate preparation, and for the roles of all parties to be clearly defined.
- The 'right' type of parent should be selected (n=12). Teachers were not explicit in defining the 'right' type but some of the qualities mentioned included maturity, interest, some basic knowledge of the educational system, a flexible approach to things, and a high level of respect in the community.
- The parent and the teacher should know each other well and should feel comfortable in their working relationship (n=3).
- One teacher suggested that there should be a good relationship between the teacher and the class.

In describing the value of parent involvement in the classroom, teachers (n=28) saw the value mostly in terms of enhancing parent awareness of what goes on in the school and in the classroom. Through such involvement, parents would come to understand the role of the teacher, the nature of their children's schoolwork, and the educational process in general.

Difficulties Associated with Involving Parents in the Classroom

Seventy-three staff members (including 39 who were in favour of parent involvement in the classroom, 19 who were against and 15 who were undecided) raised various difficulties associated with the introduction of parents into the classroom. For those against parent involvement these difficulties would appear to be insurmountable. For those undecided or in favour of parent involvement the difficulties merely represented vital issues that would need to be addressed if parent involvement in the classroom were to be effective. Table 15.5 shows the number of staff who mentioned the various difficulties.

Many of the difficulties associated with involving parents in the classroom related to teachers' concerns about the impact of such involvement on their position and work within the school. Teachers (n=19) felt threatened by the idea of parents being involved in the classroom stating that the presence of unskilled/untrained adults in their classrooms would undermine their professionalism. Some (n=7) said that they would feel observed or watched by parents, others (n=5) that having a parent in the classroom would interfere with their work and some mentioned the possibility of conflict of personalities. Four teachers noted that parent involvement in the classroom would be likely to intensify rather than ease any discipline problems or poor relationships between the teacher and students. A few teachers (n=4) emphasised the need to maintain a certain distance from parents and to guard against over-familiarity, while one teacher commented that parent involvement in the classroom

would take away one of the main advantages of teaching--the opportunity to work independently in one's own classroom.

Other difficulties associated with involving parents in the classroom related to teachers' concerns about parents' readiness for such involvement. For instance, teachers (n=8) expressed doubts about the ability of parents to contribute to the classroom. They questioned whether parents would have the required level of skill or knowledge to assist in the classroom and pointed to the fact that many parents had low levels of language development and

Table 15.5

Number of Staff who Expressed Various Difficulties Associated with Parent Involvement in the Classroom

DIFFICULTY	NUMBER OF STAFF
Impact on teacher's position/work	
threat to professionalism of teacher	19
teacher would feel observed/watched by parent	7
parent would interfere with teacher's work	5
parent presence would intensify any discipline problems	4
need to maintain distance from parents/guard against over-familiarity	4
Parent readiness for involvement	
parents would not have the skill to contribute to the classroom	8
difficulty of motivating parents	7
possibility of parent-teacher conflict	5
confidentiality	3
Labelling/comparing students	2
Student readiness for involvement	
students may not want involvement, may be embarrassed or intimidated by it	9

literacy. Attention was also drawn (by 10 teachers) to the difficulty of motivating parents to become involved. A few teachers (n=5) were concerned about confidentiality (i.e., that parents would discuss students or that they might label students and make comparisons between them).

Some teachers (n=9) suggested that students might not be too enthusiastic about parent involvement in the classroom and might be embarrassed or intimidated by it. One teacher felt that having parents in the classroom might unsettle students.

A final difficulty described by teachers related to the feasibility of parent involvement in the classroom at second level. It was thought that the structure of the post-primary school, in which teachers must adhere to a timetable and have a number of different classes each day, would not facilitate such involvement.

Overall, teachers and staff in post-primary schools were very open to involvement in activities with parents in the school. It is particularly significant that over half of the teachers and other staff who were interviewed were in favour of some kind of parent involvement in the classroom.

Changes in Staff Role as a Result of HSCL Programmes

Of the 193 teachers and other staff interviewed in the 13 post-primary schools, 74 said that some aspect of their work had changed as a result of having a co-ordinator. The availability of a co-ordinator as back-up/support was the change that most affected staff members. Changes described related to the co-ordinator as a resource for contacting the parents of certain students (e.g., poor attenders, students in danger of dropping out) through home visits, for providing information on home backgrounds, and for contacting outside agencies. The availability of the co-ordinator as a resource was mentioned particularly by class tutors and year heads who felt that the presence of the co-ordinator facilitated them in their work. They said that the process of contacting parents was more expedient and that information on the backgrounds of students, to which they would previously not have had access, was now available. The overall effect seemed to be one of easing their workload somewhat.

A few teachers and other staff members expressed a sense of support from having someone to talk to and to provide advice which they saw as reducing the sense of isolation sometimes felt by staff members and, in the case of guidance counsellors and remedial staff, an added sense of sharing skills and of working together as a team.

A few staff noted that the co-ordinator could approach parents in a more positive way than other staff and they attributed this to the fact that the co-ordinator's work is broader (e.g., courses and classes for parents) and is not centred around students' problems or difficulties. Guidance counsellors and remedial staff in particular seemed to value the home visits done

by the co-ordinator and the fact that there was someone working 'out in the field to access parents.' One remedial teacher pointed to the fact that the co-ordinator was immediately able to do a home visit that would have taken them two or three days to get around to. Three guidance counsellors stated that the co-ordinator's role was complementary to or had enhanced the guidance role. The co-ordinator could follow up on cases that the guidance counsellor was dealing with in school and this freed the counsellor to concentrate on school-based work.

Teachers and other school staff were generally very positive about the changes brought about by the availability of a co-ordinator. Apart from difficulties about confusion or overlap of roles (reported by chaplains and other staff members responsible for pastoral care), only one teacher was really negative about the changes. She stated that her role was no longer just that of teacher but had also taken on another dimension in relation to students' backgrounds and problems and that this brought added demands and stress.

Overlap of Roles

Because of the numerous roles already established at second level, there is an obvious danger that the role of the co-ordinator will overlap with the role of other staff members. Most schools have a guidance counsellor, a remedial teacher (often more than one), a chaplain, year heads/class tutors or both, and teaching posts with responsibility for attendance and discipline problems. In addition, some schools have full-time staff or allocated posts of responsibility for adult education.

Overlap of roles was a problem expressed by chaplains and other pastoral care staff in schools, for whom home visits had previously formed a major part of their role. For example, one chaplain stated that she now felt that she was doing someone else's job if she did the work (i.e., home visits) that she previously did out of interest. She felt therefore that the introduction of the co-ordinator's role had created some confusion about such visits. Some staff expressed a need for clarification of the co-ordinator's role and for clear guidelines regarding the contacting of parents i.e., who should be visited, for what purposes or reasons and by whom. One principal also referred to the overlap of roles between the co-ordinator, year heads, chaplain, and counsellor.

Co-ordinators expressed varying degrees of difficulty in addressing possible problems arising from an overlap of roles. Some had no problem in finding and taking responsibility for something that was not already being done. However, others had more difficulty with this, particularly when their previous role had been that of counsellor or remedial teacher and teachers continued to approach them regarding this work.

In general, co-ordinators seemed to be addressing the issue very well and were establishing close links with other staff members either on an individual level or through

weekly meetings as a team. In many instances co-ordinators felt that they could use these staff members as resources in their own work, just as they themselves could also serve as a resource for others.

Strengths of HSCL programmes, from the point of view of benefits to schools, were reported by many of the principals. Three principals felt that the programmes were helping them to achieve their objective of becoming part of the community. Another said that the programme provided for easy access for the school to individual parents as a means of overcoming particular difficulties that might arise. One principal felt that the programme could help discipline within the classroom. He also cited the fact that parents and children did homework and projects together as another strength of the programme.

The teachers were seen by one principal as benefitting from the programme as they gleaned information about students which was changing their view of how they should handle young people. Further, it was felt that the programme allowed teachers and parents to develop any particular talents they might have. It allowed talents and gifts that never had a chance to surface to do so.

One principal welcomed the HSCL programme as an opportunity to develop and improve the amount of input that parents have in the school. He felt that parents should have more of a say in curriculum and financial issues in particular and was hoping that this would develop as a result of increased parental involvement.

Another principal felt that the school's role within the community would be enhanced because of improved contacts with parents and increased involvement of parents (who are also members of the community) with the school. He also mentioned a decrease in the level of destructiveness within the school, which he attributed to the development of a more 'caring' approach towards students. Parental involvement in two schools was reported to have had a good impact on school morale and had also helped teachers to gain better understanding of family problems. Finally, one principal pointed out that parents could be of practical assistance in supporting and running extra-curricular activities such as games, art, and photography.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement in School, 1992-93

When questioned about teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, co-ordinators in the 12 post-primary schools reported that the majority of teachers had positive attitudes towards, were very supportive of, and welcomed parents into the school. One co-ordinator reported that a committee was set up in the school to encourage parental involvement. A co-ordinator in another school stated that teachers were becoming increasingly aware of the needs of parents. Staff members were described as dynamic and open people who wherever their timetable allowed, were willing to involve parents in a new way. In another school, the

co-ordinator reported that teachers took parents' needs into account on a regular basis, showed an increased openness to try new initiatives, and showed an increased interest in HSCL activities. Two co-ordinators found that the teachers in their schools acknowledged the necessity for and importance of parental support and backing in their children's' education. One co-ordinator pointed out that teachers showed an increasing interest in parental involvement and viewed the HSCL scheme as a means of opening the school to parents. One co-ordinator remarked that some teachers perceived that the role of the co-ordinator was to take care of 'troublesome' parents in the school. Two co-ordinators reported that some teachers were fearful of the parents involved in school activities. In one of those schools, the co-ordinator pointed out that some teachers wanted to 'bully' parents in the school.

Co-ordinators were asked if teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in the school changed since the HSCL scheme began and to describe any changes. Eleven co-ordinators reported that changes in teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement had occurred in their schools as a result of the introduction of the HSCL scheme. One co-ordinator stated that HSCL activities became a part of the teachers' agenda. One co-ordinator reported that staff members were very supportive of the HSCL scheme but could not state that changes in teachers' attitudes had occurred as there were nine new members of staff during the 1992-93 school year.

When asked to give an account of any changes in the attitudes of teachers towards parental involvement in the school, three co-ordinators reported that teachers felt less threatened and more relaxed about parents coming into the school. Two co-ordinators stated that teachers were more aware of the needs of parents. One co-ordinator mentioned that although the school had always been open to parental involvement, it had never been an aim until the HSCL scheme began to encourage it within the school. A co-ordinator in another school reported that since the HSCL scheme began teachers were getting involved in HSCL activities with parents (e.g., quiz teams, watching videos). One co-ordinator remarked that since teachers have been informed of the HSCL scheme, they have developed it into the mission statement of the school. In another school, a co-ordinator mentioned that since the HSCL scheme began some teachers have become more sympathetic and understanding in their approach when dealing with students and parents. One co-ordinator noticed that parental involvement in the school had positive effects on the students. A co-ordinator in another school stated that the number of 'angry' parents coming into the school had decreased since the HSCL scheme began. One co-ordinator reported that since the HSCL scheme began teachers made home visits, encouraged parents to continue courses, encouraged parents to participate in parent-tutor meetings, gave parents information and feedback on HSCL activities, and supported the work of the HSCL co-ordinator in the school.

16. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PARENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

Summary

Some parents (mostly mothers) who were involved in HSCL activities during the first year were overwhelmingly positive about their involvement, noting their enjoyment of such involvement, increased understanding of schools and the difficulties faced by teachers, increased interest in their children's education, and a development of their own self-confidence and self-esteem. Co-ordinators described effects of HSCL programmes on parents mainly in terms of benefits to parents' personal development and increased self-confidence. Other perceived effects were improved parenting and home management skills and the development of networks of support among parents. Parents also experienced increased opportunities for involvement in their children's education. Benefits were seen to accrue primarily from involvement in courses. In all schools, at least some parents were perceived to have undergone some positive change in attitude towards or understanding of HSCL programmes or school activities. Parents demonstrated much enthusiasm for involvement in schools and an increase in parents' presence in schools was reported for most schools. Some teachers thought that a core of parents had become involved in HSCL activities and that, perhaps, these were parents who least needed the support of the HSCL scheme. However, co-ordinators were very conscious that they should target parents with social, economic, or literacy needs and most made every effort to meet them, particularly through home visits.

This section contains a description of the impact of HSCL programmes on parents as perceived by co-ordinators and some parents in primary schools and by teachers in the six selected primary schools. It also contains details of teachers' perceptions (in the six selected schools) of the kinds of parents involved in HSCL activities in their schools.

Parents' Own Views, 1990-91

Only parents who had some involvement in HSCL programmes were asked for their opinions and ideas during the first year. The response from these parents was overwhelmingly positive. Among the benefits they identified were development of their self-confidence and self-esteem, enjoyment of courses and of their involvement in the school, increased understanding of what was happening in schools and of the difficulties which teachers faced, increased interest in their children's education and in acquiring the skills to participate in this process, and increased enjoyment of reading for children. They also noted that the fact that they were helping children with their homework reduced the frustration level of the children. Parents were happy that a contact person was available in the school and that schools and teachers were more accessible to them. Fears they had regarding schools were diminishing. There was also mention of an increase in community spirit and pride as a result of the collaborative efforts of schools, parents, and community groups.

While these observations on the role of parents in the scheme are positive and encouraging, they have to be set against the fact that, during the first year, only a small proportion of parents were involved in the programmes in schools. Parents themselves provided some suggestions as to the possible reasons for this. They suggested that personal

problems, lack of money, shyness, work commitments, lack of facilities for small children, lack of understanding of the scheme and what would be expected of them, lack of information about HSCL activities, fear and uncertainty regarding schools, illiteracy, and lack of interest as possible problems that might prevent parents from becoming involved in HSCL activities. Co-ordinators have adopted various measures to address this problem (e.g., home visits, correspondence, phone calls, encouragement by other parents, provision of courses to arouse interest).

Effects on Parents as Described by Co-ordinators

Co-ordinators described the effects of HSCL programmes on parents which may be grouped under four headings: personal development of parents; parents' involvement in their children's education; changes in parents' attitudes; and changes in parents' behaviour.

Personal Development of Parents

In 1991-92, co-ordinators in 50 schools perceived benefits to parents' personal development as a result of HSCL programmes. Some based their reports on comments made by parents, others on their own observation of changes in parents.

From co-ordinators' descriptions it would seem that the effects of HSCL programmes on parents' personal development were due primarily to parents' involvement in courses. The effects that were reported included improved self-confidence, parenting skills, practical home management skills, parent support networks, and coping skills.

Co-ordinators in 26 schools reported that parents' confidence had improved as a result of their involvement in HSCL programmes. They believed that parents had more confidence in themselves as people, in their own skills and abilities, and in their role as educators of their children. Parents were perceived to have developed more positive attitudes to learning, which it was felt would have a good effect on children's learning. These parents were eager to learn for themselves, willing to try out new things, and would persist with whatever activity they had started in the school. In two schools, mothers were considering long-term second-chance education and they had told the co-ordinator (who served both schools) that fathers were also considering second-chance education. In two other schools co-ordinators stated that those parents who were involved, particularly those who had taken on a role of responsibility, felt pleased with themselves and believed that there was a lot they could do to help both themselves and others.

Co-ordinators in 13 schools reported that parenting skills had improved. Parents were perceived to have become more conscious of the needs and feelings of their children (2 schools) and more aware of good parenting practices to guide children's behaviour (4 schools). Parents (in 3 schools) told the co-ordinator that they were getting along better with

their teenage and younger children as a result of skills learned during Parenting/Know Your Child courses. In four schools, co-ordinators believed that parents were using more responsible and effective parenting skills, for example, trying new ways of disciplining children.

Improvements in parents' practical home management skills were reported for 12 schools. In three of these schools, children told co-ordinators that their mothers were more adventurous with food recipes as a result of courses in cookery. Co-ordinators in a further six schools reported that children's diet had improved.

Co-ordinators in 11 schools reported that mutual support networks had begun to develop among parents. Through their involvement in HSCL programmes, parents were getting to know each other, making friends, and sharing problems. Thus, parents were seen to be breaking the isolation that surrounded them and beginning to realize that they were not alone in problem situations since help was available from other parents and from the co-ordinator and school.

Finally, co-ordinators reported that parents' coping skills had improved. Parents were perceived by co-ordinators to have become more assertive, to have started taking responsibility for their own lives (2 schools), and to be able to handle ongoing problems in the home more effectively (3 schools). Perhaps it was for this reason that many women in two other schools (served by one co-ordinator) were considered to be happier people. A co-ordinator who served two schools reported that, since parents had new interests and outlets, they were more positive in the home and their lives were being enhanced.

Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Education

Co-ordinators in all of the 72 primary schools in 1991-92 reported effects of HSCL programmes on parents' involvement in their children's education. The effects were described in terms of the opportunities that the scheme provided for parental involvement in education, changes in parents' attitudes towards parental involvement in the school, and changes in parents' behaviour regarding involvement in their children's education.

Co-ordinators in nine schools stated that the HSCL scheme was seen to be making a public statement about the role of parents in the school and was providing an outlet for parents who had always wanted to be involved in the school but had previously not had the opportunity.

Co-ordinators in a further 12 schools were more specific in describing the opportunities for parents' involvement in their children's education which HSCL programmes provided. They believed that parents saw them as positive, non-threatening figures, as supportive allies and friends whom they could trust, and as helping to open up the school to parents. They believed also that parents saw them as a contact person in the school, someone who listened

to their point of view and valued their input and, that as a result, parents were becoming less alienated from the school.

Changes in Parents' Attitudes

Co-ordinators were asked in 1991-92 to rate changes in parents' attitudes towards parental involvement in the school on a five-point scale from 'much more positive' to 'much more negative.' Co-ordinators perceived parents' attitudes towards this kind of involvement to have become 'much more positive' in 34 schools and 'a little more positive' in 35 schools (Table 16.1). In three schools, co-ordinators reported that there was no change in parents' attitudes but for one of these it was explained that parents' attitudes towards involvement in the school had always been positive and that the programme had added momentum to this. In no school were parents' attitudes perceived to have become more negative.

Table 16.1

Co-ordinator's Ratings of Changes in Parents' Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement in School

RATING OF ATTITUDE CHANGE	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
Much more positive	34
A little more positive	35
No change	3
A little more negative	0
Much more negative	0
Total	72

Co-ordinators serving 25 schools gave what they regarded as evidence of attitude change, with many co-ordinators reporting more than one example. Most frequently, parents were perceived to have a new interest in what happened at their child's school (11 schools), to be more aware of the working of the school (8 schools), and to have a greater understanding of the classroom situation and related problems (8 schools). Parents had become more aware of the importance of their own role in their children's education, more confident about helping children with homework, and realized that they had skills that were of benefit to their

children at school. Parents were beginning to feel that they 'had a say' in the school and had more confidence in coming to the school to see the co-ordinator and individual teachers.

Co-ordinators in some schools reported a change in parents' perception of the school or school staff. Parents had begun to realize that the school cared about children and parents as individuals and felt more welcome in the school. Because they felt that they could communicate with teachers, they were more inclined to come to the school. As a result, co-ordinators believed that parents had more trust in the school and felt a closer relationship with it. In a few schools co-ordinators reported that parents had developed some sense of ownership of the school, referring to it as 'our school.' Finally, co-ordinators reported that parents were becoming aware of the school as a resource for themselves and for the parish.

During the third year of the HSCL scheme (1992-93), co-ordinators rated parents' attitudes to HSCL programmes in their schools as having become generally more positive. For the overwhelming majority of schools (97%), parents' attitudes were rated as having become 'a little more positive' (51%) or 'much more positive' (46%). There were no schools in which co-ordinators felt that parents' attitudes had become more negative and only two in which parents' attitudes were judged not to have changed.

Co-ordinators also reported on more specific aspects of changes in parents' attitude (Table 16.2). It is encouraging to note that for none of the schools did co-ordinators feel there were any parents who had not undergone at least some change in attitude towards or understanding of a variety of aspects of HSCL programmes. For over half (52%) the schools, co-ordinators reported that 'most' parents had felt less threatened by school and teachers. This was also true of 'some' parents in 47% of schools and of 'all' parents in one school.

Co-ordinators reported that in 60% of schools 'some' parents had a new interest in what happened in school, while in 39% of schools this was true of 'most' parents and in one school of 'all' parents.

In a majority (58%) of schools, 'most' parents were reported as perceiving the co-ordinator as a resource for them and in 39% of schools this was true of 'some' parents.

Parents were also perceived to have become more aware of the importance of their own role in their child's education. This was the case for 'some' parents in almost two-thirds (63%) of schools and for 'most' or 'all' parents in the remaining schools (n=25). Co-ordinators reported that 'some' parents in 90% of schools and 'most' parents in a tenth of schools were confident in helping their child with schoolwork.

Changes in Parents' Behaviour

Positive behaviours of parents as a result of HSCL programmes were reported for 63 schools in 1991-92. These were described in terms of parents' enthusiasm for involvement in the school and parents' involvement in their children's schoolwork.

Table 16.2

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Reported Changes in Parents' Attitudes Towards or Understanding of Specified Aspects of the HSCL Programme, 1992-93

Parents ...	Percentages of schools							
	All parents		Most parents		Some parents		No parents	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
felt less threatened by school and teachers	1	(1)	52	(37)	47	(33)	0	(0)
had a new interest in what happened in the school	1	(1)	39	(28)	60	(43)	0	(0)
viewed co-ordinator as resource for them	3	(2)	58	(42)	39	(28)	0	(0)
were more aware of their contribution to child's education	1	(1)	35	(25)	63	(45)	0	(0)
were more confident about helping child with schoolwork	0	(0)	10	(7)	90	(64)	0	(0)

The most frequently reported positive behaviour of parents was their enthusiasm to be involved in school activities (28 schools). In some schools parents asked to help teachers rather than being asked, came forward with suggestions, and were willing to give up their time to volunteer for HSCL activities.

An increase in parents' presence in the school were reported by co-ordinators in 17 schools. While some co-ordinators merely noted that there were 'more parents around the school,' others elaborated, commenting for example, that parents now had a definite purpose in the school, that more parents were coming to the school by choice rather than being sent for, that more parents dropped in to the parents' room or called to chat to teachers in their classrooms, that some parents who previously would not linger in the school now did so regularly, and that parents called in simply because they were passing by. Increased attendance at activities in the school was reported for 13 schools.

Other positive changes in parent behaviour related to parents' increased involvement in their children's schoolwork. Co-ordinators reported that, as a result of HSCL programmes, parents talked more at home about educational issues and about what happened in their

child's school (9 schools). It was also reported that because of their participation in courses (e.g., in basic reading) parents were now able to help their children with homework and schoolwork (11 schools). A parent in one school told the co-ordinator that she had new confidence in helping her child with homework because she had attended a class in mathematics. Other parents benefitted from involvement in paired-reading programmes; in two schools (both served by the same co-ordinator), parents were reported to have derived great satisfaction from the paired-reading experience.

Parents were also seen to have become better organized in the preparation of children's lunches as a result of participation in courses (4 schools). In three schools, the presence of parents was seen as a resource for teachers, since parents were on hand to help out with such activities as paired reading and helping in the toylibrary. Co-ordinators also reported that parents were enjoying their involvement in classroom-based activities (5 schools), were actively seeking classes in which they could be involved (5 schools), and looked for information as to how they could help their children (2 schools).

Co-ordinators also reported on the extent of parent involvement in specified aspects of the HSCL programme in schools during the 1992-93 school year (Table 16.3). As in previous years, 'some' parents in a majority of schools had been involved in the HSCL programme. For over two-thirds (69%) of schools, co-ordinators reported that 'some' parents had visited the school more often than before and this was also true of 'most' parents in 29% of schools. There was only one school in which this was not the case.

Co-ordinators in all schools reported that parents had become more involved in their children's schoolwork. This was true of 'some' parents in a majority (80%) of schools and of 'most' parents in 18% of schools, while, in one school, the co-ordinator reported that it was true of 'all' parents.

For almost all (97%) schools, co-ordinators reported that 'some' parents had learned to use new parenting skills and skills to cope with personal difficulties. There were only two schools in which 'no parents' had learned these skills. For a slightly smaller proportion (91%) of schools, 'some' parents were reported to have learned to use new home management skills.

Co-ordinators in five schools reported that since the introduction of the HSCL scheme, schools were viewed as a focal point or a meeting place for parents. They remarked that parents had a more positive, open, and friendly attitude towards schools (4 schools), had a greater willingness and interest in helping the schools (3 schools), and a greater understanding of the needs of the schools (2 schools). Co-ordinators in 18 schools believed that the schools were perceived by both parents and members of the community as an open and friendly centre where people were welcome to attend courses, drop in for information on courses and facilities, or drop in for a cup of tea.

Table 16.3

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Reported the Extent of Parent Involvement in Specified Aspects of the HSCL Programme in School(s), 1992-93

Parents ...	Percentages of schools							
	All parents		Most parents		Some parents		No parents	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
visited the school more often than before	0	(0)	29	(21)	69	(50)	1	(1)
became more involved in children's schoolwork	1	(1)	18	(13)	80	(57)	0	(0)
learned to use new parenting skills	0	(0)	0	(0)	97	(69)	3	(2)
learned skills to cope with personal difficulties	0	(0)	0	(0)	97	(69)	3	(2)
learned to use new home management skills	0	(0)	0	(0)	91	(62)	9	(6)

Effects on Parents as Described by Teachers

Teachers suggested that HSCL activities had provided parents with a structure and a focus to their lives. Activities had stretched parents a little and had given them a new sense of purpose. By attending courses parents were seen to gain in confidence and self-esteem as they met other parents, shared ideas, and educated themselves.

Some teachers worried that many of the courses provided under the auspices of HSCL programmes existed merely as a social outlet for parents and that children would not benefit from the activity. These teachers would have preferred to see parents taking courses that would educate them towards providing a better home environment for their children (e.g., parenting courses, home management courses) or towards helping children with homework/ schoolwork (e.g., courses in basic maths, English, or Irish). Other teachers, however, saw the self-development of parents as valuable as it would ultimately benefit children. One teacher described how a number of parents had been transformed through their involvement in a folk group in the school and how these parents were now ready to become involved 'educationally.'

Parents were perceived to gain in confidence as a result of the training they received to assist the teacher in the classroom. Through this training they gained a greater understanding of what children do in school and what they could do to help their children. While previously parents felt they had little to offer, they now felt able to do something useful to help children. Knowing how to help eased previous frustrations. Parents' sense of competence was also enhanced when they were trained in the use of computers. Having learned a new skill themselves, they then passed it on to children. In a similar vein, parents who had been involved in a cookery club in one school provided cookery classes to sixth class pupils.

Evidence of enhanced self-confidence among parents is evident from teachers' perceptions that parents now come into the school more often and approach teachers more freely. One teacher stated that parents discuss things with the teacher that they would not have before. For example, a parent whose child had finished sixth class last year came back to the teacher for advice because her child was having problems at second level. Parents were more willing to offer their opinions on practices within the class if they were involved in the classroom. While many teachers might view this development negatively and as interference, others see the value of feedback from parents. One teacher described it as 'emotional support.' Other evidence of increase in parent confidence was to be found in one school where parents organized themselves into groups, no longer relying on others to do things for them. One such group got sponsorship from local shops, set up a toy library in the school, and ran it very successfully.

Teachers suggested that, as a result of the activities for parents introduced through the HSCL scheme, parents no longer saw the school as threatening. One teacher learned through feedback from the co-ordinator that parents felt less intimidated by the school building than before. Parents saw the school as their own as well as their children's and this was particularly evident in schools where there was a parents' room.

Apart from the benefits to parents of greater involvement in the school, teachers also described the benefits to parents of having a co-ordinator available. They suggested that the co-ordinator was a person within the school with whom parents could identify, discuss problems, and get help. The co-ordinator was seen as a person within the school who was dedicated to parents and thus, was easier to approach than other members of school staff. Even in schools which had always had an open-door policy, the presence of the co-ordinator improved parent contacts as there was now a definite person in the school to implement and encourage that policy. The effects of the HSCL scheme on parents were, for the most part, confined to those parents who were involved in some form of HSCL activity.

Kinds of Parents Involved as Perceived by Teachers

Teachers in the six selected schools were asked to describe the kinds of parents which they thought were most likely to become involved in the HSCL scheme. Over two-thirds (n=66) stated that parents involved in HSCL activities were the ones who least needed it (Table 16.4). They were considered to be parents who were already interested in their children's education, who had high aspirations for their children, who were highly motivated and enthusiastic, and had fewer problems.

Involved parents were also quite frequently described by teachers (n=23) as leaders, extrovert, confident, assertive, articulate, and outgoing. Teachers described the 'easy to reach' parent as one who would be involved in something else if not in the HSCL scheme or as one who was always interested in getting involved but who previously did not know how to go about it. Other kinds of involved parent described by teachers included those who had no work commitments or whose children were all in school, parents who used the HSCL scheme as a social outlet, and younger parents or parents whose first child was in school.

Table 16.4

Number of Teachers who Mentioned the Kinds of Parents that are More Likely to Become Involved in the HSCL Scheme

KIND OF PARENT	Total (n=96)
<u>Involved Parents</u>	
Parents who needed it least	66
Same parents all the time	28
Extrovert	23
Different kinds of parents	17
'Easy to reach' parents	17
Parents who were 'free to be involved'	13
Parents who needed a social outlet	10
Younger parents/first time parents	5
Mothers/women	4
<u>Non-involved parents</u>	
Parents who need it most	34

Several teachers (n=28) thought that a small core group of parents were involved in HSCL activities all the time. Some teachers viewed this group positively and thought it might encourage other parents to get involved. Already there was some sign of this. Some 'less interested' parents, though few in number, were beginning to get involved through the

core group. Other teachers were less positive about a core group of parents. In one school, teachers felt that the involved parents constituted an 'élitist' group that would discourage weaker, less confident parents from coming along to HSCL activities. Co-ordinators were generally aware of this danger and monitored it carefully. The co-ordinator was also seen to have a role in getting other parents in to the school. A number of teachers stated that, through the encouragement of the co-ordinator, parents from troubled situations had become involved in HSCL activities.

In describing the parents who were not involved in the HSCL scheme, teachers stated that they were the parents who would need it most, i.e., parents with social or economic problems, illiterate parents, parents of troublesome children, or of children with behaviour problems or who were continually absent, poorer parents, and parents who felt inadequate and lacked confidence in themselves. This emphasis is consistent with teachers' suggestion that one of the weaknesses of the HSCL scheme is its failure to target or reach the most needy cases. When teachers were asked to describe the weaknesses of the HSCL scheme almost half of them (47 of 96) referred to the fact that HSCL programmes to date had primarily encouraged parents who already had some interest in becoming involved in the school and that it was the same parents who were involved in everything. The more difficult home situations, the more deprived and needy cases, the homes of weaker, low ability, disturbed, or maladjusted pupils were not being targeted or, if they were, they were not being reached.

Activities suggested by teachers to address this situation included more visits to the homes of such parents and support and counselling services for parents. Teachers (n=9) also pointed to the need to develop activities that would encourage less interested and apathetic parents to become involved. One suggestion was that parents who were already involved in activities in the school would work to encourage other parents to become involved in such activities.

Conclusion

Based on the perceptions and descriptions of co-ordinators and teachers, HSCL programmes would appear to have had considerable impact on parents. The impact was mostly described in terms of the opportunity which programmes provided for parents to develop themselves and to add a new purpose and structure to their lives.

The effects on the personal development of parents described by co-ordinators and teachers were very much influenced by the HSCL activities with which both groups were most closely associated. Co-ordinators attributed most of the effects on parents to parent participation in courses. Teachers, on the other hand, concentrated mostly on effects on parents as they related to parent involvement in classroom-based activities or to teachers'

general contacts with parents. Co-ordinators were more aware than teachers of the effects of HSCL programmes on parents' behaviour at home. They could describe improved parenting, home-management, and coping skills resulting from parent participation in courses provided to develop such skills.

Effects of HSCL programmes on parent involvement in their children's education were often attributed to courses and activities in general but teachers saw these effects most clearly when parents were trained for involvement in classroom-based activities. Similarly, co-ordinators perceived the effects on parent involvement in children's education to be most apparent when parents participated in courses designed to help them to help their children (e.g., in basic reading and in paired-reading programmes). It is also interesting to note that the courses that teachers saw as being of most potential benefit to children were those with which co-ordinators associated the most positive and specific effects.

While the effects described on parents were of a very positive nature, it must be noted that they were generally confined to parents who were involved in programme activities and whom teachers often regarded as being least in need of the HSCL scheme. Initiatives were perceived to be necessary to encourage the involvement of all parents, particularly those whose needs seemed greatest.

17. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PARENTS OF POST-PRIMARY PUPILS

Summary

Principals felt that parents' attitudes towards post-primary schools had become less negative as a result of HSCL programmes. At the end of the second year of the HSCL scheme in post-primary schools, co-ordinators reported improved attitudes of parents to schools, greater trust of school personnel, and greater confidence in approaching the school and teachers. There was less evidence at post-primary level than at primary level that parents were becoming more involved in the educational activities of their children. Some co-ordinators expressed concern that it was the least disadvantaged parents who became involved in HSCL programmes. Co-ordinators had developed several strategies to try to reach all parents, the most effective being through home visits.

Principals' Perceptions, 1991-92

Half the principals cited an improvement in parents' attitudes towards the school and education as a value of parent involvement in the school. Parents feared schools less and trusted school personnel more. In general, their perceptions of the school were viewed as less negative than they had been. As evidence for this, principals cited increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings (up 45% in one school). Principals believed that positive parental attitudes would be associated with greater support for children's education in the school and at home.

One principal mentioned the obvious value that, through their involvement with the school, parents would develop greater understanding of what the school was doing and how they could contribute to and support this. In this way also, they would become familiar with school procedures and be more likely to be aware of when there was a need to contact the school (e.g., if a student was trying to hide a problem from a parent, parents would be better able to detect the signs of this). They should also be in a better position to help in the practical areas of homework, discipline, and attendance.

It was thought that parental involvement in the school would also have implications in the area of parenting. One principal felt that if parents had a broader view of how to look after children, this would have a value for children within the school system (e.g., children would be more settled in school).

Co-ordinators' Reports of Parents' Sense of 'Belonging' in the School, 1992-93

Four co-ordinators believed that the majority of parents had a sense of 'belonging' in their schools. When asked to report how parents' sense of 'belonging' was evident in the school, four co-ordinators stated that they received positive feedback from parents when making home visits. Parents reported feeling comfortable walking into the school for a chat with the co-ordinator or a teacher, parents enjoyed helping with school functions, parents

who attended courses and activities in the school reported feeling welcomed in the school, and parents viewed the school as a resource centre in the community in four schools.

Seven co-ordinators felt that some parents had a sense of 'belonging' in their schools. Two co-ordinators pointed out that those parents who regularly attended courses and activities felt comfortable in the school. Seven co-ordinators reported that parents' sense of 'belonging' was evident in parents who felt freer and more equal when talking to teachers, in parents who made suggestions about HSCL activities in the school, and in parents who became more familiar with the school. One co-ordinator mentioned that while many parents avoided approaching the school, those parents who attended class meetings and courses viewed the school as a more open place for parents. A co-ordinator in one school remarked that parents seemed to be more confident when coming to the school to see the co-ordinator or a teacher about an issue. One co-ordinator noted that some parents were beginning to feel comfortable and relaxed around the school (calling to the secretary's office for information) and around the teachers. Some parents were reported to be willing to take responsibility. For example, two parents in one school addressed staff meetings on the benefits of the HSCL scheme and assisted the co-ordinator with home visits and in booking tutors for courses. One co-ordinator found that some parents were reluctant to call into the school when asked, and that some parents were lacking in confidence when in the principal's office. Two co-ordinators noted that changes would have to be made if parents were to feel that they belonged in the school. For example, one co-ordinator reported that the name of the school had received negative 'press' and some parents were reluctant to send their children to the school. In another school, the co-ordinator noted that the parent body felt threatened by second level schooling.

One co-ordinator felt that parents did not have a sense of 'belonging' in the school, and that this was due to the fact that the school was continually growing in pupil size and no space was available for a parents' room. One staff member was reported to have had problems with some parents involved in courses and activities in the school. Rooms were made available in the school for HSCL activities but parents were confined to the space allocated only, which was a separate entity from the school.

Co-ordinators were asked to report on the strategies that have been used to promote parents' sense of 'belonging' in the school. Parents were perceived by co-ordinators to be made feel more welcome in schools by advertising and providing courses for parents (12 schools), providing a room for parents' use (4 schools), and a co-ordinator's room (1 school). Eight co-ordinators believed that improved relationships between staff and parents helped parents to feel more comfortable in the school. One co-ordinator remarked that teachers regularly visited the parents' room to meet parents; teachers and the principal enrolled in courses (e.g., set dancing, self defence, computers) with parents; and parents who were

involved in HSCL activities were invited to become members of the parents' committee. Co-ordinators reported that parents received support from principals (3 schools), a vice-principal (1 school), and a guidance counsellor (1 school) in schools. One co-ordinator described the principal as being sensitive to people's needs in the community, having respect for people from disadvantaged areas, and helping people in every possible way. Efforts were made in one school to involve staff in parents' activities (e.g., craft classes). In another school the co-ordinator encouraged staff to feel more open towards parents. Two co-ordinators stated that holding class meetings, social activities for parents, and information workshops helped to promote relationships between staff and parents. One co-ordinator felt that working with parents in smaller groups helped parents feel more comfortable in the school. In two schools, apart from attending courses, parents met regularly for coffee mornings and meetings to evaluate courses and plan stages for the next term/years courses. One co-ordinator met parents through local community agencies (e.g., family centre, nurse, Local Committee) in an attempt to involve parents in HSCL activities. Three co-ordinators reported making home visits to involve parents in HSCL activities.

Involved and Non-Involved Parents

When questioned about the characteristics of parents who tended to become involved and those who did not, co-ordinators offered a wide range of responses. Some said that it was the 'stronger' and least disadvantaged parents who got involved, in some cases those whose children are performing well in school (though there are exceptions to this), or those who place a higher value on the benefits of education. In many instances, the fact that mothers may have young children prevented them from attending. Where possible, co-ordinators have addressed this problem by providing crèche facilities. In other cases, women are busy with part-time work and family commitments. Again, in some cases, co-ordinators suggested that poor literacy skills prevented parents from approaching the school. Some of these parents attend courses such as cookery and art and crafts as they seem to find them less threatening. Thus it would seem that the type of activity offered in courses influences the type of parent who attends.

Most co-ordinators find it difficult to elicit a response from parents that are perceived by the school as lacking in interest in their child's education. However, some co-ordinators reported increased attendance following home visits to invite the person to attend. Some co-ordinators also initially targeted parents they knew from their teaching experience in the school. The implication would seem to be that where parents have made some connection with the school, they are more likely to attend courses or activities there.

An interesting trend noted by one co-ordinator was that parents from the immediate area (consisting of local authority housing) did not attend adult education classes. It was felt that

they viewed these classes as something for those from outlying private housing and, as such, 'a step above them.'

18. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PUPILS

Summary

Since effects at pupil level would be likely to be long-term, neither co-ordinators nor teachers were asked to describe or rate the effects of HSCL programmes on pupils during the first two years of the scheme. However, some co-ordinators and teachers raised this issue, which would suggest that the effects were somewhat obvious, at least in those schools in which they were observed. The effects described related mainly to children's attitudes to school. At the end of the third year of the scheme, co-ordinators rated specific changes in pupils which, for the most part, related to changes in some pupils. In over four-fifths of schools, improvements in the behaviour and school attendance of some pupils were noted. In most schools, at least some pupils were reported to have a more positive attitude to school, towards their own parents, and to have more pride in their own work. In a majority of schools, at least some pupils had received more practical help with school work, and this was particularly evident in schools in which parents assisted in classrooms or other activities with pupils. Teachers noted some of the same effects, pointing in addition to the fact that the presence of parents in classrooms (at junior level) made children happier. At the end of the second year, few teachers saw any immediate effect of parent involvement on pupils' scholastic performance. However, those who had been involved in paired-reading programmes were very positive about this as a means of enhancing pupils' learning. Fifth class pupils, who were interviewed at the end of the second year, were divided in their attitudes to parents' involvement. Such involvement was perceived as good insofar as it enhanced their parents' ability to help them with homework and was viewed as contributing to parents' well-being. In general, pupils were not in favour of having parents (particularly their own) involved in their classroom and would feel embarrassed by it.

During the first two years of the scheme neither co-ordinators nor teachers were asked directly to describe or rate the effects of HSCL programmes on pupils. However, in the Annual Progress Records for 1991-92, some co-ordinators included effects on children when describing advantages of the HSCL scheme, changes in schools and homes, and effects on teachers. Thus, while the numbers of schools in which effects on children were adverted to may seem small (n=19), the fact that co-ordinators raised this issue would seem to imply that the effects were somewhat obvious. During interviews in 1991-92, teachers in six selected schools also described effects on children, primarily in the context of parent involvement in the school and in the classroom. In the 1992-93 Annual Progress Records, co-ordinators were asked to rate specific aspects of effects on pupils. Interviews with fifth class pupils in the six schools also provided some evidence of effects.

Co-ordinators' Perceptions of the Effects of HSCL Programmes on Children's Attitudes and Behaviour

In describing general effects of the HSCL scheme, co-ordinators serving 19 schools reported some positive impact on children's behaviour or attitudes.

Effects of the scheme on children's behaviour were reported for six schools and included improved school attendance. One co-ordinator, who served two schools, reported that she had observed better behaviour among certain disruptive pupils when their parents were on the

premises. In another school, the co-ordinator reported that children who were involved in a paired-reading programme had made progress in reading.

Effects of the scheme on children's attitudes were reported for 13 schools. Co-ordinators perceived children to have more pride in their work (in 1 school) and in themselves (3 schools) as a result of the scheme. Some teachers in other schools also indicated that children had more pride in their work, stating that parental involvement had made children more responsible regarding schoolwork. Co-ordinators in two schools thought that children saw themselves as more important people and felt respected when their homes were visited for any reason. Perhaps this also explains why children in two other schools were perceived to be 'happier.'

Co-ordinators reported that children were now more used to seeing parents around the school as an everyday event (1 school) and that they accepted parents in the classroom (1 school). Because of their parents' involvement in the school, children could see that parents and teachers were working together (2 schools). As a result, children in one school were aware that they may now be caught out if they tried to play teacher off against parent as they had in the past. Teachers also made this point during interviews.

Co-ordinators believed that children knew their parents were welcome in the parents' room (1 school) and that the co-ordinator was a contact person for parents in the school (2 schools). A co-ordinator who served two schools reported that parents told her that their children and husbands had more respect for them as a result of their involvement in HSCL activities.

At the end of the 1992-93 school year, co-ordinators' reports for 73 primary schools pointed to changes mainly in 'some' pupils (Table 18.1). In some instances this could mean as few as one or two pupils with whom either the co-ordinator, remedial teacher, or some other person had intervened directly. However, in relation to behaviour and attendance in particular it should be remembered that it is generally small numbers of pupils that are consistently problematic.

For about one-fifth of schools, co-ordinators reported that 'most' pupils had experienced a more positive environment within the school and that their view of school, of their parents, and of their own work had been enhanced. This would seem to be a very positive step overall.

Co-ordinators reported that in a majority (88%) of schools pupils had received more practical help with school work. This was true for 'some' pupils in over three-quarters (76%) of schools, for 'most' pupils in 10% of schools, and for 'all' pupils in one school. The main aspect of this activity included increased involvement in reading activities (18 schools) mainly through paired-reading programmes. Co-ordinators reported that courses in maths in

10 schools had enabled parents to help their children, and that there had been increased parental involvement with homework (including homework clubs) in eight schools.

Table 18.1

Percentages of Schools for Which Co-ordinators Reported Changes in Pupils Regarding Specified Aspects of the HSCL Programme in Schools, 1992-93

	Percentages of schools							
Pupils ...	All pupils		Most pupils		Some pupils		No pupils	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
were better behaved in school	0	(0)	9	(6)	87	(59)	4	(3)
had increased attendance at school	0	(0)	5	(3)	84	(56)	12	(8)
had a more positive experience of school (more adult attention in the school, less tension between home and school lives)	0	(0)	19	(13)	74	(51)	7	(5)
had a more positive attitude to school	2	(1)	21	(14)	71	(48)	7	(5)
had a more positive attitude towards own parents	0	(0)	19	(12)	71	(46)	11	(7)
had more pride in themselves and in their own work	2	(1)	21	(14)	72	(48)	6	(4)
received more practical help with school work	2	(1)	10	(6)	76	(44)	12	(7)
showed improvements in school attainment	0	(0)	7	(4)	78	(46)	15	(9)

For over three-quarters (78%) of schools, co-ordinators reported that 'some' pupils showed improvements in school attainment. The improvements referred to were mostly in reading and were mainly related to the operation of paired-reading activities or programmes in schools. However, no evidence was available to corroborate this.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Benefits to Children of Parent Involvement

Teachers described the benefits to children of parent involvement in terms of a more positive experience of school, a more positive attitude towards school, and some educational benefits.

Teachers suggested that children's self-esteem was improved by seeing parents as positive role models and as competent individuals who have skills as good as if not better than, teachers (e.g., art and crafts, knitting, music). They stated that children benefitted from having a person in the classroom or in the school with whom they could identify as well as from the realization that their parents had a role to play outside the home. They believed that children were beginning to develop confidence in their parents as 'teachers' or 'helpers with homework' that they did not previously have. This view was supported by the comments of fifth-class pupils, some of whom stated that their parents would be better able to help them with homework as a result of involvement in school-related activities (e.g., maths and Irish classes).

Teachers also observed that children enjoyed school more and loved to have parents around the school, particularly in the classroom. The presence of a parent brought new life to the classroom, children got to see a new face and to relate to another adult. It should be noted that comments relating to parents in the classroom applied mostly to junior level classes (i.e., from junior infants to second class) as this kind of parent involvement was confined almost exclusively to these classes. The majority of the fifth-class pupils interviewed were not in favour of parent involvement in the classroom although some of them thought that involvement would be acceptable as long as it was not their own parents who were involved. Pupils stated that it would be embarrassing if parents were involved, particularly if they 'got stuck on something.'

Apart from parent involvement in the classroom, another parent activity which teachers considered to have added variety to the children's school day was that of parents taking children out of class for something like computer activities. In this way children got a chance to participate in an activity outside the normal school routine, an activity that would not be possible without the assistance of parents.

Teachers suggested that children begin to look on school more positively when they see parents and teachers working together, when they see the school welcoming, trusting, and respecting their parents, and valuing their contribution. One teacher said that the children in her class now see her as a friend of their parents more so than before. Teachers also suggested that children would begin to put a greater value on education when they saw parents involved in school and participating in education themselves (i.e., attending classes and courses).

Few teachers saw any immediate effect of parent involvement on pupils' scholastic performance and most felt that such effects would take longer to emerge. Paired reading was one activity recognized by teachers as stimulating parents' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers who had been involved in paired-reading programmes (n=14) were very positive about this procedure as a means of enhancing pupils' learning. A remedial teacher stated that the children in her class had improved as a result of a paired-reading programme. Another teacher described the value of paired reading as allowing pupils to take home books that would stimulate their imaginations.

Another type of activity which seemed to stimulate parents' interest and enthusiasm was parent involvement in junior infant activities. One teacher explained how involvement in such activities benefitted pupils as parents became very interested in what children were learning. Another teacher stated that the effects of parent involvement in junior infant activities during the first year of the scheme was evident in the senior infant classes of the following year; parents of her pupils were more interested than in other years and they were more aware of what was happening in class.

It is clear from teachers' comments that the main benefit to pupils of parents' involvement in the classroom was the increased individual attention they received during a variety of activities (e.g., reading, writing, maths, art and crafts, knitting). However, children also benefitted from special activities. One example of this was where a parent came in to read 'nice' books to children and the children were given the opportunity to give their ideas on these books. In terms of a specific activity, such as a homework club, children got help with their homework that they would not normally get. One teacher indicated that the children selected for the club were those that most needed help (i.e., weaker children who would normally do homework alone or not at all). The teacher trained the parents who were to supervise the club. While they could help the children with their homework, they were not to do the homework for the children. In other instances, however, parents involved in the homework club acted only in a supervisory capacity.

Both co-ordinators and teachers reported that the HSCL scheme has had some effects on children, mostly in terms of children developing a more positive attitude towards school and teachers, towards themselves, and towards their parents. Co-ordinators also reported some general improvements in behaviour while teachers pointed to the long-term educational benefits for children of the development of parents' interest in education through HSCL activities. Teachers also saw some immediate benefits to children of parent involvement in paired-reading programmes and parent involvement in class.

Pupils' Reports on HSCL Programmes

Pupil Interviews

A sample of fifth-class pupils from five of the six selected schools (one of the schools was a junior school) was interviewed by evaluation project staff (at the end of the 1991-92 school year) to obtain information relating to their knowledge of their parents' involvement in the HSCL programme in their schools. Pupils were asked about the involvement of both their mothers and fathers and about their attitudes to their parents' involvement in school-related activities. Altogether 78 pupils (54 boys and 24 girls) were interviewed.

Most pupils in two of the schools said that their mothers were involved in school-related activities. In the other three schools, about a third of pupils said that their parents were involved. The main reasons for non-involvement related to family responsibilities (e.g., looking after a child).

Pupils in four schools indicated that their parents were involved in classes in mathematics while pupils in three schools said their parents attended Irish classes. Other activities of which pupils were aware included art and crafts, cookery, a toylibrary, and helping in infant classes.

Only two pupils said that their fathers had been involved in HSCL activities. The most frequently given reason for non-involvement was the father's work.

Pupils were divided in their attitudes to parents' involvement. Some thought it was a good thing. In particular, pupils saw an advantage in their mothers' attendance at classes in mathematics and Irish. Positive attitudes to involvement arose most frequently from pupils' perceptions of their parents' ability to help them with homework. In other cases, pupils perceived parental involvement as contributing to the parents' well-being. For example, pupils felt it was good for mothers to get out and meet other people. They also noted that mothers enjoyed the activities.

A number of pupils were not enthusiastic about their parents' involvement. Others were indifferent. Several drew the line for involvement at the classroom door. Although there were exceptions, pupils in general were not in favour of having parents (particularly their own) involved in their classroom. The reason most frequently given for this was that pupils would be embarrassed.

Although fathers were not involved in formal HSCL activities, they were the most frequently mentioned helpers when pupils were asked about assistance with homework. Mothers and older sisters were also mentioned. However, information from mothers interviewed does not support this.

19. PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

Summary

Measures of pupils' achievements were obtained to serve as baseline data for later study of the impact of HSCL programmes on pupils. Pupils in first, third, and fifth class in the six selected schools were tested in English reading and mathematics. In assessing reading, the Appraisal of Early Reading Skills test was used for first class, the Drumcondra English Test, Level 2 for third class, and the English Reading Test, Form C, Version D91 for fifth class. The Drumcondra Criterion-Referenced Mathematics Tests (DCRMT), Levels 1, 3, and 5 were used to assess the mathematical achievement of pupils in first, third, and fifth classes respectively. Pupils' performances on the tests are reported, and, where possible, comparative data are provided. Between-school differences were found at first class level for mathematics and at fifth class level for English reading and mathematics.

Measures of pupils' achievements were obtained to serve as baseline data for later study of the impact of HSCL programmes on pupils in the six selected schools. Testing was carried out during November and December, 1991. Prior to testing, each school was visited to explain the purpose and the nature of the testing to principals and co-ordinators.

Pupils at three grade levels (first, third, and fifth) were tested in English reading and mathematics. In assessing reading, the Appraisal of Early Reading Skills test was used for first class, the Drumcondra English Test, Level 2, Form B (vocabulary and comprehension) for third class, and the English Reading Test, Form C, Version D91 (vocabulary and comprehension) for fifth class.

The Appraisal of Early Reading Skills test is designed to assess a number of skills grouped under pre-reading and beginning reading tasks. The test consists of 68 items organized into 17 objectives, each objective being made up of two, three, four, or five items. A pupil was considered to have 'mastered' the objective if he or she answered correctly two items in the case of objectives for which either two or three items were included, at least three items for objectives with four items, and at least four items for objectives with five or six items. The skills assessed are: following directions, auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, letter recognition, word recognition, sentence comprehension, and passage comprehension. A pupil's score was the number of objectives mastered.

The Drumcondra English Test, Level 2, Form B is a standardized measure of achievement in English developed for use in Irish schools. Two forms (A and B) of the test are available; Form B is recommended for use at the beginning of the school year. The test is made up of four sections: Test I - Vocabulary; Test II - Spelling; Test III - Language; and Test IV - Comprehension. Third class pupils completed only the vocabulary (30 items) and comprehension (40 items) sections of the test. A pupil's score was the number of items answered correctly.

The English Reading Test, Form C, Version D91 is made up of two sections: Test I - Vocabulary (40 items); and Test II - Comprehension (40 items). Again, a pupil's score was the number of items answered correctly.

The Drumcondra Criterion-Referenced Mathematics Tests (DCRMT), Levels 1, 3, and 5 were used to assess mathematical achievement. The tests are designed to provide a detailed profile of what pupils have learned in mathematics. They are based on the primary school mathematics curriculum for first (Level 1), third (Level 3), and fifth (Level 5) classes.

The Level 1 test contains a total of 114 items which make up 39 objectives in item sets of either two, three, or four items. A pupil was considered to have 'mastered' an objective if he or she answered correctly two items in the case of objectives for which either two or three items were included, and three items in the case of objectives for which four items were included. The categories of objectives covered by the test are: Section A - Operations with whole numbers (Items 1-34); Section B - Whole number structure (Items 35-79); Section C1 - Measurement (Items 80-91); Section C2 - Geometry (Items 92-97); Section C3 - Charts and Graphs (Items 98-101); Section C4 - Fractions (Items 102-103); and Section C5 - Problem solving (Items 104-114). A pupil's score was the number of objectives mastered.

The Level 3 test contains a total of 105 items making up 41 objectives. Again, the objectives are assessed in item sets of two, three or four items and 'mastery' is determined as for the Level 1 test. The categories of objectives covered by the test are: Section A - Operations with whole numbers (Items 1-33); Section B1 - Whole number structure (Items 34-55); Section B2 - Fractions and decimals (Items 56-67); Section C1 - Measurement (Items 68-84); Section C2 - Geometry (Items 85-91); Section C3 - Charts and Graphs (Items 92-95); and Section C4 - Problem solving (Items 96-105). A pupil's score was the number of objectives mastered.

The Level 5 test contains a total of 116 items making up 48 objectives (covered by item sets of two, three, or four items and with 'mastery' determined as for Levels 1 and 3). The categories of objectives covered by the test are: Section A - Operations with whole numbers (Items 1-16); Section B - Whole number structure (Items 17-39); Section C1 - Fractional number structure (Items 40-55); Section C2 - Operations with fractions (Items 56-73); Section D1 - Decimal number structure (Items 74-87); Section D2 - Operations with decimals (Items 88-93); Section E1 - Geometry (Items 94-102); and Section E2 - Charts and graphs (Items 103-106). A pupil's score was the number of objectives mastered.

Trained administrators administered tests to whole-class groups with the exception of the Appraisal of Early Reading Skills, for which test, pupils were in groups of four. For the early reading test, the class teacher facilitated the selection of pupils so that pupils of similar ability formed a group. The English tests were administered first in one session and on a separate day from the mathematics tests. At first class level, 365 pupils completed the

Appraisal of Early Reading Skills test; at third class level, 220 pupils completed the Drumcondra English Test; and at fifth class level, 252 pupils completed the D91 test.

The mathematics tests were administered in three sessions on three separate days and the number of pupils present varied across the sessions. In first class, 352 pupils were present for session 1, 350 for session 2, and 355 for session 3. In third class, 215 pupils were present for session 1, 221 for session 2, and 219 for session 3. In fifth class, 243 pupils were present for session 1, 250 for session 2, and 255 for session 3.

Test administrators recorded observations in relation to the tests, e.g., late arrivals, absences, reasons for incomplete tests, difficulties pupils had in completing tests, and teachers' reactions to tests/testing. For the Drumcondra Criterion Referenced Mathematics Tests, teachers were given the option to complete an 'Opportunity to Learn' questionnaire designed to ascertain the extent to which each of the objectives measured in the tests had been covered.

Appraisal of Early Reading Skills

Virtually all pupils could follow directions by indicating which of several pictures had been named by the tester and 85% could follow directions relating to positional concepts. Over 90% demonstrated letter recognition by identifying lower-case letters pronounced by the tester. A similar percentage demonstrated auditory discrimination by identifying a picture of an object that had the same initial sound as a stimulus object or as pronounced by the tester, but less than three quarters could identify a picture of an object with the same final sounds of a stimulus object.

About 90% of pupils demonstrated word recognition by identifying the written form of a spoken word and by matching one of two nouns to an appropriate picture. However, pupils were less successful in displaying word recognition when they were required to match a word to a picture (under 70%), and less than half could select a word to match an appropriate picture. Less than 80% of pupils displayed visual discrimination by matching equivalent letter strings.

About half the pupils displayed sentence comprehension (by selecting a sentence that represented an accompanying picture, selecting one of three words to complete a sentence with a picture clue provided, or indicating whether a simple sentence was true or false).

Skills in passage comprehension were less than well developed among most pupils. Only 20% correctly answered questions about a simple passage, while 15% could solve a simple verbal riddle, and only 5% could answer questions about a more complex passage.

The overall mean score was 11.06 (SD=2.88) (maximum possible score = 17.00). There were no between- or within-school differences on the test.

In a separate administration of the test for another study, pupils from two other schools in areas designated as disadvantaged achieved similar results on the test (Kellaghan, 1990).

An earlier version of the test was used to test pupils whose teachers had participated in the development and evaluation of a structured programme for infant classrooms in mathematics, reading, and oral language (Archer & O'Rourke, 1985). The 17 objectives contained in the earlier version were equivalent to those in the version used in this study. However, the earlier version contained a total of 77 items as compared to 68 items in the more recent version. Eighteen classes of first class pupils from schools in areas designated as disadvantaged were tested towards the end of June, 1985 (i.e., at the end of first class).

In general, the pupils in the 1985 study performed better overall than those tested in this study. It is of interest that the differences in mastery of objectives were far less pronounced for objectives 1 to 9 which measure pre-reading skills (visual and auditory discrimination and some sight vocabulary) that would be expected to be mastered prior to reading instruction. Differences were far more pronounced for objectives 10 to 17 which measure reading skills (reading vocabulary and sentence and passage comprehension) that pupils would be expected to acquire during first class.

Drumcondra English Reading Test, Level 2, Form B

Third class pupils completed vocabulary and comprehension sections of the test. The mean score for vocabulary was 12.63 (SD=6.01); the mean score for comprehension was 18.10 (SD=6.02); and the total mean score was 30.73 (SD=11.21). While school means ranged from 29.36 (SD=6.93) to 36.76 (SD=9.95) and the overall between-school variation was significant ($F=2.77$; df 4,228; $p<.05$), no two schools differed significantly from each other at the .05 level. The range for class means was similar, the lowest being 27.19 (SD=10.61) and the highest 36.76 (SD=9.95). Between-class differences were not significant.

When the mean scores were compared with the norms which were established for the test in the 1970s they appear to be relatively high. Since there is some evidence that the test has got 'easier,' it is possible that the norms are no longer appropriate. Hence, comparisons with normative data will not be provided for this sample. However, the raw scores will be available for future comparisons if further testing is carried out.

Drumcondra English Reading Test, Form C (Version D91)

Fifth class pupils completed vocabulary and comprehension sections of the test. The mean score for vocabulary was 15.56 (SD=7.59); the mean score for comprehension, 23.30 (SD=7.82); and the total mean score 38.85 (SD=14.45). School means ranged from 27.00 (SD=8.57) to 42.60 (SD=14.07) and the overall between-school variation was significant

(F=6.82; df 4,261; p=.00). One school (mean = 27.00) was significantly different from each of the other four schools (p=.05). Class means ranged from 27.00 (SD=8.57) to 46.23 (SD=16.29); the overall between-class variation was also significant (F=4.52; df 8,257; p=.00) with one class in one school being significantly different from two classes in another school (p=.05).

The D91 test had been administered to a national sample of 1,818 pupils in February 1991 as part of a national reading survey (Martin, Forde, & Hickey, 1991). The mean scores were higher than those for this sample of pupils: vocabulary 21.45 (SD=8.69); comprehension 27.95 (SD=7.61); total 49.40 (SD=15.27). On the basis of national norms, the mean total reading score of pupils in the six schools was at approximately the 26th percentile. The mean for the lowest scoring of the six schools was at the 7th percentile and for the highest scoring school at the 32nd percentile.

Drumcondra Criterion-Referenced Mathematics Test - Level 1

Over four-fifths of pupils were successful in completing addition operations with whole numbers (adding two and three single-digit numbers: 0-9). Just over half the pupils could add a single-digit number to a two-digit number (either with or without renaming - sum to 35). Over 40% succeeded in subtracting a single-digit number from a single-digit number (0-9) and over 30% could subtract a single-digit number from a two-digit number (with or without renaming 0-30).

Virtually all pupils could perform additions with zero (0-10) while 86% could perform subtractions with zero (0-10). A similar percentage demonstrated ability to read and write numerals not exceeding 99. Over half the pupils counted and ordered numbers on the number line (0-20) and completed simple number patterns on the hundred square, while just under half could position numbers on the hundred square. About a third of pupils constructed and completed number sentences representing addition and subtraction situations (0-10).

About a quarter of pupils could group numbers in 2s, 4s, and 10s, while less than a fifth succeeded at counting in 2s, 4s, and 10s. About one-tenth could identify the place value of digits in two-digit numbers and in numerals not exceeding 99.

Pupils were less successful in demonstrating the use of the commutative property of addition to interchange one-digit numbers 0-9 (7%); using the associative property to group numbers for addition (addends 0-10) (6%); and in renaming two-digit numbers less than 30 (5%).

Four-fifths of pupils could write the value of a sum of money containing coins of various denominations (up to 50p) and a similar proportion could measure the length of an object in centimetres. Just under 40% could change money (up to 50p) and could read time

in one-hour and half-hour intervals. About a fifth were successful in measuring the capacity of a container and the weight of an object using a non-standard unit.

Over 90% of pupils correctly identified the number of corners or sides on regular shapes, while 60% could identify a circle, triangle, square, rectangle, cube, and sphere.

Almost 90% of pupils could solve addition problems with two and three single-digit numbers and over three quarters could solve similar subtraction problems. Sixty percent succeeded in solving addition problems with money (up to 50p) but under 40% solved subtraction problems with money (up to 50p).

Over a quarter of pupils were successful in reading and interpreting simple pictograms (2, 3, or 4 categories) and a similar proportion could identify one half of a region or set.

The total mean score for all first class pupils was 19.51 (SD=6.35) (maximum possible score = 39). School means ranged from 17.27 (SD=5.50) to 22.54 (SD=6.51) and the overall between-school variation was significant (F=7.73; df 5,314; p=0.00). One school was significantly different from two other schools (p=.05). There was slightly more variation in class means, the lowest being 16.00 (SD=5.82) and the highest 23.94 (SD=6.01). The between-class variation was also significant (F=4.45; df 11,308; p=0.00) with three classes from one school being significantly different from one class in another school.

Drumcondra Criterion-Referenced Mathematics Test - Level 3

Virtually all pupils were successful in adding two or three single-digit numbers, four-fifths could add one- or two-digit numbers to a two-digit number with renaming, and about three-quarters could add a two- or three-digit number to a three-digit number with renaming.

Almost 90% of pupils could subtract a one- or two-digit number from a two-digit number with renaming. However, less than 60% could subtract a two- or three-digit number from a three-digit number with renaming, and less than 40% successfully subtracted a one- or two-digit number from a two-digit number with renaming.

Four-fifths of pupils could multiply one single-digit number by another (products <50). Half could multiply a two- or three-digit number by a single-digit number without renaming, while less than a fifth successfully multiplied a two- or three-digit number by a single-digit number with renaming. More than four-fifths of pupils could construct number sentences to represent multiplication and division situations (single-digit factors), 60% could complete number sentences requiring division, and over half could perform multiplications and divisions involving 0, 1, and 10. Forty percent of pupils were successful in dividing one- or two-digit numbers by a single-digit number (less than or equal to 5) without a remainder. Over a quarter could do this when dividing by numbers greater than 5.

Almost 60% of pupils successfully identified two- and three-digit numbers on the number line and under 40% could extend simple number sequences on the number line.

Just under four-fifths of pupils could identify the place value of the digits in numbers with not more than four digits and less than 60% could read and write numbers with not more than four digits. Over 60% of pupils were successful in applying the commutative property in multiplication of single-digit numbers while about a quarter could apply the distributive property in multiplication of a two- or three-digit number by a single-digit number.

Seventy percent of pupils successfully identified unit and compound fractions of a region (denominators of 2, 4, 8, 3, 6, 9, 5, and 10), 34% identified similar fractions of a set, 32% could identify equivalent forms of the unit fractions, and 30% could order the unit fractions. Only 5% could convert a fraction (denominator of 10) to a decimal and vice versa.

Surprisingly few pupils (just over 1%) were successful at measuring the length of an object in metres or centimetres (to nearest ½ cm). Almost a fifth could convert metric measures of length, weight, and capacity from one unit level to another (two levels, cm, m, g, kg, ml, l). Almost 60% could convert measures of time from one unit level to another (minutes, hours, days, and weeks), and almost half could read time in five-minute intervals. Just under 40% of pupils succeeded in converting money from one unit level to another (pounds and pence).

Over four-fifths of pupils correctly determined the area of regular shapes by counting squares and under a third could determine the perimeter of simple regular shapes (triangle, square, rectangle). Almost three-quarters identified properties of two-dimensional shapes while less than 40% identified properties of three-dimensional shapes. Almost half the pupils could identify two-dimensional shapes with an axis of symmetry. Almost 60% could read and interpret bar charts.

Over half the pupils solved addition and subtraction problems applied to length, weight, and capacity; a third solved multiplication problems with whole numbers, and slightly fewer solved division problems with whole numbers. About a third could also solve problems involving unit fractions and addition and subtraction problems with measures of money and time.

The total mean score for all third class pupils was 20.48 (SD=7.51) (maximum possible score = 41). School means ranged from 16.58 (SD=5.60) to 22.30 (SD=8.08). While the overall between-school variation was significant ($F=2.50$; df 4,193; $p<.05$), no two schools were significantly different from each other. Class means ranged from 16.65 (SD=6.27) to 23.96 (SD=6.43); once again the overall between-class variation was significant ($F=3.86$; df 7,190; $p<.001$) but no two classes differed significantly from each other.

Drumcondra Criterion-Referenced Mathematics Test - Level 5

Over 90% of pupils could perform addition and subtraction operations with numbers up to four digits; about four-fifths could multiply two numbers with up to four digits by a

number with up to two digits; and 70% could divide a number with up to four digits by a number with up to two digits.

Just under half the pupils could identify the place value of digits in six-digit numerals; over 70% performed number operations in the correct order; over 60% extended additive and multiplicative number sequences and a similar percentage correctly identified one- and two-digit prime numbers.

Over three-quarters of pupils could identify a common factor of two two-digit numbers, over 60% could find prime and non-prime factors of two-digit numbers, and just under half correctly identified the highest common factor of two two-digit numbers. Less than 40% could identify the least common multiple of two one- or two-digit numbers (not greater than 20).

About half the pupils could complete number sentences illustrating the commutative and associative properties of addition and multiplication of unit fractions and 40% could identify fractions of numbers. Other than those tasks, fewer than a third of pupils were successful in completing tasks related to fractional number structure (in order of frequency): converting an improper number to a mixed number and vice versa; reducing a fraction to its simplest form; completing a ratio statement; and sequencing fractions in terms of their order of magnitude. Only one-fifth of pupils correctly stated fractions in a number of equivalent forms.

Pupils were generally more adept at completing operations with fractions than at completing tasks related to fractional number structure (as described above). Over four-fifths could add and subtract two fractions having the same denominator and about 40% could add and subtract two fractions having different denominators and multiply two unit fractions having different denominators. About a third of pupils could add mixed numbers with renaming, subtract two fractions from a third (all having different denominators), and add three fractions having different denominators. Finally, only 5% of pupils could subtract mixed numbers with renaming.

Three-quarters of pupils could sequence decimals in their order of magnitude (two places) and two-thirds could write decimal numbers in expanded form (three places). Over 40% could identify the place value of digits in decimal numbers (three places), while about a third could rename decimal fractions (three places), convert decimals to fractions and vice versa (two places), and convert decimals and fractions to percentages and vice versa. Forty percent of pupils could add and subtract decimals with renaming (two places) and 20% could multiply or divide decimals by 10 and 100 and could multiply or divide a decimal by a decimal (two places).

Over half the pupils demonstrated recognition of basic geometric shapes, almost half could determine the perimeter of polygons, and about a quarter demonstrated knowledge of basic geometric facts. Fourteen percent of pupils could determine the area of rectangles and

right-angled triangles. Eighty-five percent of pupils could read and interpret charts and graphs.

Forty-five percent of pupils could solve problems involving calculation of profit and loss and 40% could solve problems involving operations with measures of time. A third of pupils solved problems involving operations with fractions and a fifth solved problems on the unitary method. Finally, 12% of pupils solved problems involving operations with measures of length, area, weight, and capacity.

The mean score for all fifth class pupils was 22.25 (SD=9.97) (maximum possible score = 48). School means ranged from 16.22 (SD=6.42) to 28.7 (SD=10.02). The overall between-school variation was significant (F=27.65; df 4,224; p=0.00), the two schools with the highest means being significantly different from the two schools with the lowest means (p=.05) and the school with the highest mean was also significantly different from the remaining school (p=.05). There was a great deal of variation in class means, ranging from 15.00 (SD=5.83) to 35.23 (SD=8.22). As would be expected therefore, the overall between-class variation was significant (F=20.36; df 8,220; p=0.00). The class with the highest mean differed significantly from all other classes (p=.05). Furthermore, two classes (means of 24.91 and 25.63) differed significantly from the three classes with the lowest means (15.00 to 16.46) and another class (M=25.74) was significantly different from the two classes with the lowest means (p=.05).

Between-School Differences in Achievement

English reading

At first and third class levels there were no between-school differences in achievement in English reading. However, at fifth class level, the mean score of pupils in one school was significantly lower than the means in the other four schools ($F = 6.82$, $df = 4,261$, $p = .00$).

Mathematics

At first class level, there were some between-school differences in achievement in mathematics, the mean score for pupils in one school being significantly lower than that for pupils in two other schools ($F = 7.73$, $df = 5,314$, $p = .00$). There were no between-school differences at third class level. At fifth class level, the mean scores of the two lowest-scoring schools were significantly different from those of the two highest-scoring schools, and the mean score for the remaining school was significantly different from the highest-scoring school ($F = 27.65$, $df = 4,224$, $p = .00$).

20. HSCL PROGRAMMES AND PARENTS

Summary

A sample of mothers identified as 'involved' in HSCL programmes in the six selected schools was interviewed in July 1992. Mothers answered questions about family demographics and about attitudes, practices, and knowledge related to education in general, to their child's schooling, and to the HSCL programme in particular. The three main reasons indicated for getting involved in the HSCL programme were: to be more involved in their children's education, to get out of the home, and to be better able to help their child with schoolwork. Mothers were most frequently involved in attending courses, followed by involvement in school-based activities, helping in classrooms, and playing a leading role in HSCL activities. Of those mothers who were involved in school-based activities, the highest frequency of participation was in curriculum enrichment activities, followed by curricular activities. The most popular courses were self-development courses (including personal development, leisure, and educational courses), followed by parenting courses, home management courses, and courses relating to children's education. The most frequently stated benefits of courses were that the mother got to know other parents, that parents supported each other, that the mother had gained in confidence, or had improved her own education. The main reason for inconsistent attendance at courses was because of family responsibilities. Benefits of involvement in classrooms included increased understanding of the teacher's job, of classroom activities and problems, increased ease in asking the teacher questions, increased confidence in helping own child, and learning new ways to help own child with schoolwork. Very few parents had taken a leading role in parent activities. Of those that had played a leading role, all reported increased confidence in their ability to help other people, understanding of how to organize a group and how to take control.

When the HSCL programmes had been running in schools for a period of two years, an interview was conducted to obtain more systematic data from mothers that might throw more light on the question of involvement and its correlates. A sample of mothers of pupils in the six primary schools selected for detailed study was interviewed during July 1992. At the time, there was an insufficient number of fathers involved in the scheme to be included. Selected mothers were asked questions about family demographics and about attitudes, practices, and knowledge related to education in general, to their child's schooling, and to the HSCL programme in particular. The interview was also designed to obtain information from mothers on a number of specific issues to augment information from other sources (i.e., school staff, co-ordinators, and pupils). The issues related to: levels and patterns of participation among mothers involved in HSCL programmes; input from mothers in determining HSCL courses; mothers' role in involving other mothers in HSCL programmes (multiplier principle); and mothers' perceptions of people closely involved in HSCL activities.

Only mothers who were identified as 'involved' in HSCL programmes on the basis of co-ordinators' reports of their consistent involvement in one or more activities were eligible for selection to this group. Activities used by co-ordinators in describing mothers as involved included: (1) courses for parents (e.g., cookery; art and crafts; knitting; dressmaking; money-management; home-management; women's health; assertiveness; committee skills; basic English, Irish, and Maths; Leaving Certificate English; computer skills; French; literacy;

speech and drama; ballroom dancing; set-dancing); (2) committees involving parents (e.g., Local Committee; Parent Education Group); (3) groups for parents (e.g., folk group; relaxation group; playgroup; mothers' group; women's action group; bereavement group; gardening club); (4) parents helping in toylibrary, crèche, playgroup, or homework club; (5) parents helping in the classroom or with activities outside of the classroom (e.g., computer activities), and (6) involvement in paired reading or reading together schemes. A further constraint on selection was that mothers should have a child in junior infants, first, third, or fifth class in the six schools (i.e., those children for whom achievement data had been obtained). If a mother had children at more than one of these grade levels, a child at one particular grade level was selected as the 'reference' child for the interview. Responses were available from 112 mothers for the analyses reported here.

Levels and Patterns of Involvement Among Mothers

Mothers were asked to indicate their reasons for getting involved in the HSCL programme in their child's school. They were presented with ten possible reasons and asked to say whether or not each applied. The three reasons most frequently endorsed for getting involved were: to be more involved in their children's education, to get out of the home, and to be better able to help their child with schoolwork (Table 20.1). It is noteworthy that two of the reasons relate to enhancing the mother's involvement in her child's education. The main reason given for inconsistent attendance at courses was because of family responsibilities.

Table 20.1

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Giving Varying Reasons for Getting Involved in Activities at Child's School

Reason for getting involved in activities at child's school	No. of mothers (n=112)	%
To be more involved in children's education	65	58
To get out of the home	57	51
To be better able to help child with schoolwork	54	48
To meet other parents	46	41
To help out at the school	40	36
To improve my own education	39	35
To have something to look forward to for myself	37	33
To learn useful skills for home	36	32
To learn more about a pastime	25	22
To help get a job/promotion in job	5	5
To make my life easier	2	2

Mothers were asked about their involvement in four main areas: (1) school-based activities, (2) courses or classes for parents, (3) helping in the classroom, and (4) taking a leading role in parent activities. Mothers were most frequently involved in attending courses for parents (Table 20.2). Almost four-fifths stated that they had attended such a course. By contrast, only 4% stated that they had taken a leading role in parent activities. A considerable percentage of involved mothers (37%) had helped the teacher in the classroom.

Table 20.2

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in Various HSCL Activities

Type of activity	No. of mothers involved (n=112)	%
Courses	89	79
School-based activities	58	52
Classroom activities	41	37
Leading role	4	4

Whether mothers were involved in one, two, or three activities, the emphasis on participation in courses was very strong. For instance, 74% of mothers who were involved in only one activity stated that they were involved in courses, while the next most frequent area of involvement was school-based activities (16%) (Table 20.3). When mothers were involved in two or three activities, courses were almost always included in the combinations. The most frequent combination for two activities consisted of courses and school-based activities (Table 20.4). The most frequent combination of three activities consisted of school-based activities, courses, and helping in the classroom (Table 20.5).

Table 20.3

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in One Activity by Type of Activity

Type of activity	No. of mothers (n=55)	%
Courses	41	75
School-based activities	9	16
Classroom	5	9
Leading role	0	0

Table 20.4

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in Two Activities by Type of Activity

Type of activity	No. of mothers (n=37)	%
School-based activities/courses	19	51
School-based activities/help in classroom	9	24
Courses/help in classroom	8	22
Courses/leading role	1	3

Table 20.5

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in Three Activities by Type of Activity

Type of activity	No. of mothers (n=19)	%
School-based activities/courses/help in classroom	18	95
School-based activities/courses/leading role	1	5

Involvement in School-Based Activities

Fifty-two per cent of the sample had taken part in school-based (as opposed to classroom-based) activities. The majority of these (65%) had been involved in only one such activity (Table 20.6).

Table 20.6

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Taking Part in One, Two, or Three School-Based Activities

No. of school-based activities	No. of mothers (n=58)	%
One	38	65
Two	16	28
Three	4	7

To examine the patterns of involvement, the activities described by mothers were categorized into five types : (1) curriculum enrichment (e.g., giving drama, dancing, or pottery classes, involvement in TEAM theatre, helping with school concert, school tour, or Christmas party), (2) curricular (e.g., being a paired-reading tutor, helping with library, supervising homework), (3) social (e.g., involvement in playgroup committee, organizing

crèche, collecting money for swimming/aerobics classes, organizing parent-staff lunch), (4) educational (e.g., facilitating at a parenting programme/personal development course), and (5) other (e.g., running blazer rental scheme, bookshop, or school shop, or decorating school, making sandwiches for lunches, helping with school garden, covering school books). The highest frequency of participation was in curriculum enrichment activities, followed by curricular activities (Table 20.7).

This trend was consistent whether mothers participated in one, two, or three school-based activities. Among mothers who reported being involved in just one activity, curriculum enrichment activities featured twice as often as the next most popular type, curricular activities, which together accounted for 85% of these mothers (Table 20.8).

Table 20.7

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers who Took Part in Different Types of School-Based Activities*

Type of school-based activity	No. of mothers (n=58)	%
Curriculum enrichment	38	66
Curricular	23	40
Social	6	10
Educational	2	3
Other	1	2

*Some mothers took part in more than one type of school-based activity

Table 20.8

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in Only One School-Based Activity who Took Part in Different Types of Activity

Activity	No. of mothers (n=38)	%
Curriculum enrichment	22	58
Curricular	11	29
Social	2	5
Educational	2	5
Other	1	3

For mothers who reported being involved in two activities, the curriculum enrichment or curricular type appeared in every combination (Table 20.9). Indeed, half of the two-activity group combined a curriculum enrichment and a curricular type of activity. A further one-fifth

(3 of 16) took part in two curriculum enrichment activities. Both curriculum enrichment and curricular-type activities appeared in all (n=4) three-activity combinations.

Table 20.9

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Involved in Two School-Based Activities who Took Part in Two Types of Activity

Activity-type combination	No. of mothers (n=16)	%
Curriculum enrichment/curricular	8	50
Curriculum enrichment/curriculum enrichment	3	19
Curriculum enrichment/social	3	19
Curriculum enrichment/educational	1	6
Curriculum enrichment/other	1	6

Mothers who were involved in school-based activities were asked to indicate if they had experienced any of seven possible benefits. The majority said that each of the benefits had applied (Table 20.10). Some also described additional benefits including improved self confidence (7%) and greater understanding of their child (5%).

Table 20.10

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers who Endorsed Each of Seven Expected Benefits of Involvement in School-Based Activities

Benefit	No. of mothers (n=58)	%
Got to know other parents	56	97
Look forward to going to school	55	95
Feel more comfortable talking to teachers	54	93
Talked to other parents about children and school	54	93
Feel more comfortable going to school without being invited	53	92
Got to know my child's teacher better	52	90
Know more about things happening in school	52	90

Involvement in Courses

As we saw, 79% of mothers (89 of 112) went to courses at their child's school which were provided under the HSCL programme. Of these, 84% had been asked what courses they would like to go to, while only 16% had not been asked. The majority of mothers (91%) who had been asked were asked by the HSCL co-ordinator. The remainder either saw a notice about courses at the school or a leaflet had been sent home. In terms of attendance at courses, 76% of mothers had gone to all or almost all of the sessions provided. While this percentage

represents the majority of mothers, it still means that 24% were inconsistent attenders (19% had gone to about half the sessions and 5% had gone to less than half or to only one or two of the sessions). The main reason given for non-attendance at courses was family duties (e.g., work, family illness, or a child at home) (Table 20.11).

Table 20.11

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Giving Varying Reasons for Non-attendance at Courses

Reason for non-attendance	No. of mothers (n=89)	%
Family duties	45	51
Did not enjoy meetings	4	5
Course/class not suitable	2	2
Bad weather	1	1
Other	11	12
No reason given	26	29

When level of participation is examined in terms of the number of courses attended by mothers, two-thirds are found to have been involved in just one course (Table 20.12).

Table 20.12

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Attending One, Two, and Three Courses

No. of courses	No. of Mothers (n=89)	%
One	59	66
Two	22	25
Three	8	9

Mothers were asked to describe the courses that they had attended. To examine patterns of involvement, the courses were categorized into four main types: (1) parenting courses, (2) self-development courses, (3) home management courses, and (4) courses relating to involvement in child's education. Of the 89 mothers who attended, the majority (70%) attended self-development courses (including personal development, leisure, and educational courses). Only 29% attended parenting courses while 24% attended home management courses. Very few attended courses relating to children's education (Table 20.13). The emphasis on self-development courses is even more evident in the figures for mothers

Table 20.13

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Attending Different Types of Courses
(regardless of the number of courses taken)

Type of course	No. of mothers (n=89)	%
Self-development	62	70
Parenting	26	29
Home Management	21	24
Involvement in Children's Education	8	9

who attended only one type of course. More than three times as many mothers attended this type of course as the next most frequently attended course (parenting) (Table 20.14). When mothers attended two or three courses, the course combinations almost always included one in self-development. The type of two-course combination most frequently described by mothers was that of a self-development course and a home management course (Table 20.15). The most common three-course combination included a parenting course, a self-development course, and a home management course (Table 20.16).

Table 20.14

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Attending Only One Course, by Type of Course

Type of course	No. of mothers (N=59)	%
Self-development	39	66
Parenting	12	20
Home Management	6	10
Involvement in Children's Education	2	5

Mothers who participated in courses were asked to indicate if they had experienced any of seven expected benefits. The benefits most frequently endorsed by mothers were that the mother had got to know other parents, that parents helped and supported each other, that the mother had gained in confidence and had improved her own education (Table 20.17). An additional benefit mentioned by some mothers was that they enjoyed the social aspect of courses (7%). A few mothers, rather than describe an additional benefit, stated that the course had not been suitable (3%).

Table 20.15

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers Attending Two Courses by Type of Course

Type of two-course combination	No. of mothers (N=21)	%
Self-development/Home Management	6	29
Self-development/Parenting	5	24
Self-development/Self-development	4	19
Parenting/Home Management	2	9
Home Management/Involvement in child's education	2	9
Parenting/Parenting	1	5
Involvement in child's education/Involvement in child's education	1	5

Table 20.16

Numbers of Mothers Attending Three Courses , by Type of Course

Type of three-course combination	No. of mothers (N=8)
Parenting/Self-development/Home Management	4
Self-development/Home Management Involvement in child's education	2
Parenting/Self-development/Self-development	1
Parenting/Self-development/Involvement in child's education	1

Table 20.17

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers who Endorsed Each of Seven Expected Benefits of Involvement in Courses

Benefit	No. of mothers (n=89)	%
Got to know other parents	86	97
Parents helped and supported each other	80	90
Gained more confidence in myself	78	88
Improved my own education	74	83
Learned to help my own child with schoolwork	61	69
Learned more about a hobby I enjoy	50	56
Learned useful skills for home	46	51

Involvement in the Classroom

The 36% of involved mothers who had helped the teacher in the classroom were asked to indicate if they had experienced any of six expected benefits of this type of involvement. The vast majority of mothers endorsed each of the benefits (Table 20.18). Practically all

mothers felt that they had learned more about what the teacher's job is like, about what being in a classroom is like for a child, and about problems the teacher might have in the classroom. They also found it easier to ask the teacher questions and became more confident about helping their own child. It is noteworthy that a higher percentage of mothers who had helped in the classroom (88%) (Table 20.18) learned new ways to help their child with homework than did mothers who had attended courses (69%) (Table 20.17).

Table 20.18

Numbers and Percentages of Mothers who Endorsed Each of Six Expected Benefits of Parent Involvement in the Classroom

Benefit	No. of mothers (n=41)	%
Learned more about what teacher's job is like	40	98
Learned more about what being in a classroom is like for child	40	98
Learned more about problems the teacher might have in the classroom	39	95
Found it easier to ask the teacher questions	39	95
Became more confident about helping child	38	93
Learned ways to help child with schoolwork	36	88

Leadership Role in Parent Activities

Only four parents of the involved sample had taken a leading role in parent activities. All endorsed three expected benefits of having a leading role: they had gained confidence in their ability to help other people, and had learned how to organize a group and how to take control of a situation. When asked why they had taken on a leading role, three of the mothers endorsed each of the following reasons: to use new skills that they had learned, to help other parents to use new skills, and because they had been asked to take on the role. While there may have been some ambiguity about mothers' perceptions of what constituted a leading role, evidence from co-ordinators' reports indicated that this was an aspect of HSCL programmes that developed slowly at first. However, by the third year of the scheme, the number of parents who had taken a leading role had grown considerably with parents taking responsibility for maintaining the Parents' Room and running the crèche (in 66% of schools) and helping in the running of parent courses (in 75% of schools). In about half the schools, parents (usually one or two) acted as presenters or facilitators of parent courses.

Conclusion

Involving mothers in personal development courses has obviously been a useful way of encouraging parents to become involved in HSCL programmes. However, a further step would seem to be required to help parents to learn new ways of assisting their children's educational development. The reason most frequently given by mothers for getting involved in activities in their child's school was to become more involved in the education of their child. Parents who had helped the teacher in the classroom found this activity more beneficial in terms of their becoming involved in the education of their child than parents who had been involved in courses. Participation in courses has its own benefits, however, particularly in terms of helping parents to get to know other parents and in building parent confidence. Interview responses gave some insight into the reasons for inconsistent attendance at courses, the main reason given being family duties. This points to the importance of a support system for mothers in encouraging them to attend courses by accommodating and supporting them in their family duties as much as possible (e.g., through the provision of crèche facilities).

The finding that few parents appear to have taken a leading role in parent activities indicates a need to develop leadership qualities among parents. The presence of parents as leaders, while seen less frequently as a positive development by uninvolved compared to involved mothers, could, perhaps, become one of the ways of encouraging more parents to become involved in HSCL programmes in the schools.

21. UNINVOLVED PARENTS

Summary

In addition to the group of parents who were involved (I) in HSCL activities, a group of uninvolved mothers was also identified by co-ordinators in the six schools. Preliminary analyses did not reveal great differences between 'involved' and 'uninvolved' groups. Uninvolved mothers were further categorized into two groups based on co-ordinators' judgments of whether or not they needed additional assistance. The groups are described as 'uninvolved - okay' (UOK) and 'uninvolved - needs help' (UNH). Almost twice as many UNH mothers came from households in which both parents were unemployed than did either I or UOK mothers and a much smaller percentage of UNH households had both parents employed when compared with I and UOK households. A greater proportion of UNH mothers than UOK and I mothers were in single-parent families. On average, households of UNH mothers had significantly more children than those of involved mothers and also more children between the ages of 4 and 14 years than households of involved mothers. UNH mothers differed from the involved mothers and frequently from the UOK group on a number of practices and attitudes related to the child's educational environment, at home and at school. Mothers in the UNH group were less likely to have read to their child when younger, less likely to read themselves, less likely to talk to their child about something seen on television or that had been read, and less likely to monitor the child's television viewing or reading. They were also more likely to perceive that their child was doing less well than other children at school, to feel that they could not help their child with homework, and to expect their child to leave school at a younger age. In general, uninvolved mothers considered not to need help were more like involved mothers than like uninvolved ones considered to be in need of help.

In addition to the group of parents who were involved (I) in HSCL activities ('involved' parents), whose responses were described in the last chapter, a further group of uninvolved mothers was identified by co-ordinators in the six schools and they also completed the interview. This group was asked the same questions as the 'involved' group with the exception of the section on involvement. Preliminary analyses did not reveal great differences between the 'involved' and 'uninvolved' groups. On closer examination, however, it became clear that the group of uninvolved mothers was very heterogeneous, and included a wide range of mothers, some of whom, while not involved in HSCL programmes, were nonetheless very involved in their children's education, as well as others who were not deeply involved in their children's education, usually because of more pressing problems in the home. Co-ordinators felt that they could distinguish between these two types of 'uninvolved' mothers and so were asked to indicate for each parent whether they felt her family was or was not in need of the kind of assistance provided by HSCL programmes and by other services. The two groups that were identified in this way are described as 'uninvolved - okay' (UOK) and 'uninvolved - needs help' (UNH). The total number of valid interviews was 340, which included 121 I, 138 UOK, and 81 UNH mothers. (Fifteen records could not be included in analyses due to ambiguity of responses.) The distribution of the children of the mothers across four school grades is presented in Table 21.1.

Table 21.1

Numbers of Mothers With Children at Varying Grade Levels

	I	UOK	UNH	Total
Grade				
Junior Infants	52	32	28	112
First	28	51	18	97
Third	16	22	18	56
Fifth	25	33	17	75
Total	121	138	81	340

$\chi 2=16.33$, df=6, p=.0121

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics (i.e., employment status, household composition, and educational level) of mothers interviewed are presented in Tables 21.2 to 21.10.

Employment status showed a (statistically) significant difference between the groups of mothers. The most striking differences serve to distinguish UNH mothers from both the I and UOK groups: almost twice as many UNH mothers came from households in which both parents were unemployed than did either I or UOK mothers and only 1.3% of UNH households had both parents employed, compared with 18.3% and 19% of I and UOK households respectively (Table 21.2).

Table 21.2

Employment Status of Involved and Uninvolved Mothers and their Partners

	I (n=120) %	UOK (n=137) %	UNH (n=78) %	Total (n=335) %
Employment status				
Two-parent family:				
Both parents unemployed	25.0	29.2	48.7	32.2
Father employed/mother unemployed	31.7	29.2	19.2	27.8
Both parents employed	18.3	19.0	1.3	14.6
Mother employed/father unemployed	5.8	10.9	6.4	8.1
One-parent family:				
Mother unemployed	12.5	10.2	21.8	13.7
Mother employed	6.7	1.5	2.6	3.6

$\chi^2=36.73$, df=10, p<.0001

There were also significant differences between the groups on household composition variables (Tables 21.3 to 21.6). A greater proportion of UNH mothers than UOK and I mothers were in single-parent families. Further, on average, households of UNH mothers had significantly more children than households of involved mothers (4.0 compared with 3.4) and also more children between the ages of 4 and 14 years than involved households (2.8 compared with 2.4). There were no differences between the groups in the number of children aged over 15 years or from 0-3 years.

Co-ordinators had suggested that having young children at home was one reason for lack of involvement in the HSCL scheme. While the current finding suggests that the number of young children at home (i.e., aged 0-3 years) is not singularly a factor in involvement, it is possible that it may be so when combined with other family circumstances, for example, the number of other older children to be cared for or the availability of a babysitter.

Table 21.3

Percentages of One- and Two-Parent Families in Households

	I (n=121) %	UOK (n=138) %	UNH (n=80) %	Total (n=339) %
Two parents	80	88	76	83
One parent	20	12	24	17

χ^2=5.98, df=2, p=.05

Table 21.4

Average Number of Children in Households

	I (n=121)	UOK (n=138)	UNH (n=80)	Total	F	df	p	Diff. (p<.05)
Average no. children	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.0	2,336	.05	I≠UNH
Average no. children by age range								
0-3 years (n=97)	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3	0.7	2,94	.48	
4-14 years (n=338)	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.5	3.4	2,335	<.05	UOK≠UNH I≠UNH
14+ years (n=105)	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.6	0.4	2,102	.70	

Table 21.5

Percentages of Mothers with Varying Numbers of Children

	I (n=121)		UOK (n=138)		UNH (n=81)		Total (n=339)	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
1 child	11.6	(14)	5.1	(7)	2.5	(2)	6.8	(23)
2-4 children	68.6	(83)	70.3	(97)	66.3	(53)	68.7	(233)
More than 4 children	19.8	(24)	24.6	(34)	31.2	(26)	24.5	(83)

χ^2=9.53, df=4, p=.05

Table 21.6

Percentages of Mothers with Children in Specified Age Groups

	I (n=121)		UOK (n=138)		UNH (n=80)		Total (n=339)	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
0 - 3 years	9	(31)	11	(37)	9	(29)	29	(97)
4 - 14 years	36	(121)	41	(138)	24	(80)	100	(339)
14+ years	10	(34)	13	(44)	8	(27)	31	(105)

There were no significant differences between the groups of mothers in the level of schooling that they or their partners had attained (Tables 21.7, 21.8). The majority of both mothers and partners in the I and UOK groups had obtained some level of post-primary education (mostly from one to two years post-primary up to the Group or Intermediate Certificate) but this majority was slightly smaller for UNH mothers. Few I or UOK mothers and none of the UNH mothers had obtained their Leaving Certificate or gone on to further education. While slightly more partners had done so in each group, the pattern was similar: almost twice as many partners of I (15.3%) and UOK (17.3%) mothers than partners of UNH (9.5%) mothers had reached Leaving Certificate or further education.

Table 21.7

Percentages of Mothers who Reached
Varying Levels of School Attainment

Level of schooling attained	I (n=120)		UOK (n=137)		UNH (n=80)		Total (n=337)	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Sixth class primary	26.4	(32)	31.4	(43)	38.7	(31)	31.5	(106)
1-2 years post-primary	42.1	(51)	36.5	(50)	41.3	(33)	39.8	(134)
Intermediate/Group Cert.	21.5	(26)	23.4	(32)	20.0	(16)	22.0	(74)
Leaving Certificate	6.6	(8)	7.3	(10)	0	(0)	5.3	(18)
Further education	2.5	(3)	1.5	(2)	0	(0)	1.5	(5)

χ^2=10.807, df=8, ns

Table 21.8

Percentages of Partners who Reached
Varying Levels of School Attainment

Level of schooling attained	I (n=98)		UOK (n=121)		UNH (n=63)		Total (n=282)	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Sixth class primary	26.5	(26)	34.7	(42)	39.7	(25)	33.0	(93)
1-2 years post-primary	27.6	(27)	27.3	(33)	23.8	(15)	26.6	(75)
Intermediate/Group Cert.	30.6	(30)	20.7	(25)	27.0	(17)	25.5	(72)
Leaving Certificate	14.3	(14)	14.0	(17)	7.9	(5)	12.8	(36)
Further education	1.0	(1)	3.3	(4)	1.6	(1)	2.1	(6)

χ^2=7.5345, df =8, ns

Mother's School-Related Practices

All groups of mothers and their partners were equally likely to talk to their child's teacher: all UOK mothers and 97.5% of both I and UNH mothers had done so during the 1991-92 school year. However, involved mothers met their child's teacher significantly more often than either group of uninvolved mothers (average: 3.3 for I mothers versus 3.0 and 2.9 for UOK and UNH on a 4-point rating scale where 1 = once; 2 = twice; 3 = 3 or 4 times; and 4 = 5 times or more; F = 4.49, df = 2,332, p = .01). This finding supports co-ordinators' reports that, while they are in the school, involved mothers have incidental contacts with teachers that the other groups can not. Partners of UOK (56%) mothers were more likely to have talked to the child's class teacher than were partners of either I (49%) or UNH (35%)

(χ^2=6.78, df=2, p<.05). Mothers in each of the groups were equally likely to talk to their child and to their partner about the child's school reports (over 90% in each case). The vast majority of partners also talked to their child about reports (84%, 92%, and 89% respectively).

Mothers were asked to describe how they would respond to a report about their child that was better than usual or worse than usual. The groups showed similar patterns in their most frequent responses to both types of report (Table 21.9). The most frequent response for all groups was to provide a reward following a report that was better than usual and to determine the reason for low performance following a report that was worse than usual.

Table 21.9

Percentages of Mothers Indicating Reactions to Child's Report that was (a) Better or (b) Worse than Usual

Mother's response	I (n=104) %	UOK (n=130) %	UNH (n=76) %	Total (N=310) %
(a) Report better than usual:				
Would provide reward	79.8	76.9	68.4	75.8
Would encourage child	13.5	18.5	7.9	14.2
(b) Report worse than usual:				
Determine reason for low performance	55.8	49.6	40.8	49.5
Request more care in future	27.9	38.8	28.9	32.7

Mothers gave very similar responses regarding other practices relating to homework. For instance, they were equally likely to state that their child's teacher gets parents to sign homework (79% I; 81% UOK; and 76% UNH). Mothers (or their partners) in each group signed homework on average about two to four times a week, were equally likely to state that someone at home helps their child with homework (84.7% I; 86.7% UOK; and 87.3% UNH) and to state that, on average, between 10 minutes and half an hour was spent helping their child with homework each day. The pattern of who tends to help the child with homework was similar across both uninvolved and involved groups (i.e., mostly mother, then father, sister, and brother) (Table 21.10). However, the small sample of pupils that were interviewed said that their fathers helped most frequently.

Table 21.10

Percentages of Family Members who Help Child with Homework

Who helps with homework	I (n=121) %	UOK (n=138) %	UNH (n=81) %	Total (n=340) %
Mother	66.9	68.8	63.0	68.8
Father	39.7	45.3	43.2	42.1
Sister	8.3	16.7	17.3	13.8
Brother	6.6	10.9	16.0	10.6

UNH mothers were significantly less likely than either UOK or I mothers to report that they or their partner talked to their child about something that the child had read or seen on television (74%, 86% and 91% respectively, $\chi^2 = 11.39$, df=2, p<.01), or that they checked what their child was reading or watching (76%; 91%; and 93%; $\chi^2 = 14.47$, df=2, p<.001).

Mothers were very similar in their reports of the frequency with which they talked to their child about school (almost every day), looked at things their child did at school (almost every day), read to their child (about once a week), and listened to their child read (more than once a week). When their child was younger, all groups of mothers listened to their child read more than once a week. However, there were differences in the frequency with which mothers read to their child when the child was younger with UNH mothers reading significantly less often. On a 6-point scale (with 1-'never,' 2='less than once a month,' 3='once or twice a month,' 4='once a week,' 5='more than once a week,' 6='every day,'), the mean for UNH mothers (n=80) was 4.7 compared to 5.3 for I mothers (n=121) and 5.2 for UOK mothers (n=138) (F =5.91, df = 2,336, p<.01).

Groups also differed in the extent to which mothers read newspapers or books, with significantly fewer UNH mothers stating that they had time for such reading than either involved or UOK mothers (79% compared with 90% and 90% respectively; $\chi^2 = 6.13$, df = 2, p<.05). Mothers reported to a similar extent that partners had time for reading newspapers or books (86%, 91%, and 81% respectively for involved, UOK and UNH). When asked whether their children took any lessons outside of school (e.g., art, music, sports coaching), UNH mothers (14%) reported that their children took such lessons to a lesser extent than did UOK (29%) mothers. The difference between the groups was significant ($\chi^2 = 7.43$, df = 2, p<.05).

Children from all groups were equally likely to have a hobby/hobbies (over 90% in each case). Hobbies were initiated (in order of frequency) by children themselves (29%), by someone outside the family (21%), by mother (13%), by father (13%), by siblings (10%), and by both parents (7%).

Three of ten questions assessing mothers' promotion of their children's independence showed significant differences between the groups of mothers (Table 21.11). Involved mothers would allow their child to make friends and visit their homes, and to sleep at a friend's home overnight when they were significantly younger than children of both groups of uninvolved mothers. However, both UNH and I mothers would allow their child to stay at home alone while they went out for a few hours at a significantly younger age than UOK mothers.

Mothers' Knowledge of Child's Progress and Aspirations for Child

Mothers in the three groups rated in a similar fashion their child's liking of school on a 5-point scale and his/her confidence at school on a 4-point scale. However, UNH mothers rated their child (on a 5-point scale with 1='don't know,' 2='not as good as most,' 3='around the middle,' 4='better than most,' 5='the very best in the class') as doing significantly less well at school relative to his/her classmates overall and in English. For mathematics, children of UNH mothers received a significantly lower rating than children of UOK mothers (Table 21.12).

Table 21.11

Average Age at Which Child Would be Allowed to Perform Activities Independently

Activity	Average Age in Years I	UOK	UNH	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
To make friends and visit their homes	6.63 (n=120)	7.66 (n=137)	7.65 (n=81)	5.1	2,335	<.01	I≠UNH I≠UOK
To sleep at a friend's home overnight	10.5 (n=118)	11.4 (n=130)	11.7 (n=78)	3.75	2,323	< .05	I≠UOK I≠UNH
To stay at home alone while you went out for a few hours at night	13.1 (n=115)	13.6 (n=130)	12.9 (n=81)	3.21	2,323	<.05	I≠UOK UOK≠UNH

Table 21.12

Mothers' Rating of Child's Ability Compared
to Classmates, Overall, in English, and in Maths

	I	UOK	UNH	Total	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
Overall	3.43 (n=121)	3.35 (n=138)	3.04 (n=81)	3.30 (n=340)	6.32	2,337	<.01	I≠UNH UOK≠UNH
English	3.47 (n=120)	3.41 (n=135)	3.16 (n=81)	3.37 (n=336)	3.83	2,333	<.05	I≠UNH UOK≠UNH
Maths	3.18 (n=119)	3.31 (n=136)	2.97 (n=80)	3.18 (n=335)	3.19	2,332	<.05	UOK≠UNH

Most mothers in the three groups saw good training at school and good training at home as contributing to their child's success at school. Lesser numbers attributed a role to ability and effort and, a much smaller number, a role to luck. There were, however, no significant differences between the groups in the frequency with which they attributed their child's success to any of these factors (Table 21.13).

When asked what would make their child do better at school, groups again reported similar patterns of agreement (Table 21.14). A majority felt that more effort would help their child. A smaller majority felt that ability would. Minorities identified luck, better training at home or better training at school. The relatively small numbers of parents that saw a role for changed conditions in the home or at school in affecting children's performance is of particular significance for an intervention project such as the HSCL scheme.

Table 21.13

Percentages of Mothers who Attributed their Child's
Current Success at School to Varying Factors

	I (n=112)	UOK (n=123)	UNH (n=70)	Total	
	%	%	%	%	(n)
Ability	90	86	76	85	(305)
Effort	78	85	80	81	(305)
Good school training	97	98	97	98	(304)
Good home training	90	94	91	92	(305)
Luck	55	52	44	51	(304)

Table 21.14

Percentages of Mothers Choosing Various Attributions for What Would Make their Child do Better

	I		UOK		UNH		Total	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Trying harder	72	(120)	70	(138)	81	(81)	73	(339)
More ability	61	(117)	59	(138)	54	(81)	59	(336)
More luck	39	(118)	38	(138)	41	(81)	39	(337)
Better training at home	35	(118)	33	(138)	46	(81)	36	(337)
Better training at school	22	(118)	19	(138)	25	(81)	21	(337)

Mothers were asked how far they thought their child would go in school (expectations) and how far they would like him or her to go (aspirations). Responses were reported on a 5-point scale with 1=sixth class primary, 2=1-2 years post-primary but no exam, 3=Junior Certificate, 4=Leaving Certificate, and 5=College. The majority of mothers in each group expected their child to go as far as the Leaving Certificate (I 58%; UOK 53%; UNH 65%). However, both I and UOK mothers had significantly higher expectations and hopes for their child than did UNH mothers (Tables 21.15, 21.16).

Table 21.15

Mean Values of Mothers' Expectations for their Child's Education

I (n=121)	UOK (n=137)	UNH (n=81)	Total (n=339)	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
4.34	4.44	3.95	4.29	14.45	2,336	<.001	I≠UNH UOK≠UNH

Table 21.16

Mean Values of Mothers' Aspirations for their Child's Education

I (n=121)	UOK (n=138)	UNH (n=81)	Total (n=340)	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
4.60	4.66	4.33	4.56	9.55	2,337	<.001	I≠UNH UOK≠UNH

School-Related Attitudes of Involved and Uninvolved Mothers

The attitudes of mothers in all groups were very similar regarding the extent to which they would like to have stayed on at school (I 76.9%; UOK 75.9%; and UNH 72.5%). There were, however, differences between the groups relating to their involvement in their children's education. UNH mothers felt that they could help their child at school to a significantly lesser extent (on a 5-point rating scale where 1='don't know,' 2='cannot help at all,' 3='can help only a little,' 4='can help a fair amount,' and 5='can help a lot') than did either I or UOK mothers. Their average rating was 4.05 compared to 4.35 for I and 4.33 for UOK mothers ($F = 5.41$, $df = 2,337$, $p < .01$). Involved mothers were less likely (on a 5-point scale with 1='disagree a lot,' 2='disagree a bit,' 3='don't know,' 4='agree a bit,' and 5='agree a lot') than either UOK or UNH mothers to feel that they were intruding if they went to the school without being invited and more likely than uninvolved mothers to say that they should be given credit when their child did well in school (Table 21.17).

Table 21.17

Mean Values for Mothers' Agreement Ratings
to a Number of Attitude Statements

	I	UOK	UNH					
Attitude statement	Average agreement rating (n=121)	Average agreement rating (n=138)	Average agreement rating (n=81)	Total	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
I would feel I was intruding if I went to the school without being invited	1.32	1.65	1.82	1.57	5.20	2,337	<.01	I≠UOK I≠UNH
I should be given credit when my child does well at school	3.23	2.91	2.68	2.97	3.55	2,337	<.05	I≠UNH
When teachers ask parents to help their child it usually takes a lot of work	2.65	2.94	3.41	2.95	6.36	2,337	<.01	I≠UOK I≠UNH UOK≠UNH
I would like to be told more about how my child is getting on at school	3.08	3.54	3.42	3.35	2.90	2,337	.06	
Parents should leave all teaching and helping with school work to the teachers	4.47	4.33	4.11	4.33	2.91	2,337	.06	

Involved mothers and UOK mothers were less likely than UNH mothers to agree that when teachers asked parents to help their child it usually took a lot of work on their part to give that help. Differences between groups relating to being told about their children's school progress or leaving all school work to teachers were not significant. The large proportion of mothers in all groups who agreed that all teaching and helping with school work should be left to the teachers is surprising.

Mothers' Knowledge of, and Attitudes to, the HSCL Programme in their Child's School

The vast majority of mothers (86%) were aware of the existence of the HSCL programme in their child's school. As would be expected, this included practically all I mothers (98%). (It is possible that the remaining 2% did not know that the activities they were involved in were part of a HSCL programme.) An encouraging majority of both UOK (81%) and UNH (75%) mothers were also aware of the programme. These findings suggest that efforts at promoting awareness of the HSCL programme among parents have been successful.

Involved mothers were significantly more likely to have found out about the programme through a school meeting than were either UOK or UNH mothers ($\chi^2 = 7.98$, df = 2, $p<.05$) (Table 21.18). Involved and UNH mothers were significantly more likely than UOK mothers to have found out about the programme through a visit from the co-ordinator ($\chi^2 = 20.78$, df = 2, $p<.001$). While UNH mothers were categorized as uninolved for the purposes of this interview, these findings confirm that, in fact, co-ordinators are reaching some of them through home visits.

Table 21.18

Percentages of Mothers Found Out About the HSCL Programme in Various Ways

	I		UOK		UNH		Total	
Found out through:	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Letter sent home	75	(118)	77	(111)	71	(62)	75	(291)
Notice at school	56	(117)	53	(110)	59	(61)	56	(288)
Another parent	30	(118)	37	(109)	34	(61)	34	(288)
School meeting	46	(117)	31	(109)	28	(61)	37	(287)
Visit from co-ordinator	33	(117)	9	(109)	32	(60)	24	(286)

Parents also networked among themselves about HSCL. The majority of I (80%) mothers had told another parent about HSCL, half (52%) had gone with another parent to a

HSCL activity for her first time, and one-fifth (22%) had taken another parent along with them to a HSCL activity for their first time (Table 21.19).

Table 21.19

Percentages of Mothers who Communicated with Other Parents About the HSCL Programme

	I %	UOK %	UNH %	Total %	χ^2	df	p
Told another parent about the programme	80 (n=119)	42 (n=112)	42 (n=62)	57 (n=293)	41.45	2	<.001
Brought another parent along to a HSCL activity for their first time	52 (n=119)	13 (n=112)	19 (n=62)	30 (n=293)	45.39	2	<.001
Was taken to a HSCL activity by another parent for my first time	22 (n=119)	11 (n=110)	8 (n=62)	15 (n=291)	8.25	2	<.05

Both groups of uninvolved mothers had also networked about HSCL, although to a lesser extent than I mothers. Forty-two percent of both UOK and UNH mothers had told another parent about HSCL. Further, although not consistently involved, some of these had also brought another parent along to a HSCL activity for their first time (13% UOK and 19% UNH) and were taken to a HSCL activity by another parent for their first time (11% UOK and 8% UNH).

Home Visits

Significantly fewer UOK mothers (only 18%) knew that someone from the school visited parents at home than either UNH (35%) or I (43%) mothers (χ^2 =19.28, df = 4, p<.001). A school staff person had visited twice as many homes of UNH (41%) and I (41%) mothers than of UOK (20%) mothers (χ^2=15.52, df = 2, p<.001). In most cases it was the co-ordinator who had visited the homes (94% for I and 88% for both UOK and UNH). Almost all mothers found these visits helpful (96% of I and UOK groups and all the UNH group). The most popular reasons why mothers perceived home visits as helpful are presented in Table 21.20. The greatest numbers perceived the visit as helpful because of the information it provided to them. More UNH mothers were likely to attribute the helpfulness of the visit to the provision of information and to the (caring) approach and personality of the visitor, whereas more involved mothers referred to the ease of interaction between themselves and the visitor in their own home. It may be that for I mothers their relationship with the co-

ordinator has gone beyond the primarily practical basis of needing information and initial caring contact to being able to open up and express more personal needs.

Table 21.20

Percentages of Involved and Uninvolved Mothers who Gave Varying Reasons why they Considered Home Visits as Helpful

Reason why visit was helpful	I (n=49) %	UOK (n=27) %	UNH (n=35) %	Total (n=111) %
Provided information to mother	40.8	40.7	57.1	45.9
Visitor's approach and personality (were caring)	16.3	25.9	34.3	24.3
Ease of interaction between mother and visitor in own home	24.5	18.5	8.6	18.0

Attitudes to HSCL Practices and to the People Involved

Mothers were asked whether a number of HSCL practices were for the better, made no difference, or were for the worse. The practices were rated on a 4-point scale with 1='don't know,' 2='worse,' 3='no difference,' and 4='better') and were predominantly perceived as being for the better (Table 21.21). Having parent classes in the school and parents helping with school activities were almost exclusively considered to be for the better by all three groups. Over 90% saw having a room in the school that parents can use as being for the better but there were significant differences in opinions on this matter between the I mothers and the UOK mothers. Having parents helping the teacher in the classroom was also generally perceived as being for the better. There was a significant difference between UOK mothers and I mothers in the extent to which they felt that having parents help teachers was for the better, with I mothers viewing this practice in a more positive light. Having people from the community (who have no children in the school) helping with school activities was also perceived as being for the better, though the differences between the groups were not significant. Having parents act as leaders at classes for other parents was least often seen as being for the better, the differences being significant between both I and UNH groups and I and UOK groups. It is noteworthy that for the three HSCL practices showing significant differences between the groups, it was UOK mothers more often than UNH mothers who

Table 21.21

Mean Values for Mothers' Ratings of HSCL Practices

	I (n=121)	UOK (n=138)	UNH (n=80)	Total (n=339)	F	df	p	Diff (p<.05)
Having classes for parents in the school that are organised by the co-ordinator	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	1.63	2,336	.20	
Having parents helping with activities in the school	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	1.05	2,336	.35	
Having a room in the school that parents can use	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9	7.6	2,336	<.001	I≠UOK
Having parents help teachers in the classroom	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.04	2,336	<.05	I≠UOK
Having people in the community help with school activities	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	.90	2,333	.41	
Having parents act as leaders at classes for other parents	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.6	6.5	2,335	<.05	I≠UNH I≠UOK

differed from I mothers. It seems that UOK mothers saw less need for a room for parents in the school, less need for parents to help teachers in classrooms, or less reason for a parent to act as leaders at parent classes.

When asked what they thought of the group of people who were involved in the HSCL programme, I mothers made more positive comments than either group of uninvolved mothers. For example, more I mothers mentioned positive personality attributes of those who were involved (68.1% compared with 44.5% and 38.3% for UOK and UNH mothers respectively) or mentioned the time or effort put into involvement (26.1% compared with 16.4% and 15% respectively). Some I mothers (16.8%) noted the positive interaction among those involved whereas both uninvolved groups largely did not (2.7% and 5.1% respectively for UOK and UNH). These patterns are perhaps to be expected since many of the uninvolved (28.2% UOK and 26.7% UNH) said that they did not know anything about the people who were involved. Both uninvolved groups were also more likely than I mothers to be more non-committal or slightly negative (e.g., ' they're alright, I'm sure') in their responses (13.6% and 18.3% compared with 7.5%).

Conclusion

The most striking demographic differences distinguish UNH mothers from I and UOK groups. UNH mothers were more likely than the other two groups to come from a family in which both parents were unemployed. This finding points to the need for strategies to address problems associated with unemployment. UNH parents were also more likely to come from a one-parent family, and to have more children.

Uninvolved mothers considered to need help also displayed certain practices and attitudes which would be expected to inhibit rather than to encourage their children's achievement. Compared to involved mothers, both groups of uninvolved mothers talked to their child's teacher less frequently. UNH mothers were less likely than other mothers to read newspapers or books/to talk to their child about something he/she had read or seen on television. UNH mothers read less often to their child when he/she was younger; perceived their child to be doing less well at school than classmates; and felt that they could help their child at school to a lesser extent. Particularly significant is the fact that UNH mothers felt less in a position to help their child at school than involved or UOK mothers. Increased effort to devise activities that would enhance UNH mothers' confidence in, and understanding of, how to support their child's educational development, would seem to be worthwhile.

Three-quarters of UNH mothers and four-fifths of UOK mothers were already aware of HSCL programmes in schools, mostly as a result of a letter sent home or of seeing a notice at the school. There was also evidence of networking among parents as some uninvolved (as well as involved) mothers had learned of the HSCL programme from other parents. This finding is corroborated by another finding that almost four-fifths of involved mothers stated that they had told another parent about the programme. Involved mothers appear to seek most information about their children (they talk to the teacher more often and also say that they would like to be told more about how their child is getting on at school). Uninvolved mothers, particularly UNH, were less likely to initiate such communication. In this respect, home visits would appear to be vital in encouraging greater communication between UNH parents and the school. While co-ordinators clearly targeted UNH families for home visits, all groups were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to such visits which were perceived to be most helpful (particularly by UNH mothers) in terms of the information that was provided through them to mothers.

22. OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Activities relating to home-school-community relationships before and after the introduction of the HSCL scheme are briefly described. The impact of HSCL programmes on schools, parents, and pupils is outlined. A considerable amount of activity was generated in schools, which provided a wide range of courses for parents (mothers) and opportunities for them to meet socially. Homes were visited and parents became involved in a variety of school activities, both in the classroom and outside it. In both primary and post-primary schools, teachers were involved in HSCL activities. In general, parents' personal development and involvement in schools were perceived to have benefitted from the HSCL Scheme. However, not all parents are being reached by the scheme. A number of effects on pupils, including improved behaviour and attendance and a more positive attitude to school, were reported. The community-based aspect of the HSCL Scheme received less emphasis than work with parents. However, many co-ordinators were successful in establishing links with relevant community agencies.

Activities Before the HSCL Scheme

All primary and post-primary schools had a number of basic structures in place to facilitate home-school relationships before the inception of the HSCL scheme. These included, for most schools, Boards of Management with parental representation, parent committees, open days, and parent-teacher meetings. In several schools, parents helped out with extra-curricular activities. Parents seemed to have reasonable access to schools, especially at the point at which their children were entering the school. They were also informed of their children's school progress.

The fact that post-primary schools had a pastoral care structure and staff (chaplains) meant that they could sustain a wider range of contacts with homes than primary schools. For example, home visits were a feature of contacts at post-primary level but were rare at primary level. Post-primary schools also, particularly those in the vocational education sector, had greater contact with agencies outside the school (including community agencies) than primary schools. This was partly a reflection of the fact that such contacts were more relevant to older children and also of the fact that vocational schools were embedded in a local authority structure which had responsibility for adult and community education as well as second-level education.

Despite the arrangements that were in place in schools to promote home-school contacts before the HSCL scheme began, it was recognized that more needed to be done. Some schools had relatively few structures or activities and all probably needed to expand the range of activities in which they were engaged. Further, the quality of home-school contacts in most cases could not be regarded as entirely satisfactory. For the most part, the role of parents was a relatively passive one, for some in the deliberations of governance and advocacy bodies, for the rest in receiving communications from the school about their children's school progress and behaviour. Besides, parents who become involved in

governance and in helping out with extra-curricular activities are generally self-selective and may not at all be representative of the general parent body, much less of parents who may be uninvolved in their children's education. A consideration of the existing state of affairs relating to home-school relationships before the commencement of the HSCL scheme indicated a need for the school to adopt a more proactive role in promoting home-school relationships. Three major approaches seemed appropriate. The first would involve increasing the variety and quantity of home-school contacts. Secondly, the quality of the contacts would need to be improved. In particular, there was a need to promote a more central and active role among parents in their children's education. And thirdly, there was a need to ensure that as great a number as possible of parents would be involved in home-school activities. This would no doubt require special efforts to target in a more systematic and vigorous manner parents who were uninvolved and might have difficulty in becoming more involved.

Activities in HSCL Programmes

One indication of how HSCL programmes were constructed and implemented in schools and in the community may be obtained by examining how co-ordinators spent their time. While the picture that emerges from this examination may not reflect the experiences of schools or of parents, it should provide information on the main thrust of programmes. When we examine primary school co-ordinators' use of time, we find that, on average, most time (31%) was devoted to parent courses and activities. This finding may be paralleled with the findings of a survey of parents carried out in six selected schools that among parents who became involved in HSCL programmes, the most common activity was attendance at courses. Just over a quarter (26%) of co-ordinators' time was spent on home visits. Rather less time was devoted to meetings and contacts within the school with principals (7%), teachers (8%), and pupils (3%). Individual meetings with parents occupied 10% of time, and contacting agencies or individuals in the community 9 percent. The remaining time was spent on arranging funding for HSCL programmes (2%) and a variety of other activities (4%).

It will be noted that work with parents (either in school or the home) took up two-thirds (67%) of co-ordinators' time. By contrast, only 15% of time was spent with teachers and 9% in community-related activities. It can be accepted on the basis of these data that concern with parents was the main preoccupation of co-ordinators. This may help explain why some teachers did not think that programmes were sufficiently well integrated into schools or did not adequately address their immediate problems. The approach, however, was being faithful to the aims of the HSCL scheme to promote active co-operation between home and school and to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's

educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills. The procedures adopted to promote these aims would appear to have focused more directly on parents rather than on intervention in the general community.

When we examine the precise courses and activities which primary schools offered in the second and third year of the operation of the HSCL scheme, we find that the most popular from the schools' point of view in both years were ones directly related to children's education. Over 90% of schools in the second year were involved in such activities as providing classes in the children's school subjects in order to equip parents to help their children with homework. Parents also assisted in the classroom, in paired-reading programmes, in meetings, or in the library. While these activities were continued in the third year, the percentage of involved schools decreased to about 70. There was also a decrease in the number of schools offering self-development courses. However, the number of schools offering parenting, leisure, and parents' education courses increased.

The parents' point of view, however, was somewhat different if we can take the experience in the six schools selected for special study as representative of programmes as a whole. As we have just seen, attending courses would appear to have been the most salient feature of HSCL programmes for parents. Almost 80% of those involved in programmes attended courses, compared to 58% who attended school-based activities, and 41% who were engaged in classroom activities.

Differences between primary and post-primary schools in their organization, degree of differentiated staffing, and the stage of development of students would suggest that the development of HSCL programmes would take a different course and experience different problems in post-primary schools than in primary schools. Post-primary schools already had personnel (guidance counsellors, chaplains, year heads/class tutors, posts of responsibility) whose everyday work was likely to bring them into contact with parents, as well as with students in both pastoral and academic contexts. Furthermore, vocational and community schools in the post-primary sector had a tradition of greater involvement with the community than is normal either in primary or in traditional secondary schools. The stage of development of students is also relevant in considering home-school relationships. By the time students reach the post-primary level, they are becoming increasingly independent of their parents while parents, for their part, might feel that they have less control over, and less responsibility for, their children. Again, at the post-primary level, the academic demands on students increase and are likely to be beyond the competence of many parents. Given these factors, it is unlikely that some approaches adopted at the primary level to improve home-school relationships, especially those for very young children, would be appropriate for young adolescent students.

It is perhaps surprising then that the pattern of activities at post-primary level was not greatly dissimilar to that at primary level. In both years in which HSCL programmes had been in operation, there was a heavy emphasis in post-primary schools on courses and activities for parents. These included courses in self-development, leisure, parenting, and education. It should be pointed out that access to tutors for such courses was easier at the post-primary level, where many tutors came from the VEC sector, than at the primary level. However, the involvement of parents in activities more directly related to their children's learning (e.g., reading programmes) was less common than in primary schools.

There was also less involvement of parents in classroom activity. About half the staff interviewed in post-primary schools were sceptical about how parents could be integrated into classroom work. About the same number, however, were open to this type of parental involvement and thought that parents could assist in a variety of activities, including remedial work, practical subjects, and career guidance.

The Impact of HSCL Programmes on Schools

It is clear that a major advantage of the HSCL scheme was in its provision of a co-ordinator to liaise with parents and the community outside the school. This was found to be a boon to teachers and in many primary schools, the co-ordinator was able to facilitate contacts between teachers and parents. Sometimes school timetables were adjusted to do this. In most schools, the number of teachers who interacted with parents increased during the first three years of the scheme.

In a number of schools, school staff were perceived to have become more open and tolerant, both in dealings among themselves and in relation to parents. Some teachers who at an early stage had resisted parent involvement in the classroom now welcomed it. However, resistance to this idea continued among others.

In four out of five primary schools, the school's role in the community had been perceived to change. Schools had a higher profile and in some schools contact with community agencies had grown.

At a general level, the HSCL scheme has made teachers think about the role of parents in the school and in education. At a more specific level, it has got teachers to think about how they might involve parents in the school or in the classroom. Teachers realise, however, that parent involvement, particularly in the classroom, needs to be part of a well thought-out and structured programme which has been developed with considerable input from teachers.

With improved parent-teacher relations, teachers found that problems became easier to deal with and parents easier to contact. Parents, in turn, found it easier to approach teachers. At least some teachers in more than half the schools involved parents in a variety of activities, from accompanying children to swimming to helping in classroom activities.

However, in most schools in which such activities took place, only some teachers were involved.

Teachers for their part in more than half of primary schools also helped out with other HSCL activities. Again, it was more usual to find only some teachers in a school rather than all or most engaged in such activities. The implication of this is that care must be taken to avoid isolating teachers who are fearful of or who are not involved in HSCL programmes.

In general, the picture is one in which changes occurred in primary schools as a result of HSCL programmes. Further, changes in teachers' attitudes towards parents--their role in the home and in the school--were more frequently positive than negative. However, there is variation between schools in the extent to which HSCL programmes impacted on schools. And even where there was an impact, it did not touch all teachers.

Despite differences in context, many of the reported effects on post-primary schools were very similar to those reported for primary schools. In general, teachers in post-primary schools were supportive of the HSCL initiative, saw it as improving parents' access to the school, and exhibited positive attitudes to school and community. They also noted that it was now easier to contact parents, something which they welcomed. As at primary level, some staff provided evidence of their support for HSCL programmes by taking on extra duties to facilitate the work of the co-ordinator. A particularly significant feature at the post-primary level was the effort which was made in the context of the HSCL scheme in a few schools to review and achieve consensus, with the collaboration of parents, on the goals, ideals, and aspirations of the school.

More than half the staff in post-primary schools were involved in a variety of school-based activities with parents, though this was already a feature of schools before the initiation of HSCL programmes. However, during the course of the HSCL scheme, a majority of teachers said that they were prepared to expand these activities--meeting with parents, teaching adult education classes, and working with parents in extra-curricular activities. The time commitments which the activities would involve were, however, seen as likely to be problematic.

The most striking effect of the extension of the HSCL scheme to post-primary schools was the development of links between primary and post-primary levels in the scheme, and in particular, of activities relating to the transition of students from primary to post-primary school. Primary teachers welcomed information about entrance examinations while post-primary teachers were glad to get information about incoming students. Parents were pleased that there would be some continuity in their involvement across both levels within the school system. Co-ordinators also co-operated in the provision of courses and activities for parents, and this usually resulted in a broadening of the range of available activities.

The main differences between both levels of the scheme related to the organization of schools. The existence of pastoral care structures at post-primary level gave co-ordinators access to a team of specialists (e.g., remedial teacher, guidance counsellor, chaplain, year heads) who often knew the backgrounds to students' problems. However, the number of teachers and their varying roles often created confusion among parents about who to contact about a problem or concern. Furthermore, because the pupils at primary level are younger, co-ordinators tended to have more opportunities for contact with their parents.

Impact on Parents

It is clear from the design of, and thinking behind, HSCL programmes that parents were perceived to occupy a key role in attaining programme objectives. It is thus of considerable interest to look at the impact of programmes on parents. It would be more accurate to speak of mothers than of parents. Given the potential influence of mothers on their children's educational development, it was reasonable that they should have been the target of activity. There was, of course, also the more practical consideration that it was more often mothers rather than fathers who came to the school. As a consequence, the data in this report refer almost exclusively to mothers.

The views of co-ordinators and teachers are in general agreement in seeing considerable benefit for mothers arising from HSCL programmes. In an increasing number of schools throughout the first three years of the scheme, and in the final year in all schools, parents' personal development was perceived to have benefitted from participation in HSCL programmes. Thus, sometimes based on comments made by parents themselves, the self-confidence, parenting skills, and home-management skills of parents were perceived to have improved. Benefits were seen to accrue primarily from involvement in courses. Information from parents in the six selected schools endorses the observations of co-ordinators. Parents described a number of benefits, including the development of a mutual support system among themselves and growth in self-confidence, as accruing to them from involvement in HSCL activities.

In a large majority of schools, parents' attitudes towards involvement in the school had been perceived to become more positive. Parents had developed a new interest in what happened in school, came to the school more frequently, were more aware of the working of schools, talked more about educational issues, and had a greater awareness of the classroom situation and of the problems of teachers.

Parents in some schools were beginning to show evidence of a growth in 'empowerment.' They became aware of the importance of their role in their children's education and began to feel that they had a say in what went on at school. Their attitudes to the school became more positive and they felt more at home in the school and in dealing with

teachers. They asked if they could help without waiting to be asked and, in particular, volunteered for HSCL activities. They helped their children at homework following attendance at courses (in e.g., reading) and in general felt comfortable about it. Finally, some parents felt confident enough to help in the classroom.

Involvement in classroom activities was reported by practically all parents who had helped in the classroom as having conferred a variety of benefits. Parents had learned more about the teacher's job, more about what being in the classroom is like for a child, and more about the problems teachers have to deal with. As a result, they found it easier to ask teachers questions, learned ways of helping with their children's schooling, and became more confident about doing it.

While HSCL programmes were perceived in all primary schools to have had an impact on parents (at least in terms of general activities in the school), at the same time there were differences between parents in the degree to which their attitudes had been perceived to change. Clearly also there were considerable differences in the extent to which parents had become involved in HSCL activities. Some teachers thought that a core of parents had become involved and that these perhaps were the ones who least needed the support of a home-school scheme, while those most in need--parents with social or economic problems, literacy problems, parents of troublesome children or of ones that were frequently absent from school, parents who lacked confidence in themselves--were not involved. However, co-ordinators were very conscious of the need to target these parents and most made every effort to meet them, particularly through home visits.

Some of the effects on parents at the post-primary level were very similar to those reported at the primary level: improved attitudes to school, greater trust of school personnel, increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings, and greater confidence in approaching the school and teachers.

However, there was less evidence at the post-primary level that parents were becoming more involved in the educational activities of their children. This is perhaps not surprising given that most parents would not be familiar with much of the curriculum content of the post-primary school. One principal thought that as a result of the greater involvement of parents in the school they should be in a better position to help in the practical areas of homework, discipline, and attendance. However, this seems to be a rather over-optimistic view of the possible effects of school visitation.

As at the primary level, some co-ordinators at post-primary level expressed concern that it was the least disadvantaged parents who became involved in HSCL programmes, while parents from less advantaged homes, who might for example have problems of literacy, were less likely to become involved. Despite efforts of co-ordinators to use home visits or other strategies to reach such parents, this concern would appear to have substance.

When the HSCL programmes had been running in schools for a period of two years, a survey was carried out to obtain more systematic data from mothers themselves that might throw light on the question of involvement and its correlates. Interviews were conducted with mothers of pupils in the six selected primary schools who had been identified by co-ordinators as 'involved' in the HSCL programme, 'not involved but not needing help,' and 'not involved but needing help.'

A number of demographic characteristics were found to distinguish uninvolved mothers described as needing help from the other categories of mother. Such uninvolved mothers were more likely to come from a one-parent family, to have more children, and where there were two parents in the family, the uninvolved (needing help) were more likely to be unemployed.

The uninvolved group (needing help) also differed from the involved parents and frequently from the uninvolved group that was not considered to need help on a number of practices and attitudes related to the child's educational environment, at home and at school. Thus, parents in the uninvolved group considered to need help were less likely to have read to their child when younger, less likely to read themselves, less likely to talk to their child about something seen on television or that had been read, and less likely to check the child's television viewing or reading. They also were more likely to perceive that their child was doing less well than other children at school, to feel that they could not help their child with homework, and to expect their child to leave school at a younger age. In general, uninvolved mothers considered not to need help were more like involved mothers than like uninvolved ones considered to be in need of help.

These findings on the characteristics of uninvolved parents lend support to teachers' views about who had become involved and who had not in HSCL programmes. They also indicate the need for increased efforts to increase the level of involvement of those described as uninvolved but needing help.

Impact on Pupils

Limited information is available on the impact of HSCL programmes on children. As pointed out earlier in this report, effects at the pupil level would be likely to be long-term, beyond the life of the present evaluation. However, while effects, for example, on student achievement are likely to be longer term and while data on one of the aims of the HSCL scheme relating to students' continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level are clearly beyond the time-scale of the evaluation, at the same time one might expect at this stage to be able to detect some processes and behaviours that would suggest by their presence a real probability that longer term goals would be achieved.

A number of effects on pupils were reported by co-ordinators in a majority of schools. For the most part, the effects referred mainly to 'some' pupils (sometimes as few as one or two pupils with whom the co-ordinator or another staff member had intervened directly). Effects included improved behaviour, improved attendance, improved scholastic achievement, greater care in their school work, and more positive attitudes to school and teachers, to themselves, and to their parents. Co-ordinators also reported that pupils had received more practical help with school work. This was particularly evident in schools in which parents assisted in classroom activities or other activities (e.g., computers, paired reading) with pupils. Over two-thirds of involved mothers also reported that, as a consequence of their involvement in courses, they had learned how to help their child(ren) with school work. This was true for a greater percentage of those who had been involved in classrooms.

Teachers noted some of these effects also, pointing in addition to the fact that the presence of parents in classrooms (at junior level) made children happier. The majority of older pupils (fifth class) who were interviewed during the evaluation, however, did not favour the presence of their own parents in their classroom. Few teachers saw any immediate effects on pupils' scholastic performance. Most felt that such effects would take longer to emerge.

Community Involvement

One of the aims of the HSCL scheme is to promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of children. In pursuit of this aim, co-ordinators, on average, devoted about 9% of their time to contacting a variety of agencies and individuals. Over the three years in which the scheme has been in operation, a large number of agencies and individuals were contacted. Initially, contact was mainly to publicize and explain the HSCL scheme, to find out more about agencies and individuals, to establish relationships with them, and to seek resources. As time went on, contacts were established with voluntary agencies (e.g., youth organizations, social services), health and social service agencies/individuals (e.g., public health nurse, social worker), groups involved in parents' education (Vocational Education Committees), a number of local initiatives (e.g., women's groups), and others. There was a marked increase from the second to the third year of the scheme in the numbers of schools for which co-ordinators contacted local agencies or individuals. While the greatest percentage of schools which had contacted any individual agency or person in the second year was 32 (and this was high for the year), by the following year a greater percentage had contacted three agencies/individuals and close to 30% had contacted four further agencies or individuals. In both years, the Vocational Education Committee was the agency contacted by the greatest number of schools. Other agencies/individuals that attracted contact from a relatively high number of schools in both

years were public health nurses and social workers. There was considerable variation between schools in the precise agencies or individuals that were contacted.

Co-ordinators' assessments of the extent to which a variety of community agencies or individuals contributed to the success of HSCL programmes can be interpreted as providing an indication of their perceptions of what the main thrust of programmes should be. Their assessments are of particular interest in the context of the balance that had to be struck between goals which emphasize the longer term development of parents and community and ones that are related to alleviation of the day-to-day problems of families and children.

When we examine co-ordinators' ratings of the extent to which community agencies and individuals had contributed to the success of HSCL programmes, we find that the most valued contributions were judged to have come from agencies which one would expect to provide services relating to the long-term development of parents and communities. Thus, the agency most frequently named as having contributed to a great extent to programme success was one that provides parent education courses and resources for programmes (VECs). Also relatively frequently named were agencies that have as their concern the economic and social development of areas (city corporations, Area Partnership Companies).

At the same time, the fire-brigade aspect of services was not neglected by co-ordinators and could hardly be, given the family problems that they would inevitably encounter in their work. Thus, social workers, community gardaí, public health nurses, and child care and family guidance centres were perceived to have contributed to the success of HSCL programmes. But their contribution was much more frequently judged to be 'to some extent' rather than 'to a great extent.'

Differences in the weight assigned to community agencies and individuals by different co-ordinators probably reflects a difference in emphasis between the HSCL programmes of schools. In some schools, greater weight was assigned to the contribution of development agencies while in others greater weight was assigned to individuals and services that could provide immediate support in dealing with problems.

It was envisaged that Local Committees, made up of representatives from schools, parents/families, and local statutory and voluntary organizations, should play an important part in the development of relationships between schools, homes, and the community. At an early stage in the scheme, the issue of Local Committees generated much concern among some principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and local co-ordinators, a concern that was reflected in the pace at which Local Committees were established. By the end of the first year of the scheme, only 25 primary schools had established a Committee, while at the end of the third year only 33 had such a Committee. Four post-primary schools had established a Local Committee by the end of their second year in the scheme. This was done in conjunction with local primary schools.

Though slow to develop, by the end of the third year of the scheme, Local Committees had begun to play a greater role in planning and decision making in relation to HSCL activities. However, many teachers remained unaware of the existence of Local Committees, much less of their role or function. A number of problems emerged regarding the operation of Local Committees. These included identification of the role of Committees, the role of parents, poor attendance, and lack of contact between the Committees and other agencies. Despite such problems, the concept of a Local Committee was perceived by school personnel as worthy.

Factors identified by co-ordinators as having contributed to the success of a Local Committee where one was established included parent awareness of HSCL programmes, support from the school principal, the degree of co-operation and effort exhibited by committee members, and community awareness of HSCL activities.

Conclusions

This overview of the operation of HSCL programmes in their first two or three years of operation in primary schools and their first two years in post-primary schools indicates that a considerable amount of activity was generated in schools. Schools provided a wide range of courses for parents (mothers), including self-development courses, parenting courses, classes in the primary-school curriculum, and leisure courses. Homes were visited and opportunities were provided in schools for parents to meet socially. Parents became involved in a variety of school activities, both in the classroom and outside it. The reaction to such activity, among teachers and parents, was very positive. It is a tribute to co-ordinators that changes in school practice and ethos were accomplished without any discernible negative reactions.

It seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of such activities and of the reactions of all involved in HSCL liaison programmes--co-ordinators, parents, and teachers--that a major start had been made in meeting one of the aims of the scheme--to promote active co-operation between home and school.

There is also some evidence that movement had occurred towards the achievement of a second aim of the scheme--to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills. This conclusion may be inferred from observations that parents had increased in self-confidence, knew more about what was happening in school, and had learned how to help their children with school work.

Judging the extent to which another aim of the project--to enhance the active participation of children in the learning process, in particular those that might be at risk of failure--was achieved is more problematic. As pointed out early in this report, effects on pupil achievement of a project such as the HSCL scheme would be likely to be long-term

rather than short-term. There will be an opportunity in a few years time to compare the scholastic achievements of students in participating schools with achievements at the inception of the scheme. At this stage, we can only comment on the likelihood that the type of programmes that have been implemented will be found to have impacted on students' scholastic progress.

While programmes were in general comprehensive in nature, their major focus, insofar as one can judge from the activities that were generated, can be described as cognitive-behavioural. Furthermore, most activities were directed towards mothers and, in particular, towards providing them with opportunities for self-development. Opportunities were also provided in classes dealing with the curriculum of primary schools and by having mothers present in classrooms. Classroom presence was designed to increase their sensitivity to the importance of their role in the educational process and to develop their skills for interacting with their children in ways that would promote their children's educational development. However, fewer schools and mothers were involved in such activities than were involved in self-development activities. It is our feeling that a greater emphasis on such activities would be more likely than parent development courses to impact on children's school learning. Such an emphasis would also be likely to meet the needs of the greatest majority of parents who participated in programmes who gave as their reason for participation 'to be more involved in children's education.' By contrast, only minorities gave as reasons 'to improve my own education' or 'to learn more about a pastime.'

Reference in the aims of the HSCL scheme to meeting the needs of children considered to be most at risk prompts an examination of the characteristics of "involved" and "non-involved" mothers. In our survey of parents, we found that those identified as uninvolved and in need of help were in fact in need of greater support in the task of enhancing the educational environment of their children than were parents who were actively involved in programmes. The fact that co-ordinators were aware of this problem and sought to address it by visiting a greater proportion of such uninvolved homes should serve to underline the intractable nature of the problem of involving such parents. While one cannot discount the possibility that further visits or networking of parents will produce a more positive response in the future, neither can one be sure that this will be the case. At this stage, a search for alternative strategies would seem in order. These might involve more intensive work in the home with mothers. This, of course, would be labour-intensive and may not be possible within the present resources of HSCL programmes.

The community-based aspect of the HSCL scheme received less emphasis in programmes than cognitive-behavioural aspects. This is not surprising since there is a reference to community in only one of the aims of the HSCL scheme and that is limited to enhancing 'active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in

promoting the educational interests of the children.' In evaluating the effectiveness of the HSCL programmes in achieving the aim regarding community involvement, it is necessary to distinguish two types of community-based programmes. One recognizes that since many agencies besides the family play a role in supporting child development, partnership with a variety of formal and informal social systems and organizations may be necessary to create optimal conditions for children's development. The other type of programme, recognizing that the problems of disadvantage very often have their origins in the conditions of the communities in which families live, communities that may lack services, organization, and leadership, see development of the community itself as a prerequisite to sustaining the effects of any intervention that may be implemented to support children's development. Both the aim of the scheme and the way in which programmes have developed suggest that the former type of programme is what was envisaged in the HSCL scheme. If this is so, programmes may be regarded as having met the scheme's aim insofar as many co-ordinators have been successful in establishing links with relevant community agencies. The extension and development of local committees should serve to further facilitate this work.

Finally, we may consider the extent to which programmes have been successful in bringing schools to the point that they provide a more appropriate educational environment for children. There is no doubt that schools have changed. They are more accommodating of parents, are providing a wide range of services for them, and are allowing them to participate more actively in the work of the school and of classrooms. One might expect this trend to continue until all teachers have some involvement in home-school programmes. It seems unlikely, however, given the constraints under which schools operate, particularly at the post-primary level, that radical changes will occur in their organization and functioning.

Even if radical changes in the organization and functioning of schools are not to be expected, it does, however, seem appropriate to explore further how schools, under present constraints, are dealing with problems of disadvantage. There have been several initiatives at the national level designed to deal with disadvantage which have allowed schools to purchase materials, to reduce class size, and to provide remedial and psychological services. However, these initiatives have so far either been evaluated in isolation or not at all. It would seem appropriate at this stage to examine the impact of the variety of measures that have been taken from the point of view of individual schools. Now that HSCL programmes, together with other programmes, are well-established in schools, such an examination should provide useful information for policy decisions on the relative effectiveness of existing measures as well as on the possible need for other approaches to deal with the problems of disadvantage. While it would be unrealistic to expect individual initiatives such as the HSCL scheme to solve the problems of disadvantage, it may not be unrealistic to expect that a combination of

approaches would serve to alleviate them. There is already evidence from elsewhere that such a combination would be likely to be more effective than single-focus strategies.

A multi-faceted approach to meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged students is favoured in recent major interventions in the United States. While interventions vary in their emphasis and in detail, major efforts, such as Success for All Schools (Slavin, 1989), Accelerated Schools (Levin, 1987), and School Development Program (Comer, 1988), all share certain characteristics. First, all encourage a highly contextualized curriculum placing great emphasis on reading and language skills. Second, all involve smaller classes to facilitate individual attention and the development of relationships between teachers and pupils. Third, all emphasize the important role that parents must play in their children's educational experiences. Fourth, all approaches include governance structures designed to empower schools to develop a unity of purpose to focus and build on strengths. Finally, all programmes operate at the primary school level, emphasizing prevention over remediation. All also show a commitment to preschool experiences (see King, 1994).

The HSCL scheme shares some of the features of these approaches but also differs from them in a number of respects. The most obvious similarity is to be found in the role assigned to parents. For both the HSCL scheme and the American interventions, parents occupy a central role. The Irish approach is probably closest to the Success for All Schools in its approach to parental involvement. While it accepts the Accelerated School philosophy that there is room for considerable variety in how parents get involved as long as they get involved, it also shares the more structured approach of the Success for All Schools in its provision of a local co-ordinator, in its conduct of home visits, in its parenting workshops, in offering strategies for helping children at home, in recruiting parents to volunteer in schools, and in its provision of referrals to social agencies (see Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1991).

Although not an integral part of the HSCL scheme, reduced pupil-teacher ratios, as a consequence of other interventions for schools in disadvantaged areas, are a feature of the Irish approach as of American approaches.

The Irish approach is also similar to the American ones in its promotion of parent involvement in school governance. However, the approaches differ insofar as the Irish approach emphasizes the role of local committees in community involvement, while the American approach focuses parents' activities on the challenges faced by schools.

The areas in which the Irish and American approaches diverge most relate to preschool intervention and curriculum. While preschool intervention has been a feature of other attempts to deal with disadvantage in Ireland (Kellaghan, 1977), it does not figure in the HSCL scheme. Modification of curriculum, a key feature of current and past American interventions, also featured in earlier Irish efforts (Kellaghan, 1977). In the light of such

experience, at home and abroad, it would seem reasonable to now consider the integration of preschool and curriculum components with the HSCL scheme to provide a broader and more multi-faceted approach to the problems faced in disadvantaged schools.

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