

**REVIEW OF THE
HOME/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY LIAISON SCHEME**

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), all Government departments are required to carry out or commission a series of expenditure reviews of some of their more significant programmes and other areas of activity (Delivering Better Government, 1996: Department of Finance, 2001a, b).

SMI is essentially a programme of institutional reform of the civil service, in particular, and the public service, more generally, designed to achieve “accountability, transparency and freedom of information” (Delivering Better Government, 1996, Foreword). A new approach to financial management, including expenditure reviews of the programmes of spending departments, is an element of the SMI.

The Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme is one of the programmes under the Department of Education and Science (DES) that are or have been the subject of SMI reviews. Others include primary education (Kellaghan & Flanagan, 1999) and “the main post-primary education programme” (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, in preparation). The HSCL scheme differs from these other two programmes insofar as it is not universally provided. Only schools that serve significant numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and have been so designated by the Department can avail of the personnel and other resources of the HSCL scheme. In particular, designated schools can avail of the services of a HSCL coordinator. The process of designating schools as “disadvantaged” will be described later.

Following the decision to include the HSCL scheme in the SMI review process, a steering committee, comprising representatives of the Departments of

Education and Science and Finance, was established with the following terms of reference.

To examine and report on the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme with a view to:

1. Setting the scheme in the context of Government policy in general and Department of Education and Science policy in particular
2. Commenting on the adequacy and appropriateness of the scheme's objectives in the context of these policies
3. Evaluating the implementation and development of the scheme
4. Assessing the impact of the scheme on schools, families, pupils, parents and community
5. Commenting on how efficiently and effectively, the scheme has achieved stated objectives
6. Examining and commenting on the relationship and interaction between the scheme and other schemes/services for children and families at risk at both local and national levels and making recommendations in this regard
7. Reporting and commenting on international approaches to addressing educational disadvantage and the extent to which these involve home/school/community linkages
8. Assessing the HSCL scheme as a means of addressing educational disadvantage
9. Identifying alternative policy and/or organisational approaches to achieving the scheme's objectives on a more efficient and effective basis
10. Identifying and commenting on available performance indicators for the scheme and developing further appropriate performance indicators to the extent that deficiencies are identified in available indicators

11. Identifying key themes, issues and learning from the experience of the HSCL scheme
12. Presenting conclusions and recommendations to be considered in the formulation of future policy and practice in relation to the development of school, family, community linkages as a means of addressing educational disadvantage.

For convenience, the twelve items in the terms of reference will be referred to as ToR 1, ToR 2 ... ToR 12.

The terms of reference were discussed at a meeting between the steering committee and staff of the Educational Research Centre on June 18, 2001. At that meeting, it was agreed that, the need to complete the review quickly precluded any significant fieldwork to generate new data and that this constraint would lessen the value of the review. Nevertheless, the review was seen as valuable in its own right and as a potential springboard for a further, more comprehensive evaluation of the HSCL scheme. The Research Centre then prepared a document in which the main elements of a proposed review were outlined. That document envisaged that, apart from a survey of HSCL coordinators that will be described later, the review would be based on:

- analyses of documentation relating to the scheme (e.g., statements of aims and basic principles, guidelines for coordinators, material used with staff as part of in-career education and training);
- analyses of relevant policy documents issued by the Department of Education and Science and by the Government;
- interviews with a small number of key personnel;
- observation of meetings and/or in-career development sessions;
- findings from the external evaluation by the Educational Research Centre (Ryan, 1994, 1999);

- a doctoral thesis by the National Coordinator of the HSCL scheme (Conaty, 1999).

Conaty has since developed the material in her thesis in a book published in March 2002. That book is referred to at various points in the present report;

- relevant literature from Irish and international sources.

The present report follows, with some minor exceptions, the outline envisaged in the earlier Research Centre document. The report is divided into 8 sections.

The next section (Section 2) is an attempt to deal with the first item in the terms of reference: “Setting the scheme in the context of Government policy in general and Department of Education and Science policy in particular” (ToR 1). The HSCL scheme is a major strand of the Department of Education and Science strategy to tackle educational disadvantage. That strategy is, in turn, part of Government policy on poverty and social exclusion as outlined in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS, 1997, 2002). Therefore, Section 2 attempts to situate the HSCL scheme both in a specific educational strategy and a wider social policy framework.

Since its introduction to the system in 1990, documentation relating to the HSCL scheme has included statements of five aims and 12 “basic principles”. Section 3 of this report begins with a commentary on these aims and principles in terms of the extent to which they adhere to guidelines provided in documentation on the SMI regarding objectives (ToR2) and the relationships between objectives and other concepts (e.g., targets, mission statements and inputs) and the extent to which they reflect the overall context of Department and Government policy and strategy, as described in Section 2. In Section 3 also, the rationale for the HSCL scheme is outlined in the form of a series of propositions relating to various elements of the scheme (e.g., pupil’s educational attainment and achievement are enhanced by increased parent involvement). These

propositions are then discussed in the light of relevant national and international literature.

The implementation of the scheme (ToR 3) is the subject of Section 4, paying particular attention to the ways in which it has developed since its introduction. A distinction is made between implementation at national and local levels. In relation to the national level, Section 4 documents the expansion of the scheme and examines how the operation of the scheme was supported in areas like in-career development for coordinators. In this context, priorities identified at in-career sessions are highlighted. In relation to implementation at local level, Section 4 contains some results of a survey of schools in the scheme that was carried out in January 2002. These results include some findings on how schools responded to the priorities that were established at national level in the course of the development of the scheme. Some evidence is also presented on changes in the implementation of the scheme. This is done by comparing the results of the recent survey (e.g., in terms of the amount of time devoted to various activities) with findings from previous evaluations (Conaty, 1999, 2002; Ryan, 1994, 1999).

The fourth item in the terms of reference (ToR 4) calls for an assessment of “the impact of the scheme on schools, families, pupils, parents and community”, the fifth item (ToR 5) mentions the extent to which the scheme is achieving stated objectives. These matters are dealt with in Section 5 of the report. Findings of the previous evaluations are summarised in the section and the perceptions of staff in the scheme of the scheme’s impact on pupils, families, schools, and communities, as revealed in the recent survey, are presented. It is important to acknowledge that the review does not have access to any new data on the long-term effects of the scheme other than data based on the perceptions of participants.

Section 6 is concerned with the efficiency with which resources are used in the scheme (ToR 5). It includes a brief analysis of total costs and costs under a number of subheadings (e.g., salaries, administration).

Section 7 contains a discussion of performance indicators (ToR 7) that might be developed for use in the HSCL scheme. Some exemplary indicators are proposed. Distinctions are drawn between indicators relating to inputs (available resources), processes (how resources are used) and outputs (the desired impact on pupils, parents, schools and communities).

While some conclusions are presented throughout this report, Section 8 attempts to draw these conclusions together. This final section also contains recommendations to be considered in the formulation of future policy and practice (ToR12).

A draft of the present report was submitted to the Steering Committee in July 2002 with a request for comments from committee members. In September 2002, the authors met with the National Coordinator and the Manager of the HSCL scheme who had prepared a joint set of comments. In January 2003, a further set of comments was received from other members of the Steering Committee. Where possible, the present report takes account of responses received to the draft report.

SECTION 2

THE POLICY CONTEXT OF THE HOME/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY LIAISON (HSCL) SCHEME

The Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme, with which this report is concerned, was initiated, as a pilot project in 1990. The HSCL scheme was designed as a result of a review of a scheme for providing additional funding to primary schools in disadvantaged areas that had been established in 1984. Originally entitled the Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage, it is now referred to as the Designated Areas Scheme (DAS). Schools were admitted to DAS on the basis of a combination of various socioeconomic indicators (e.g., level of unemployment) and an assessment by School Inspectors of the level of need. In 1990, the number of schools designated as disadvantaged was 190. Grants were paid to these schools for the purchase of books and equipment (€12.70 per pupil) and for the development of home-school relations (€6.35 per pupil). An internal review of the operation of DAS indicated that, although the funding for books and equipment was being used well, the quality of home-school liaison activities varied widely and, in some schools, such activities were not undertaken at all. Accordingly, the budgetary allocation for DAS was increased by 300% in 1990 to allow for the appointment of 31 teachers as Home/School/Community Liaison Coordinators in 55 primary schools that were part of DAS at the time. In 1991 the scheme was extended to 13 post-primary schools that served the children from the original 55 primary schools.

The scheme has been expanded several times and is now available in 278 primary schools and 189 post-primary schools. HSCL became a mainstream programme in 1993 (i.e., it is no longer regarded as a pilot project). All schools that

are designated as disadvantaged are, since 1999, entitled to avail of the services of a coordinator, at least on the basis of sharing a coordinator with one or more other designated schools. A more detailed description of the expansion of the scheme is in Section 4 of this report. The main purpose of this section is to situate the scheme “in the context of Government policy in general and Department of Education and Science policy in particular” (ToR 1). We will deal, first, with the policy approach to educational disadvantage of the Department of Education and Science and, then, with the Government’s National Anti-Poverty Strategy. (For a fuller description of initiatives of the Department, see Murphy, 2000. For further analysis of the overall policy approach, see Archer, 2001; Kellaghan, 2002).

Departmental Policy on Educational Disadvantage

The HSCL scheme represents a significant example of one element in the strategy for tackling educational disadvantage being pursued by the Department of Education and Science. That element involves positive discrimination in favour of schools serving disadvantaged children. Others include Early Start, Breaking the Cycle, the Support Teachers Project, The School Completion Programme and aspects of a new programme (Giving Children an Even Break by Tackling Disadvantage). Brief descriptions of these initiatives will be given later in this section. Designated schools (i.e., those in DAS) were also treated more favourably in terms of resources to which all schools are entitled [e.g. capitation grants, remedial (learning support) teaching and the psychological service]. In recent years there have been a number of instances where initiatives that are planned for the whole system were introduced in designated schools. These include the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)

and aspects of Schools IT 2000 which is a programme to promote information and communication technology in schools (Department of Education and Science, 1997).

The designation of schools has been a central part of departmental policy to combat disadvantage since 1984. There have, however, been other elements of that policy. These include curriculum innovations, especially at second level to cater for the needs of an ever-increasing range of abilities and interests among students (e.g., the Leaving Certificate Applied which, although not confined to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, is considered to be of benefit to such students). They also include the continuation of schemes that target individuals rather than schools (free books, school meals and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance). In the third-level education sector, there are schemes of student support for students from low income families and programmes to increase the participation rates of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in third-level education. Finally, outside the formal school system, there is a variety of second chance initiatives for early school leavers (e.g. Youthreach and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) and for other adults who did not benefit from their schooling (e.g. the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme).

More recently there has been an attempt to develop another element in the strategy to address educational disadvantage. This element involves a complementary approach which focuses on the system as a whole. This approach is sometimes referred to as “systemic change” and focuses on what Kellaghan, Weir, Ó hUallacháin and Morgan (1995) call “the role that structural problems in the system may be playing in the maintenance, and probably in the creation of disadvantage” (p.64). It would result in a change of experience of schooling not just for those students who are disadvantaged, but for all students. Among the factors identified by Kellaghan et al.

are the admissions and placement policies and practices of schools and the focus on academic examinations. The new emphasis on systemic change is evident in the Education Act (1998), where educational disadvantage is taken to mean “ the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools” [Section 32 (9)]. The Education Act (1998) has given rise to the establishment of a committee to advise the Minister for Education and Science “on policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage” [Section 32 (1)]. According to a ministerial press release of February 16, 2001, it appears that this committee will be expected to take systemic factors into account in discharging its advisory function. The National Educational Welfare Board, established under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), also has a remit in relation to disadvantage and is expected to carry out that remit with reference to systemic factors. For example, one of its functions is to advise the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment about aspects of the school curriculum that “are likely to have an effect on attendance levels at, or the extent of student participation in, school” [Section 10 (1) (j)].

The Education (Welfare) Act has the potential to impact on the Department’s strategy on disadvantage in a number of ways. For example, it is envisaged that up to 300 Education Welfare Officers will be deployed throughout the country. “These officers will work in close co-operation with parents, teachers, school managers, community bodies and other relevant agencies to promote regular school attendance and prevent absenteeism and early school leaving.” They “will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school” (<http://www.education.ie>). It is also planned to give priority to areas with high levels of disadvantage in the phasing in of the new service.

The range of schemes targeted at schools is, as noted earlier, just one element of the Department’s strategy for dealing with disadvantage. However, it is the element of which the HSCL scheme is part and, therefore, it is important to describe the schemes and how they relate to each other in more detail. The terms of reference for the present review mention “the relationship and interaction between the Scheme and other schemes/services for children and families at risk at both local and national levels” (ToR 6).

A description of existing schemes

The schemes have evolved over a relatively short period of time as the education system has attempted to respond to the different dimensions of disadvantage. Thus, for example, the HSCL scheme began as an attempt to strengthen and structure a feature of DAS (parent involvement) and it evolved in the light of work in the literature in the 1980s and 1990s on the concept of partnership (e.g., Bastiani, 1989; CMRS, 1992; Pugh & De’Ath, 1989).

Similarly Early Start was introduced in recognition of evidence on the benefits to disadvantaged children of participation in high quality preschool intervention programmes. Early Start is a one-year programme for three-year olds modelled on the Rutland Street Project (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977). It was introduced in eight schools in 1994/1995 and to a further 32 in 1995/1996. All 40 schools are designated as disadvantaged. The only other criterion for inclusion in Early Start appears to have been the availability of physical space (effectively a spare classroom). (For evaluations of Early Start, see Educational Research Centre, 1998; Kelly & Kellaghan, 1999; Lewis & Archer, 2002.)

Disruptive behaviour among pupils in primary schools is the focus of another scheme, entitled the Support Teacher Project (STP). The STP was initiated in

September 1995, following submissions from school principals in Dublin. The principals felt that efforts to tackle disadvantage were being hampered by the behavioural problems of a small minority of pupils. Schools in the STP have an ex-quota teaching post which is used by the school to support efforts to manage the behaviour of disruptive pupils. The scheme is in place in 45 primary schools, almost all of which are designated as disadvantaged.

Breaking the Cycle (BTC), another significant scheme, was introduced on foot of a report commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency for the Department of Education and Science and prepared by the Educational Research Centre. In the report, Kellaghan, Weir, Ó hUallacháin, & Morgan, (1995) reviewed the adequacy of the interventions that were then in place and addressed problems in the identification of disadvantage, paying particular attention to the criteria that had been used to designate schools as disadvantaged.

The report contained a number of conclusions and recommendations which we will examine in some detail later in this section. At this stage, however, we need to focus on the report's conclusions regarding (a) the need for more precise targeting of resources on "a limited number of schools in which there is a high concentration of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds" (Kellaghan et al., 1995, p. 66) and (b) the fact that previous schemes were available to only a very small proportion of disadvantaged pupils in rural areas.

In relation to the first of these conclusions (more precise targeting), Kellaghan et al. (1995), proposed, based on a review of successful programmes, a new initiative that would be confined to the 25 to 30 "most severely disadvantaged schools in the country" (p. 66). They proposed that intervention in targeted schools should be "comprehensive and coordinated." Specifically, they proposed that it would involve

...curriculum adaptation at primary and post-primary levels (paying particular, though not exclusive, attention to literacy and numeracy skills); smaller classes, particularly in the early grades, to facilitate individual attention and the development of relationships between teachers and pupils; preschool provision, reflecting an emphasis on prevention rather than remediation; a high degree of parent involvement in the educational process (both in their own homes and in schools); the reform of school organisation to develop a unity of purpose and build on existing strengths of teachers and pupils; adequate financial resources for schools to operate comfortably; and a high level of involvement of other community agencies (p.66-67).

In relation to rural disadvantage, Kellaghan et al. (1995), indicated that the criteria for identification of disadvantage in rural areas would probably need to be different from those used to identify disadvantage in urban areas and that schools would need to be surveyed about the number of families, with children in the school, that met these criteria. A number of possibilities for intervention in rural schools were mentioned. These included an adaptation of the HSCL scheme, increased capitation and a sharing of staff and services among clusters of small schools.

Following publication of the Kellaghan et al. (1995) report, the Educational Research Centre conducted a survey of 221 primary schools that were (a) designated and (b) in urban areas. The principals of these schools were asked to complete a questionnaire about numbers of pupils from families that had various socioeconomic characteristics associated with poverty (e.g., unemployment, medical card possession). A modified version of this questionnaire was sent to the principals of primary schools with four teachers or less (almost all of which were in rural settings). The two questionnaires (urban and rural) were analysed separately and the results

used to select schools for inclusion in Breaking the Cycle (BTC) which was to have an urban and a rural dimension.

BTC (urban) was introduced in 33 urban schools that were found, in the survey, to have the heaviest concentrations of disadvantage in the 1995/1996 school year. Participating schools are provided with additional staff to ensure a maximum class size of 15 in Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st and 2nd classes. There is a strong emphasis in the scheme on the development of school plans, incorporating targets and strategies, for responding to the educational needs of disadvantaged children. Enhanced grants for books, materials and out-of-school projects are also paid to BTC urban schools. It is important to note that these resources are additional to the resources available to designated schools, including the services of a HSCL coordinator. Half of the BTC (urban) schools are in the STP. Five BTC schools are also included in Early Start.

BTC also has a rural dimension that involves 122 schools. These schools are organised into 25 clusters each of which has a full-time coordinator. The coordinator provides support to participating schools in areas such as school development planning and home/ school/community liaison. Enhanced grants and in-career development are also available to BTC (rural) schools. There are strong links between BTC (rural) and the HSCL scheme. For example, the National Coordinator of the HSCL scheme is also responsible for the coordination of BTC (rural) and personnel from both schemes receive some of their in-career development together. Evaluations of both dimensions of BTC have recently been completed. (Weir, Milis, & Ryan, 2002a, b).

Early school leaving is a feature of educational disadvantage that has been receiving a lot of attention in recent years. In 1998, an initiative that focussed on early

school leaving among 8- to 15-year olds, was introduced in 17 locations under the title the 8-15 Early School Leaver Initiative (ESLI). The thrust of ESLI was the integration of in and out-of-school provision through an “area-based approach.” In order to become part of the initiative, consortia had to be in place at local level. These consortia needed to be representative of voluntary and statutory bodies involved in the provision of services (health, welfare, youth services as well as education). Although young people who had already left school were targeted, the main emphasis was on prevention.

The Stay in School Retention Initiative (SSRI), introduced in 1999, was another example of the growing concern with early school leaving. It was seen as complementing ESLI in the sense that its focus was on increasing the numbers of students completing the Senior Cycle. Participating schools were expected to draw up retention plans that respond to the needs of their own students. Support was provided to schools in the implementation of their plans. In 2002, the School Completion Programme, which is an amalgamation of the ESLI and SSRI, was introduced. Interestingly, in the present context, it is envisaged that Local Committees of the HSCL scheme will, where appropriate, become the management committees for the School Completion Programme.

In January 2001, the Minister for Education and Science announced a new scheme entitled Giving Children an Even Break (GCEB) for primary schools (Department of Education and Science, 2001). A number of features of this scheme are worth mentioning. First it is based on a survey of disadvantage in primary schools in which over 80% of the schools in the system participated. Secondly, urban schools that were found, by the survey, to have the heaviest concentrations of disadvantage are being allocated additional staff to enable them to reduce class size in junior classes to

20:1 (a variation of a feature of the urban dimension of BTC). Thirdly, rural schools with the heaviest concentrations of disadvantage have been organised into clusters of four or five with a view to being offered the services of a coordinator along the lines of BTC (rural). Finally, schools in GCEB are being provided with financial support in accordance with a “sliding scale” that is based on estimates of the number and percentage of disadvantaged children in each school. This final feature of GCEB represents an attempt to target individuals rather than schools. The survey was used to produce an estimate of the number of disadvantaged children in each school. The Department then allocated a grant of €63.50 for each such pupil (subject to a minimum of €952.50) and the school undertook to target “the new financial resources on the provision of appropriate in-school and out-of-school supports for the pupils concerned” (the letter signed on behalf of schools participating in GCEB). Therefore, schools are being resourced to provide support to disadvantaged children irrespective of the number of other disadvantaged children in these schools.

A number of initiatives, designed for members of the Traveller community, can also be seen as part of the strategy to address disadvantage. For example, there are 54 preschools providing “special preparation for approximately 660 Traveller children before enrolment in national schools” (White Paper on Early Childhood Education, 1999, p. 101). In addition, the Department of Education and Science employs 40 visiting teachers who support Traveller families on the educational development of their children, advise schools on the provision of education appropriate to Traveller culture, work with the Inspectorate on the implementation of Department policy on Traveller education and liaise with other agencies working with the Traveller community.

To what extent are existing schemes comprehensive and coordinated?

Earlier in this section, we quoted part of a recommendation from Kellaghan et al. (1995), in which seven elements of a comprehensive and co-ordinated intervention were outlined. It may be useful, at this stage, to revisit these seven elements with a view to (a) seeing how, if at all, each of them has been incorporated in the Department's strategy and (b) assessing the extent to which disadvantaged pupils are experiencing the elements in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner. The seven elements will now be examined in turn.

1. Curriculum adaptation at primary and post-primary levels (paying particular, though not exclusive attention to literacy and numeracy skills)

Curriculum adaptation, at post-primary level, is a significant part of the Department's strategy in the sense that significant numbers of students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are participating in and likely to benefit from innovative programmes that have been designed as alternatives to traditional academic and examination oriented curricula. These include the Junior Certificate School Programme which has "a particular, though not exclusive" focus on literacy and numeracy" (see, for example, Cassidy, 1997; O'Gorman, 1998) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (see, for example, Boldt, 1998; Gleeson & Granville, 1996).

Adaptations of curriculum to the needs of disadvantaged children are less common at primary level despite the fact that the scope for such adaptation was highlighted in an official report in 1985 (Working Party on the Primary School Curriculum and the Disadvantaged Child, 1985). One example, with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills, was the development of a structured programme, based on the Primary School Curriculum (Department of Education, 1971) and the curriculum that had been developed for the Rutland Street preschool project (Holland,

1979; Kellaghan, 1977), for pupils in infant and first classes. The structured programme consists of sets of objectives and activities in the areas of reading, oral language and mathematics. It was the subject of an evaluation in 28 schools, most of which catered predominately for pupils in disadvantaged areas in the early 1980s (Archer & O'Rourke, 1985). Teachers in the participating schools reported that they had made a great deal of use of the programme and that, overall, they found it very useful. They also made a number of suggestions about how the programme might be improved. The programme, with some modifications in the light of the evaluation, was produced in the form of three manuals containing objectives and linked learning activities (Gleeson, Kelly, & Archer, 1985). We have no evidence on the extent to which the manuals are used in schools, though our impression is that such use is not extensive and we know that the Department has not made the manuals available to schools on a systematic basis (Kellaghan, 2002).

Curriculum adaptation/development, with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy is a major feature of Early Start especially since the introduction, in 1998, of curriculum guidelines (In-career Development Team in Collaboration with the Early Start Personnel, 1998). These guidelines divide the content of the curriculum into four main areas: cognitive development, language development, personal, social and emotional development and creative and aesthetic development. Learning outcomes are specified in each of these areas and, in some cases, exemplars of appropriate pedagogy are outlined. It is quite clear that the main aim of the curriculum, in relation to cognitive development and language development, is the promotion of early literacy and numeracy and, interestingly, it is in these two areas that most exemplars are given (Lewis & Archer, 2002; McGough, 2002).

There is not much evidence available on the extent to which schools in other schemes for disadvantage engage in curriculum adaptation and, if they do how much emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy. However, our impression is that the development of literacy and numeracy, while clearly central in all of the schemes, is not assigned the kind of priority that it receives in apparently successful initiatives in the United States, many of which involve substantially increased instruction time, especially in relation to reading and oral language (see, for example, Shanahan, 2001). Indeed data from the evaluation of Breaking the Cycle in urban schools indicates that teachers were spending less time on the teaching of English in 1999/2000 than they were three years earlier (Weir, Milis, & Ryan, 2000a). English would seem to be the aspect of the curriculum where a focus on literacy is most likely to be found. In Section 4 of this report, we will present some examples of how literacy and numeracy development are promoted by the HSCL scheme.

Our suggestion, in the previous paragraph, about the absence of a clear prioritisation of literacy and numeracy is meant as a comment on the set of special schemes for disadvantage as a whole and not specifically to the HSCL scheme. Neither is it a comment on the other aspects of the Department's provision such as the recently introduced Revised Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 1999), the work of the Primary Curriculum Support Team and the Learning Support Service. The Learning Support Service may be particularly relevant in this context. It is available to all schools and separate guidelines relating to the service in primary and post-primary schools have recently been prepared and issued. Both sets of guidelines refer to learning support for pupils experiencing difficulties with literacy and numeracy in designated schools.

2. Smaller classes, particularly in the early grades, to facilitate individual attention and the development of relationships between teachers and pupils

All schools in DAS have the staff necessary to ensure that maximum class size at all grade levels is 29. The subset of DAS schools that are in BTC (urban) and the 225 (approx.) most disadvantaged urban schools in GCEB have a lower maximum class size in the infants, first and second classes (15 in the case of BTC; 20 in the case of GCEB). Clearly, then, reduced class size is an established feature of the Department's strategy and this feature has been refined since 1996 so that the early grades are treated most favourably. Whether the smaller classes are leading to more individual attention and better relationships between teachers and pupils, which Kellaghan et al. indicated should be the aim, is not known. However, how teachers might exploit smaller classes has been a focus of in-career development for teachers in BTC schools. In addition, the support team that was envisaged for the urban component of GCEB was intended to work with teachers and schools in order to ensure that "the pupils concerned received the maximum benefit from reduced class sizes" (Department of Education and Science, 2001, p.2).

3. Preschool provision, reflecting an emphasis on prevention rather than remediation.

When Kellaghan et al. were preparing their report in 1995, Early Start had just been introduced in eight designated schools. A further 32 schools became involved the following year. As we will see later, the National Anti-poverty Strategy includes a commitment to the expansion of preschool provision in disadvantaged areas. There is also recognition, in the urban dimensions of BTC and GCEB, of the importance of early years learning insofar as the reductions in class size favour the junior classes.

An emphasis on prevention rather than remediation characterises many of the schemes, most notably those with a particular focus on early school leaving and one of

the 12 principles of the HSCL scheme states that “the thrust of the scheme is preventive rather than curative” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p.2).

4. A high degree of parent involvement in the educational process (both in their own homes and in school).

Parent involvement is an element of all the DES schemes including, of course, the HSCL scheme. We will be discussing why parent involvement is regarded as important in the next section of this report and describing how parent involvement is promoted in the HSCL scheme in Section 4.

5. The reform of school organisation to develop a unity of purpose and build on existing strengths of teachers and pupils.

Since the introduction of BTC, almost all DES initiatives in the area of disadvantage have involved a requirement that a plan of action be developed for the whole school. In addition, as noted earlier, the School Development Planning Initiative which is a system-wide initiative and is underpinned by Section 21 of the Education Act of 1998, was introduced first in designated schools. Thus, there is an attempt, through the mechanism of school planning, to forge the “unity of purpose” proposed by Kellaghan et al. Unity of purpose between parents, teachers and the wider community is also a concern of the HSCL scheme in ways that will be described later.

One of the reasons why organisational change through school planning is thought to be relevant to disadvantage relates to the expectations that teachers, parents and the school, generally, hold for pupils. Several of the programmes for disadvantage that have been found to be effective in the United States (e.g., Slavin, 1989) include strategies designed to raise the expectations of parents and teachers for what pupils can achieve particularly in relation to reading and other language skills. There are other sources of evidence that indicate that expectations may be important in this context.

First, there is evidence that some teachers take pupils' social background into account when making assessments of pupils' ability or potential to an extent that is inappropriate (Hargreaves, 1972; Nash, 1973). Secondly, there are studies (e.g., Brophy & Good, 1974) that show that teachers behave differently towards pupils for whom they have high and low expectations (e.g., the number and type of questions asked; the kind of feedback given etc.). Through such aspects of their pedagogy, teachers may be communicating to pupils from poor backgrounds that less is expected of them in terms of learning than is expected of other pupils. Pupils may respond by performing less well, thereby confirming the initial expectation (a self-fulfilling prophecy).

A third source of evidence on the importance of expectations is the literature on school effectiveness (see, for example, Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). School effectiveness research is concerned with measuring the extent to which schools affect ("add value" to) the development of children and identifying the characteristics of schools that have been found to have a positive impact on children's development. One of the characteristics to emerge most often, from reviews of research in this area (e.g., Good & Brophy, 1986; OECD, 1989; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000), is a high level of expectation for what pupils will learn (often operationalised in terms of the proportion of pupils expected to master the prescribed curriculum).

On the basis of these three sources of evidence, it would seem reasonable to suggest that one of the aims of the school planning process might be to raise expectations for what disadvantaged children can learn with the direct assistance of their teachers and parents. We are not aware of anything in the documentation relating to the various DES schemes that has an explicit emphasis on raising expectations for achievement in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Indeed, there is a danger that an

unintentional effect of targeting schools for intervention, as is done in all of the schemes being considered here, will be a lowering of expectations.

6. Adequate financial resources for schools to operate comfortably.

Every scheme provides schools with extra finance to help with the running of that scheme and, in the case of DAS, with the general costs of the school as a whole. Some of the extra finance comes in the form of increased capitation payments or grants for specific purposes. The impact of the additional finance on designated schools, up to 1993, was examined by Kellaghan et al. (1995) who found that all that had been achieved was parity, in terms of some resources, between designated and other schools rather than positive discrimination. Developments since 1993 may have altered the balance in favour of designated schools (Archer, 2001).

7. A high level of involvement of other community agencies

When the HSCL scheme was being designed, there was a belief that it was important that schools forged links with the wider community “and not just those members of the community who happen to be parents” (CMRS, 1992, p.61). As a result, the word “community” was included in the title of the scheme and a number of steps were taken to facilitate cooperation between schools and agencies in the community. For example, participating schools were expected to become involved in the establishment of Local Committees with representatives of parents and voluntary and statutory agencies. These committees were seen as a way of promoting community ownership of the scheme and as a way of identifying unmet needs in education. More recently, the ESLI and the SSRI involve the development of stronger links between home, school and a wide range of community agencies (voluntary and statutory). The ESLI is particularly significant in that it was the first educational initiative that required the establishment of broadly based local consortia as a condition of eligibility

for funding. Schools in GCEB are also encouraged to collaborate with other local agencies in devising plans for using the financial resources that they receive as part of that scheme.

The Department has taken several steps to give effect to the concept of integration at national as well as local level. Thus, for example, a Social Inclusion Unit, within the Department, has responsibility for the coordination of policy on disadvantage and has initiated mechanisms whereby the National Coordinators of the various schemes meet regularly with a view to maximising integration. It is envisaged that The Social Inclusion Unit will work closely with the Committee on Educational Disadvantage, established under Section 32 of the Education Act (1998), and with the National Welfare Board, established by the Education (Welfare) Act (2000).

In recent years, the Department of Education and Science, along with other Government departments and state agencies, has increasingly promoted an ‘integrated area-based approach’ (OECD, 1998). Government commitment to an integrated area-based approach is evident in a number of important policy documents including the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (1999), the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000) and the National Children’s Strategy (2000). The National Children’s Strategy, for example, states that “the aim will be to support a greater level of inter-agency and inter-disciplinary work as an effective way of promoting a more seamless service, which is child focused rather than service lead” (p.89).

So far in this section, we have outlined the main elements of Departmental policy on educational disadvantage. We focussed particularly on special schemes targeted at schools with concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In our description of existing schemes, we have highlighted the ways in which the schemes differ from each other. These differences are important because they represent

at least a partial response to the suggestion, that is sometimes made, that there is unnecessary fragmentation among the various schemes (see, for example, an article in the Education and Living supplement of the Irish Times, February 19th, 2002). We have also tried to show that progress has been made in relation to seven elements of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach advocated in 1995 by Kellaghan et al. However, we highlighted two areas that may not have received the attention that the Kellaghan et al.(1995) analysis indicated they merit. First, we noted that curriculum adaptation, with a particular but not exclusive focus on literacy and numeracy, appears not to be receiving the emphasis that is warranted. Secondly, we argued that one aspect of school development planning, which the literature suggests is beneficial in the context of disadvantage (concerted attempts to raise the expectations of parents and teachers about what children can achieve), is not a key feature of any of the initiatives.

We are not, of course, suggesting that these are the only weaknesses in the Department's strategy. It may well be that a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach should contain elements other than the seven considered here. In addition, some of the elements, that have been considered may need to be refined. For example, we will suggest later that some forms of parent involvement(the fourth element) may be more effective than others. Similar points could be made about, for example, preschooling (the third element)where a variety of different types of provision are possible and where there is a literature on which types are most likely to be effective with disadvantaged children.

Finally, it is important to note that there is much more that needs to be done in relation to many of the areas where progress has been made. This is, perhaps, particularly true in relation to integration (the seventh element). There are studies (e.g., Eivers & Ryan, 2000) that show that, despite considerable effort at local level,

instances of fragmentation in the effort to tackle disadvantage still occur (Kellaghan, 2002). It is also important to recognise that the introduction of new initiatives and other policy developments can give rise to new challenges in relation to integration. For example, the phasing in of the Education Welfare service in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) will require a clear definition of the complementary roles of Education Welfare Officers and personnel associated with existing schemes (especially HSCL coordinators and Visiting Teachers for Travellers).

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Government's overall approach to poverty is outlined in a number of policy documents including, for example, the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (1999). For the purpose of this review, however, we will treat the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS, 1997) and the recent review of that strategy (NAPS, 2002) as the overall policy context in which we need to situate the HSCL scheme, in accordance with the terms of reference for this review (ToR1).

According to the leaders of the three political parties in Government at the time, the decision to develop a national strategy for dealing with poverty was prompted by a United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. (NAPS, 1997, Foreword). Following consultation with the Social Partners and with people experiencing poverty, a strategy statement was published. It was based on recognition of three propositions.

Firstly, addressing poverty needs to be based on an understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty...Secondly, addressing poverty involves tackling the deep-seated underlying structural inequalities that create and perpetuate it...Thirdly, there is also a need to give particular attention to a

number of key areas if any significant advance on the tackling of poverty is to be achieved (NAPS, 1997, p.8).

One of the key areas identified was educational disadvantage. The statement went on to establish the following as its global target: “Over the period, 1997 – 2007, the National Anti-poverty Strategy will aim at considerably reducing the numbers of those who are “consistently poor” from 9 to 15% to less than 5 to 10%, as measured by the ESRI” (p. 9). The 1997 document also spelt out objectives, targets and policy actions in each of the six key areas, including educational disadvantage.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000) included a commitment to update the strategy in consultation with the Social Partners. This process was completed in February with the publication of Building an Inclusive Society (NAPS, 2002). This revised strategy statement sets out three key objectives: “reduce, and ideally eliminate, consistent poverty; build an inclusive society; and develop social capital – particularly for disadvantaged communities” (NAPS, 2002, p.8). Evidence is presented which indicates that consistent poverty had fallen to 6.2% in 2000 and a new target is set: to “reduce the numbers who are consistently poor to below 2% and, if possible eliminate consistent poverty” (p.9). Unlike the 1997 target on consistent poverty, the revised version includes a commitment to giving “special attention” to groups that are vulnerable to consistent poverty (children and young people, women, older people, travellers, people with disabilities, migrants and members of ethnic minority groups).

The published document then sets out key targets in relation to education, health, housing and accommodation, the vulnerable groups listed above, urban poverty and rural disadvantage. The document also contains a series of commitments relating to access to services. These commitments involve, according to the document,

acceptance of the view that “citizenship rights encompass not only the core civil and political rights but also social, economic and cultural rights and obligations” (p.20) and “a move towards a more formal expression of entitlements across the range of public services” (p.21). Finally, the document outlines some of the steps that are planned in relation to implementing and monitoring the strategy, including proposals for mobilising the voluntary and community and business sectors, an overall institutional framework, the collection of data and other research requirements.

The recently published document is much shorter and, therefore, less detailed than its 1997 counterpart. However, the 2002 document is accompanied by, what is referred to, as a “Framework Document,” which was prepared by Goodbody Economic Consultants (2001) and contains the outcomes of the consultation process. The Framework Document contains the same key targets as the published document but also sets out “supplementary targets,” a description of the “overall policy approach” and listings of the specific policy action and measures that it is planned to take. The section on education in the published NAPS (2002) document is worth quoting in full:

The objective is to ensure that all young people leave the educational system with an adequate education and related qualifications to support their full participation in the economy, in employment and in society. In addition all those who have already left school must have the opportunity to address any lack of educational experience and related qualifications that militates against their ability to participate fully in the economy, in employment and in society.

Key Targets

- To halve the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties by 2006.

- Reduce the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy to below 10 to 20 per cent by 2007 (restricted literacy being defined as falling below 200-225 on the IALS scale or equivalent).
- To reduce the number of young people who leave the school system early, so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 85 per cent by 2003 and 90 per cent by 2006. (NAPS, 2002, pp. 11-12).

On the basis that the above is likely to be the most widely read, it is appropriate to comment on the key targets and the preamble to these targets before examining what appears in the Framework Document. First, it may be worth noting that all of the three education targets specify improvement in educational achievement or attainment in the population as a whole rather than reductions in inequality. Thus, for example, the first target specifies the halving of the number of pupils with literacy difficulties but does not refer to the association between such difficulties and social background. While it is the case that a disproportionate number of children who experience literacy difficulties are from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, a substantial number of such children are from better off families. In the 1998 National Assessment of English Reading (Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde, & Morgan, 2000), about 30% of the national sample were from families that possessed a medical card. However, in the group of pupils who scored low enough on the reading test to be considered as experiencing difficulty (at or below the tenth percentile), almost 60% were from families with a medical card. While this illustrates the strong association between reading difficulties and socioeconomic circumstances, it also shows that the association is not perfect because over 40% of the children with literacy difficulties are from families that do not have a medical card. In other words, a significant number of children with literacy difficulties are not

disadvantaged in the sense of being poor. Therefore, progress could, in theory, be made towards halving the number of pupils with literacy difficulties even if the only weak readers who showed improvement were those who are not in possession of a medical card. This is, perhaps, an unlikely scenario. However, it may be worth noting that, in a study of the impact of remedial education (now called learning support teaching), Shiel, Morgan, & Larney (1998) found that recipients of remedial teaching in schools, that were designated disadvantaged, benefited less than recipients in other schools. (see Kellaghan, 2002, for some other difficulties of definition and measurement associated with this target.)

The second target (about adult literacy) is arguably not particularly meaningful in the sense that the passage of time, without any intervention, is likely to result in substantial reductions in, what the target refers to as, “restricted literacy” being achieved. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), on which the target is presumably based, found that “restricted literacy” was much more common among adults who were over 45 years of age than it was among younger adults (Morgan, Hickey, Kellaghan, Cronin, & Millar, 1997). Most members of this cohort would be over 64 in 2007 and, therefore, not part of any survey of adult literacy that might be undertaken to assess progress on the target. Indeed, if we assume that school leavers since 1995 (when data were collected for IALS) have the same incidence of restricted literacy as 16- to 24-year-olds in 1995, the proportion of the population aged 16 to 64 with restricted literacy has probably already fallen. In any event, it should be noted that any proposal to repeat IALS and use its findings for policy making purposes would have to address a number of issues relating to methodology and interpretation (see, for example, Archer, 1999; Kellaghan, 2001).

In relation to the third target about participation in second level schools, a number of points can be made. First, it may be important to distinguish between those young people who leave school before taking the Junior Certificate (i.e., without a qualification) and those who leave after the Junior Certificate but before the Leaving Certificate. Recent evidence on the social backgrounds of different kinds of early school leavers indicates that, while very few of those who leave before Junior Certificate are from professional or managerial backgrounds, a significant minority of those who leave between Junior and Leaving Certificate are from such backgrounds (Clancy, 2002). Therefore, Senior Cycle completion rates could improve in a way that would widen inequality if the improvement was confined to children from more comfortable backgrounds. Secondly, apart from considerations of inequality, the absence of a target referring specifically to early school leaving without a qualification could be problematic. It is conceivable that Senior Cycle completion rates could rise to almost 97% without impacting on the number leaving without a qualification. For every student who leaves school before the Junior Certificate, there are five or six who leave between the Junior and Leaving Certificates. Schools might, therefore, concentrate their efforts (e.g., in the context of the School Completion Programme) on persuading students who have completed the Junior Certificate to remain in school until the Leaving Certificate at the expense of working with students who are at risk of leaving before the Junior Certificate, even though the employment prospects of the latter group are significantly worse than the prospects of the former (McCoy & Williams, 2000; National Economic and Social Forum, 2002). Finally, the third educational target is one of the few targets in NAPS 2002 that is less ambitious than its counterpart in NAPS 1997 which referred to a 90% completion rate by 2000 and a rate of 98% by 2007.

Turning now to the Framework Document (Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2001), it is important to note, at the outset, that some of the supplementary targets, unlike the key targets, are expressed in terms of reducing inequality. For example, there is a supplementary target, clearly linked to the first key target, about halving the “proportion of pupils in designated disadvantaged schools with serious literacy difficulties.” There are also targets relating to increasing the “participation in third level education from unskilled/agricultural work backgrounds” and from “the unskilled social class.” These targets seem to derive from the series of surveys conducted for the Higher Education Authority (e.g., Clancy, 2002). It should be noted that there are at least two indicators that could be used to monitor progress in relation to the participation of students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds: the proportion of such students who attend third level colleges and the proportion of third level students who are from such backgrounds. Although it is not entirely clear, it seems that it was the first kind of indicator that the authors of the NAPS supplementary target had in mind. The second kind of indicator would, of course, be more appropriate if the aim is to reduce inequality in the sense of closing the gap between the participation rates of different groups.

The Framework Document contains 12 supplementary targets, some of which refer to pupil or student outcomes (e.g., the two targets mentioned in the previous paragraph). Other supplementary targets refer to inputs such as reductions in pupil-teacher ratios in schools with “a high concentration of at risk pupils” (p.31). Another supplementary target relates to the expansion of early childhood education to “all children in targeted disadvantaged areas” (p.31) by 2006. The term “disadvantaged areas” is clarified later, in the section on key policy actions and measures, where it is noted that the expansion of early childhood education will focus particularly on a small number of areas with the heaviest concentrations of poverty that are part of the

RAPID and CLÁR programmes (National Development Plan 2000-2006, 1999).

However, some confusion is created by the suggestion, in an appendix, that the expansion will be achieved by extending Early Start to additional schools.

Two further points about the Framework Document are relevant in the present context. First, it is surprising that there is no mention of the HSCL scheme or of the centrality of parent involvement to the strategy of the Department of Education and Science in the document. Secondly, it is worth noting the strong emphasis that there is in the document on literacy and numeracy. We have already seen that two of the three key targets relate specifically to literacy. In addition, there are commitments to several separate policy actions related to literacy and numeracy.

These include

- A national programme of in-service training at second level on the integration of literacy and numeracy teaching in all aspects of the curriculum;
- Establishment of a National Literacy and Numeracy Committee;
- The existing English reading survey of eleven year olds will be replicated in junior classes, following consultation with the interested parties;
- Random sample survey of levels of literacy, in designated disadvantaged schools, to be conducted by the Educational Research Centre using approved existing assessment tools, in the interim, pending agreement on more broadly based assessment tools; (p.32) and
- A strengthening of the scale, scope and quality of adult literacy provision through the National Adult Literacy strategy (p.33).

The very strong emphasis on literacy in the 2002 statement of strategy may be significant in light of our earlier suggestion that the absence of just such an emphasis is a gap in the Department's strategy for dealing with disadvantage.

Conclusion

In an attempt to place the HSCL scheme in its wider policy context, we have, in this section, described the various schemes that are in place. We have tried to show that, although there is scope for better integration, there is an underlying coherence to the Department's strategy and that the strategy has evolved in line with findings of research on the kinds of interventions that are likely to be effective. Attention was drawn to two gaps in that strategy: the fact that literacy and numeracy are not prioritised in the way that they are in successful initiatives in other countries and the absence of concerted efforts to raise the expectations of teachers and parents. The first of these gaps may begin to be dealt with in the context of attempting to implement the parts of the NAPS, (2002) dealing with education. However, there are several aspects of the treatment of education in NAPS (2002) that need to be clarified. Some of these aspects have been discussed in this section (see also Kellaghan, 2002).

SECTION 3

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE HSCL SCHEME

This section contains, in accordance with the terms of reference, a commentary on “the adequacy and appropriateness of the scheme’s objectives” (ToR 2). We will examine documentation on the HSCL scheme in terms of the extent to which that documentation reflects guidelines produced, by the Department of Finance (2001a, b), on the implementation of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI). Although our initial focus is on objectives, we will also consider the HSCL documentation in the light of SMI guidelines on other concepts (e.g., mission statements and inputs) with a view to establishing the scheme’s underlying rationale. We will then comment briefly on the extent to which that rationale is consistent with Government and Department of Education and Science policy, as discussed in Section 2, and refer to relevant literature on the extent to which the rationale is supported by findings of research.

The central term “objective,” as used in the terms of reference for this review, is defined in SMI documents as “targets for realising goals.” They are “SMART (specific, measurable, ambitious/attainable, results-oriented and time-bound)” (Department of Finance, 2001a, p.5). Later in the same document, goals (preceded by the term “strategic”) are defined as “broad statements of an organisation’s intent. They are focussed on outcomes” (p.5). Outcomes, in turn, are defined as “the ultimate effects that the Government wants to achieve through its policies” (p.5). In their report on the primary education system, carried out in the context of the SMI, Kellaghan and Flanagan (1999) discussed the differences between goals and objectives in the following terms: “Goals or aims are essentially statements of philosophy or basic purpose and express ideals of an open-ended ongoing kind” (p.32). They went on to

suggest that goals and aims “may be contrasted with specific objectives which, while in accord with more general goals or aims and mission statements, are more specifically formulated and provide a clear statement of the changes that are expected as a result of the activities which they generate” (p.32).

It is important to note, at the outset, that the HSCL scheme was in place and most of its documentation agreed for several years before the SMI was introduced. Therefore, it is probably not surprising that documentation on the HSCL scheme tends not to contain the kind of terminology advocated by the SMI. Thus, the HSCL scheme is usually described, in documentation, in terms of “aims” and “principles” whereas the SMI guidelines favour terms like “strategic goals,” “objectives,” “outcomes”, “outputs” and “performance indicators.” In addition, the HSCL scheme places a large emphasis on processes, while the SMI seems to use an input-output model of systems of public administration including the education system. There is a strong emphasis in the HSCL scheme on consultation and participative decision making. In addition, as we will note later, one of the guiding principles of the scheme is that activities undertaken should be determined by local needs. To the extent that local needs vary, individual schools or clusters of schools may need to set particular objectives that are not relevant to other schools or clusters of schools. Indeed, the setting of particular goals and objectives, by clusters of schools, is an existing feature of the scheme insofar as clusters of schools are encouraged to work together in a process of “review-plan-implementation-review” (Conaty, 2002, p.87). Conaty (1999, 2002) also describes several instances where the process of schools, families and communities working together resulted in positive outcomes that had not been anticipated. Dunne (1988) has argued that the setting of specific objectives may be “uncongenial” (p.66), in the context of teaching and learning, partly because of the difficulty of anticipating positive outcomes.

The difficulty of applying a mechanism (SMI) that requires the early specification of objectives to a scheme (HSCL) based on the concept of partnership, has also arisen in some discussions of policy making at national level, where social partnership has been adopted as a model (National Economic and Social Forum, 1997; O'Donnell, 2000).

Policy making through partnership “involves a combination of consultation, negotiation and bargaining” and “is characterised by a problem solving approach designed to produce consensus” (O'Donnell, 2000, p. 189). When policy is developed in this way, it can be very difficult to specify fixed objectives in advance. Rather objectives tend to emerge as consensus among the partners, on the nature of the problem, is achieved. Objectives may also have to be revised in light of ongoing negotiations.

Leaving aside for the moment issues about the appropriateness of SMI guidelines to the HSCL scheme, we may note that the stated aims of the HSCL scheme seem much closer to the SMI concept of goals than they are to objectives. The five aims are as follows:

1. To maximise active participation of the children in the schools of the scheme in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure
2. To promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children
3. To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills
4. To enhance the children’s uptake from education, their retention in the education system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning and
5. To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally (Department of Education and Science 2002, pp 1-2).

All five of the aims are “broad statements of intent” and they focus on outcomes (see the SMI definition of strategic goals above). The first and the fourth aims relate to pupil outcomes. Although the first aim is somewhat ambiguous, it appears to refer to achievement (what pupils learn). The fourth aim refers to attainment (participation in the system). Parent outcomes are mentioned in the third aim (awareness of their own capacities, the development of relevant skills). The second aim refers to improvements in the level of cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies. Finally, the outcomes referred to in the fifth aim are systemic in the sense that the intent is to use lessons from the HSCL scheme to bring about change in the system as a whole.

On the other hand, the five aims only meet the SMI criteria for objectives (implied by the acronym SMART) to a limited extent. In particular, they are not specific and no indications of time scale are given. Furthermore, measurement of progress in relation to most of the aims is difficult. An exception is the fourth aim, where it would be possible to devise a set of procedures to monitor improvements in retention rates in schools in the scheme and in transfer rates from schools in the scheme to third-level education. It might be difficult to separate the effects of the HSCL scheme on, for example, retention rates from the effects of other aspects of the Departmental strategy on disadvantage. Monitoring would also need to take place over quite a long period of time.

On the basis of our commentary on HSCL documentation, so far in this section, it might be concluded that, in the terminology of the SMI, the HSCL scheme has goals but that objectives, derived from these goals/aims have not been specified. Such a conclusion would not be entirely valid, however, because, although they tend not to be found in official documentation, specific objectives are, in fact, set from time to time

and communicated to schools at in-career development sessions and during visits by the National Coordinator and her team to schools and local communities.

Several of these objectives are described in the National Coordinator's recent book (Conaty, 2002), although she does not describe them as objectives. For example, the National Coordinator asked all local coordinators, at an in-career session in 1997, to facilitate at least one effort at joint policy formation involving parents and teachers in the following school year. This invitation was, in our opinion, effectively the setting of a specific objective based on the second aim (or that part of the aim that relates to cooperation between home and school). As an objective, it meets the five SMI (SMART) criteria. An interesting feature of this example is that it can be used to illustrate a point made earlier about the emphasis in the HSCL scheme on "process" rather than the input-output approach of the SMI. In her description of the joint policy making initiative, Conaty (2002) states that "the emphasis was placed on the process and not on the outcome" (p.99). She elaborates by outlining the benefits (many of them unexpected) that occurred as a result of parents and teachers working together. These included increased trust and greater understanding, on the part of parents and teachers of their respective roles and problems.

Another example of what might be regarded as an objective, relating to the second aim, is of recent origin and is relevant to only some schools in the scheme. Shortly after the establishment of Local Drugs Task Forces, officials of the Department of Education and Science met with officials of other Departments and agreed that, where appropriate, Local Committees of the HSCL scheme should cooperate with the Local Drugs Task Forces. This agreement has been communicated to local coordinators and suggestions made about the form that cooperation might take. The extent to which cooperation is taking place is being monitored.

The fifth aim (about dissemination of good practice from the HSCL scheme) has also been translated into more specific objectives. For example, it was decided that joint in-career development, with personnel from the HSCL scheme and at least one other Departmental initiative present, would provide an opportunity for lessons learned in the HSCL scheme to be shared with people working on other schemes. A deliberate effort was made to ensure that there was at least one joint in-career development session for each Departmental scheme. Our understanding is that considerable progress has been made in this regard.

Although we have identified a number of instances where specific objectives have been derived from some of the stated aims of the scheme, such a specification of objectives has not been done on a systematic basis and there are some aims in relation to which we were unable to find any instances of objectives having been specified. It is also worth noting that none of the objectives, that we did identify, relate to outcomes such as improvements in pupil achievement or the acquisition of particular skills by parents. In Section 7 of this report, we will make suggestions for some additional specific objectives and related performance indicators. We will do so, however, conscious of the fact that there are aspects of the HSCL scheme that may not be amenable to the specification of objectives and performance indicators because, for example, of the scheme's emphasis on processes and the importance of responding to locally identified needs.

Immediately following the statement of the five aims, the information leaflet for the HSCL scheme, (Department of Education and Science, 2002), contains the following statement:

The Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme is a preventative strategy which is targeted at pupils who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the

educational system because of background characteristics which tend to affect adversely pupil attainment and school retention. The scheme is concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of children's learning. It focuses directly on the salient adults in children's educational lives and seeks indirect benefits for the children themselves (p.2).

This statement outlines, what in SMI terminology is, the "mission" of the scheme insofar as it is "a short, comprehensive statement of purpose" (Department of Finance, 2001, b, p.30). It also identifies the group for whom the scheme exists ("pupils who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the education system because of background characteristics") and indicates how the scheme tries to respond to the needs of this target group (by influencing "the salient adults in the children's educational lives"). According to Pfeiffer, Goodstein and Nolan (1989), a good mission statement for an organisation should provide answers to three questions: "what the organisation does, for whom and how" (p.128).

The leaflet then sets out the scheme's "basic principles." It is stated that the Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme is "based on the principle of partnership between homes, schools and communities" (p.2). This partnership is defined as "a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making and accountability" (Pugh & De'Ath, 1989, p.68). The leaflet continues as follows:

General principles govern the operation of the liaison scheme:

1. The scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of parents and teachers.

2. The scheme is unified and integrated at both primary and second levels.
3. The thrust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative.
4. The focus of the scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely, parents and teachers.
5. The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having those needs met.
6. The scheme develops teacher and staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and the ‘whole-school’ approach.
7. The scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence.
8. Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.
9. Networking with and promoting the coordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies increases effectiveness, obviates duplication and leads to an integrated delivery of service to marginalised children and their families.
10. Home/School/Community liaison is a full-time undertaking.
11. The liaison coordinator is an agent of change.
12. Community ‘ownership’ of the scheme is promoted through the development of local committees (pp.2-3).

Although the statement of principles does not provide further clarification of the objectives or outputs of the scheme, it does provide information on what are seen as the most important inputs. Thus, for example, the tenth principle (“Home/ School/ Community liaison is a full-time undertaking”) is a clear signal that the services of a full-time coordinator is a key input. We know from other project documentation that a further operational principle of the scheme is that coordinators should be qualified, experienced teachers.

The statement of principles also provides a picture of some of the methods or processes by which the scheme seeks to achieve its aims. Essentially, as we have seen, the scheme is designed to benefit children by influencing the “the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely parents and teachers” (the fourth principle). Several of the principles specify some of the methods that are used to exercise influence, while others indicate the nature of the influence to be exerted. Thus, for example, the eighth principle identifies “home visitation” as a method of establishing bonds of trust with families and, presumably, influencing the attitudes and behaviour of parents. Two sets of attitudes among teachers are mentioned in the sixth principle (“partnership and the ‘whole-school’ approach”). It may be worth noting that, while partnership is defined in the leaflet, a whole-school approach is not. In the absence of a formal definition, questions arise about the extent to which there is a shared understanding among those involved in the scheme about what is meant by a whole-school approach.

It is possible to use the documentation on the HSCL scheme to define an underlying rationale for the scheme. It seems to us that a rationale emerges from the documentation that can be expressed in terms of six propositions relating to effective strategies to enhance the educational attainment and achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and to more general strategies to tackle poverty:

1. Pupils’ educational attainment and achievement are enhanced by increased parent involvement.
2. Strengthened links between the school and the wider community (in general and, specifically, through integrated delivery of services) gives rise to further benefits.
3. A “whole-school approach” is characteristic of schools that are effective in improving pupil performance.

4. Early intervention is most likely to be effective.
5. The empowerment of individuals, families and communities is an essential element of strategies to combat poverty.
6. The provision of services should be based on the assessment of the real needs of participants.

The fact that each of these propositions featured in our discussion of the policy context of the HSCL scheme may be taken as further evidence of the extent to which the scheme is consistent with overall policy in the area of disadvantage and poverty.

There is a good deal of support, in the research literature for each of these propositions. Indeed, we have already seen that parent involvement, collaboration between schools and other agencies in the community and early intervention were all part of the comprehensive and coordinated approach advocated by Kellaghan et al. (1995) on the basis of their review of effective interventions. In addition, a whole-school approach, if properly defined might be similar, in practice, to “the reform of school organisation to develop a unity of purpose and build on the existing strengths of teachers and pupils” (Kellaghan et al., 1995, p.67).

While there is strong empirical support for each of the first four propositions, there have been some recent developments in the literature that are worth noting. In relation to parent involvement, Hanafin and Lynch (2002) suggest that “the unproblematic assertion in the parental involvement discourse that parental involvement is a good thing has been questioned” (p.37). The concerns of these writers include the possibility that some efforts to promote involvement may benefit middle-class families more than it does families from disadvantaged backgrounds (see also, for example, Lareau, 1989, 1996; Toomey, 1987).

Another concern, in the recent literature seems to reflect a belief that attempts to promote parent involvement still cast parents in a subordinate role to that of the teacher in a way that was described in 1975 as: “parents helping teachers to achieve goals specified by teachers in ways specified by teachers” (Sharp & Green, 1975, p.206). Sharp and Green went on to argue that a “good parent,” according to this view, “is one who appears to defer to the teacher’s superior knowledge, expertise and competence” (p.207). As we have seen, the documentation for the HSCL scheme, deals explicitly with this kind of concern by, for example, referring to the “complementary role of parents and teachers” (the first principle).

Despite these kinds of reservation, there seems little doubt that initiatives designed to enable parents to develop their roles as educators, especially in the home and with children before and shortly after they begin school, can be effective (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; CMRS, 1992; Epstein, 1996; Kagicibasi, Sunar & Beckman, 2001) even among children from the most marginalised families (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). For example, the involvement of very marginalised families can be secured with the help of members of local communities, working in a “para-professional” capacity (Conaty, 2002). In this context, there is renewed interest in programmes that seek to help parents to develop skills that will enhance their children’s oral language (Hart & Risley, 1995). There is also increased confidence that the relevant skills have been identified in the literature on language acquisition. The work of Snow (1989), McGough (2002), Neuman and Gallagher (1994), and Wood (1998), for example, points to some of the kinds of adult verbal behaviour that have been found to be associated with language learning in young children. They include the extent to which the adult “fine-tunes” and “recasts” the child’s utterances and the techniques used to focus the child’s attention on a topic. Some of these adult behaviours are described in

the Curriculum Guidelines for Early Start (In-career Development Team in Collaboration with Early Start Personnel, 1998). Another development, in the literature, that is worth mentioning is the reconceptualisation of some home-based preschool interventions and school-based initiatives such as paired reading as “family literacy” (Wasik, Dobbins, & Herrmann, 2001). The potential of family literacy programmes for adults as well as children is recognised in the Green Paper (1998) and the White Paper (2000) on adult education in Ireland.

There have also been developments in the literature that can enhance our understanding of the contribution that the wider community can make to the educational process. Two separate developments may be identified. The first relates to the concept of social capital, which is increasingly being seen as an important source of influence on the development of individuals and communities (OECD, 2001). People are believed to have access to social capital to the extent that they are part of groups or social networks where there is mutual trust and shared values and norms and the capacity to enforce adherence to these values and norms (Kellaghan, 1999). The work of Coleman (1987, 1988) and Bryck, Lee and Holland (1993) are regarded as particularly important in demonstrating the significance of social capital for children’s educational progress. The second development, related to the influence of the wider community, concerns the growing acceptance of the importance of integrated area-based approaches, (see Section 2 of this report and McCormack, 1999; OECD, 1998). In this regard, the growing importance of integration is evident in the 2002 version of the HSCL scheme’s basic principles by the inclusion of an explicit reference to “an integrated delivery of services to marginalised families and their children.” Previous versions had simply referred to “increased effectiveness” and the avoidance of “duplication.”

The fifth and sixth propositions (about the importance of empowerment and responding to local needs) find support in the literature on poverty in a number of disciplines but, perhaps, particularly in the literature on community development. This literature contains many case studies that describe communities being revitalised as a result of projects that seek to respond to locally identified needs and that seek to empower individuals, families and communities to take control of their own lives (see, for example, CMRS, 1992; Kelleher & Whelan, 1992; Lovett, 1988; Paz, 1990).

Returning to the basic question about the “adequacy and appropriateness of the scheme’s objectives” (ToR 2), it has to be concluded that the objectives of the HSCL scheme are not adequate in terms of the guidelines of the SMI. In fact, specific objectives do not feature in documentation relating to the scheme. There are, however, serious questions about the desirability of applying SMI guidelines to the HSCL scheme and, in our view, any proposal to bring the scheme’s documentation into line with SMI guidelines should first be discussed with personnel involved in the scheme. We suspect that such discussions would reveal that there are some aspects of the scheme (e.g., the emphasis on process) which could be harmed by an inflexible attempt to specify objectives that are measurable and time bound. On the other hand, we believe that the scheme could benefit from the specification of objective derived from the first and fourth aims (referring to pupil outcomes) and, to a lesser extent, from the third aim (referring to the skills and attitudes of parents).

Despite the absence of adequate objectives, our assessment of the HSCL scheme documentation is that it is appropriate both in the sense that it reflects overall government policy and in the sense that it is well grounded in the national and international research literature on educational disadvantage and poverty. There have however, been developments in the literature that are worth examining and that might

lead to refinements or additions to the HSCL scheme. These include research on initiatives to help parents to support their children's language learning and developments in the area of family literacy.

SECTION 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HSCL SCHEME

This section is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the implementation of the scheme at national level. The second part, based largely on the results of a survey conducted for this review, is concerned with implementation at local level.

Implementation at National Level

Here we will present information on participating schools, on the personnel working on the scheme and on the support structures that exist within the scheme.

Participating schools

As noted earlier, the HSCL scheme began in 55 primary schools in 1990 and was extended to 13 post primary schools in 1991. The numbers of schools involved has grown steadily since the early 1990s. For example, by 1994, there were 133 primary and 51 post-primary schools in the scheme. At the beginning of 1999, 225 primary and 85 post-primary schools were participating. Later in the school year 1999/2000, The Department sanctioned a huge expansion of the scheme when it decided that all schools that were designated as disadvantaged would be entitled to the services of a fully qualified teacher to work as a HSCL coordinator on, at least, a shared basis with other schools. Currently 309 primary schools and 211 post-primary schools are eligible to participate in the scheme.

Information supplied by the National Coordinator indicates that the scheme is operating in 278 primary schools (served by 168 coordinators) and 190 post-primary schools (served by 189 coordinators). With a small number of exceptions in post-primary schools, HSCL coordinators work full-time on the scheme. At primary level,

56 coordinators have responsibility for one school only. The remaining 112 coordinators have responsibility for two or three schools, one of which is the coordinator's employer and is referred to as the 'base school'. There are some cases where two or more coordinators share responsibility for three or more schools.

As can be inferred from figures given earlier, 31 primary schools and 21 post-primary schools that are entitled to be part of the HSCL scheme, are not yet participating. Twelve posts at primary level and 21 posts at post-primary level have been sanctioned but not filled. The Department has had discussions with the individual schools about how their inclusion might be facilitated. For example, it has been proposed that some primary schools could be accommodated in clusters that are being established as part of the rural dimension of Giving Children an Even Break.

The information leaflet on the HSCL scheme indicates that the expansion of the scheme took place mainly on the basis of:

- Offering the scheme to designated primary schools in urban areas with high concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and
 - Offering inclusion in the scheme either simultaneously or subsequently to the second level schools into which the primary schools in the scheme 'feed'
- (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 1).

If these criteria were adhered to, one would expect to find a relationship between the level of disadvantage in a school and the stage at which they were admitted to the scheme. The National Coordinator and others in the Department indicated, during interviews for the present review, that schools admitted to the scheme in recent years had substantially lower concentrations of disadvantage than schools that were admitted at the beginning. Indeed they pointed out that some new strategies had to be developed to ensure that coordinators targeted their efforts at the most disadvantaged families.

We have some independent evidence to suggest that there is, in fact, a relationship between level of disadvantage and point of admission to the scheme. Almost all HSCL primary schools participated in the survey of disadvantage carried out by the Educational Research Centre in 2000 as part of Giving Children an Even Break (GCEB). Therefore, we were able to compare the average levels of disadvantage for schools admitted to the HSCL scheme at various points between 1990 and 1999 inclusive. These comparisons confirm the trend reported by the National Coordinator and others. The schools that were in the scheme from its inception were found to be the most disadvantaged, on average, while those admitted in 1999 were on average the least disadvantaged.

The GCEB survey of disadvantage in primary schools also provides some information on the related question of whether the HSCL scheme is in the most appropriate schools. The results of the survey were used to rank schools in terms of their level of disadvantage. Separate ranking were produced for urban and rural schools. The urban list is of particular importance here because 264 urban HSCL schools appear on that list. When we examined the urban list, we found that 213 of the HSCL schools (81%) are among the 264 most disadvantaged schools in the system, according to the survey. It should be noted that a small number of HSCL schools were not included in the exercise just described because they were involved in an appeals process relating to GCEB. While the exercise provides confirmation of the appropriateness of the original selection of schools for the HSCL scheme, it also indicates that (a) there may be up to 51 schools not in the HSCL scheme that had levels of disadvantage in 2000 that warranted their inclusion in the scheme and (b) there may be up to 51 schools in the HSCL scheme with levels of disadvantage that would not have entitled them to participate, if the selection had been made in 2000.

At post primary level, although there is considerable overlap between HSCL schools and schools participating in initiatives to tackle early school leaving, some anomalies have been identified. For example, 28 of the 161 post-primary schools selected to participate in the School Completion Programme are not in the HSCL scheme. It may be a cause for concern that these 28 schools have a significant problem with early school leaving but do not have access to a HSCL coordinator.

Personnel

The basic unit of the HSCL scheme is the full-time coordinator whose role is described in the information leaflet, that we discussed in Section 3. This leaflet describes the coordinator as “an agent of change” and states that “The focus of the scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely, parents and teachers” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 3). It goes on to spell out examples of some of the activities for parents and teachers in which coordinators are involved. The activities listed for parents are:

- home visitation with the objective of establishing bonds of trust with parents and families and supporting parents in the identification of their developmental needs
- provision of drop-in centres and parents’ rooms in schools
- provision of childcare facilities so that parents can attend scheme activities
- courses and classes on:
 - (a) curricular areas so that parents can assist and support their children with their school work
 - (b) personal development through parenting and assertiveness training
 - (c) leisure activities

- (d) aspects of educational development which range from basic literacy to certificate examination subjects and diploma courses and
- (e) the development of parents as home visitors, facilitators and classroom aides (p. 6).

The work of coordinators with teachers is described as follows: “Development for teachers in the liaison scheme is in the area of developing partnership and collaboration with parents in the interests of the children’s education.” The leaflet goes on to provide the following examples of development work with teachers:

- (a) the promotion and establishment of a continuity in the children’s transfer from home to school, and from primary to second level
- (b) an understanding of partnership in the context of parents’ roles as the primary educators of their children
- (c) the development of attitudes and behaviour regarding the complementarity of parents’ and teachers’ skills, knowledge and experiences in the enhancement of children’s learning and
- (d) joint policy making between parents and teachers on issues such as homework, code of positive behaviour, study skills, attendance, substance misuse and home/school/community liaison (p.7).

The work of the HSCL scheme is supported, at national level, by a National Coordinator, and two Assistant National Coordinators. Their roles are described as “to advise on and support the development of the scheme, liaise with participants at local level and provide a link between local and national levels” (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p.6). This role is discharged in a variety of ways. The National Coordinator and her assistants design and present the full range of in-career development for the scheme (see below). They visit schools as often as possible to “support the local

coordinator” and “school personnel” (Conaty, 2002, p.89). Apart from visits, various other methods are employed to maintain contact with people associated with the scheme at local level (e.g., they attend regional cluster meetings). The HSCL scheme also has a manager who is a Divisional Inspector who devotes about 40% of his time to the scheme.

It is clear that the work of the National Coordinator, her two assistants and manager represent an important source of professional support in the context of the scheme. There is also a leadership dimension to the work done at national level. It is important to note that there has been no increase in the number of people providing support and leadership despite the very significant increase in the number of participating schools. As a result, visits to schools and other forms of personal contact between personnel at national and local levels have inevitably become less frequent. The National Coordinator raised this as a concern when she was interviewed for this review.

Support structures

A variety of supports are available to coordinators. For example they participate, with other coordinators, in four types of cluster that are designed to provide mutual support and opportunities for sharing ideas and reflection on practice. “Family clusters” are made up of coordinators from primary and second level catchment area schools who liaise with families who have children attending from pre-school years (in cases where preschools such as Early Start exist) to Leaving Certificate level. The National Coordinator estimates that almost 25% of coordinators are in schools where the creation of family clusters is difficult and, in some cases, impossible (e.g., where a post-primary school, but not its feeder primary schools, is in the scheme). Coordinators in an area form “local clusters” and meet regularly for mutual support and development. A number of local clusters come together annually to form “regional clusters” to assess and evaluate the development of the scheme. Regional cluster

meetings are attended by school principals chairpersons of boards of management, inspectors and psychologists in a region as well as the HSCL coordinators in that region and take place once a year. However, the coordinators in a region also hold separate meetings once a term. These meetings are referred to as Term Clusters.

A good deal of priority is given in the scheme to in-career development. Six types of in-career development are provided:

1. In-career development for newly appointed coordinators consisting of a one week induction course.
2. A one day information meeting is provided for principals of schools which are new to the scheme and for newly appointed principals in schools which are already in the scheme.
3. A two-day module for “new” principals on the introduction of the scheme into their schools and its integration into the school structure.
4. Two modules, each of two days duration, each school year for experienced coordinators. These sessions are used to address coordinators’ needs and the needs of the scheme.
5. Regional cluster meetings for school chairpersons, principals, coordinators, some parents, and inspectors each Spring.
6. Provision is made for in-career development for school staffs on request.

Another support for coordinators is the Local Committee. Such committees were intended, from the introduction of the scheme, to be an important advisory and support structure. It was envisaged that they would be comprised of representatives from schools, parents and local voluntary and statutory bodies. As well as being supportive of coordinators, Local Committees were seen as providing a forum for identifying needs and fostering “ownership” of the scheme by communities.

A number of problems emerged regarding the establishment of Local Committees and it took several years before the participants accepted the value of such a structure. These difficulties are well documented by Ryan (1994) and Conaty (1999, 2002). According to the National Coordinator almost every school in the HSCL scheme is now involved in a Local Committee. An indication that Local Committees are regarded as important by the Department, is the recent decision that Local HSCL Committees will, where possible, take responsibility for the management of the new School Completion Programme. In addition, we will present data later showing that a large majority of coordinators regard the Local Committee as an effective structure. We also learned from our discussions with HSCL personnel of many instances where a Local Committee served as an important link with other local initiatives (e.g., Drugs Task Forces).

The promotion of Local Committees was one area for development that was prioritised by the National Coordinator and her team in recent years. We will present details, later in this section, about progress in relation to other priority areas of development. These are home visits, the training of parents as home visitors, the targeting of the most marginalised families and joint policy formation by parents and teachers. The priority areas for development were identified by the National Coordinator and her team at in-career development sessions, at meetings of regional clusters and during visits, by members of the team, to schools.

Implementation at Local Level

In order to provide a picture of the operation of the HSCL Scheme at local level, we will rely on a survey of coordinators carried out in January 2002. A draft questionnaire was developed and piloted with a small number of coordinators in October 2001. This piloting exercise resulted in a number of modifications to the draft

questionnaire. The exercise also convinced us to wait until January 2002 to carry out the survey rather than do so in November 2001 as we had originally intended.

Questionnaires were sent to all the coordinators on a Department of Education and Science database for 2001/2002. Although that data base does not distinguish between coordinators at primary and post-primary levels, other information supplied by the scheme's National Coordinator indicates that the questionnaire was received by 168 coordinators attached to primary schools and 185 coordinators attached to post-primary schools. Completed questionnaires were returned by 143 primary level coordinators (a response rate of 85%) and 141 post-primary level coordinators (a response rate of 76%).

The questionnaire for coordinators and another questionnaire that sought the opinions of school principals provide material for Section 5 of this report. In this section, our focus is on parts of the questionnaire for coordinators that deal with

- coordinators' reports of how they spend their time;
- the priority areas for development, identified in our discussion of implementation at national level; and
- resources and other factors that affect the work of coordinators.

How coordinators spend their time

Part of the questionnaire required coordinators to approximate the percentage of their time that they devoted to each of 19 work activities. The particular activities listed in the questionnaire were based on a similar item used by Ryan (1994) but updated and modified after consultation with groups of coordinators during their in-career development sessions in October 2001. The 19 activities are listed in Question 10 on the questionnaire for coordinators which is reproduced in an Appendix to this report.

Analysis of responses to Question 10 reveals that coordinators spend, on average, 31.78% of their time on home visits. They devote a further 13.28% of their time on average, to contacts (formal and informal) with individual parents and 20.75% to activities involving groups of parents (e.g., courses and classes). If we assume that the bulk of the time used during home visits involves interactions with parents and allowing for the difficulty of the task that coordinators were asked to perform, it seems reasonable to conclude that coordinators spend about 66% of their time in direct contact with parents. Coordinators spend a considerably smaller percentage of their time (14.63%) on average, in contact with other staff in their own schools, while they devote just under 10% of their time, on average, to dealing with individuals and agencies in the community.

Six of the work activities for which coordinators were asked to make an estimate of their time are not dealt with in the previous paragraph because they do not involve contact with parents, school staff or the community. In all six cases, the percentage of time allocated, on average is very small (5% or less). However, it is worth noting that some of the activities (e.g., “administration/paperwork” and “planning, monitoring and evaluation”) are part of the work of almost all coordinators.

Coordinators were also asked to indicate whether the amount of time they devoted to each of the 19 work activities had increased, decreased or remained the same since they began working as a coordinator. A ‘not applicable’ category was also provided to cater for coordinators who had only recently begun to work on the scheme. Many coordinators clearly found this to be a very difficult task and interpretation of the responses is, as a result, problematic. In particular, it is difficult to reconcile the fact that there are 12 cases (out of 19) where more than a third of coordinators said that they now allocated more time than when they began with the

fact that the highest incidence of coordinators reporting a decrease in time allocation is just over a fifth. In fact, there are only two cases where the number of coordinators, who report a decrease in time allocation, exceeds the number who report an increase in time allocation. The two work activities involved are 'contact with pupils' and 'acting as course presenter or facilitator on courses for parents.'

As noted earlier, several of the work activities about which coordinators were asked to provide information were taken from an instrument used by Ryan (1994) for the earlier evaluation. Direct comparisons of our findings with those of Ryan could be misleading for a number of reasons. For example, Ryan's data are confined to coordinators in primary schools and our questionnaire presented coordinators with a longer list of work activities than that which appeared in the earlier instrument. Nevertheless, it may be worth noting the strong similarities that emerged between the findings of the two surveys. Thus, when we grouped the responses of primary level coordinators reported by Ryan into the three broad categories used earlier, we found that the time allocation for primary level coordinators in 1992-1993 was similar to that which emerged from the recent survey (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Coordinators' allocation of time 1992-1993 and 2000-2001

	1992-1993	2000-2001
Contact with parents	67%	66%
Contact with principals and teachers	15%	15%
Contact with individuals and agencies in the community	9%	10%

Within the broad category of contact with parents, however, some shifts appear to have taken place. In particular, there appears to be a shift away from working with groups of parents (e.g., organising courses and classes) and towards contact with individual parents (e.g., home visits). Thus, in 2000-2001, coordinators devoted 7% of

their time to organising course and classes compared to 16% in 1992-1993; home visits took almost 32% of coordinators' time in 2000-2001 compared to 26% in 1992-1993.

The reduction in the time, spent by coordinators, on the organisation of courses and classes does not mean that fewer courses and classes are being offered or that fewer parents are attending such courses and classes. In fact, there is evidence that, in many cases, there has been an expansion of activity in this area. Several experienced coordinators, in response to an open-ended question about ways that their work had changed, referred to the fact that core groups of parents had taken over responsibility for some aspects of the scheme, including courses and classes. Other coordinators referred to the fact that the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) was taking an increasingly active role in relation to courses and classes for parents. VECs had always been involved in supplying and paying tutors and facilitators for course and classes (Ryan, 1994). The range of courses and classes offered appear to be similar to the range described by Ryan (1994) and include classes in curricular areas (English, Irish and Mathematics) designed to enable parents to help with homework; leisure courses; personal development courses; and courses on home management and parenting. One type of course that has become more popular involves the training of parents in skills relevant to the operation of the HSCL scheme itself (e.g. training parents as home visitors or as facilitators).

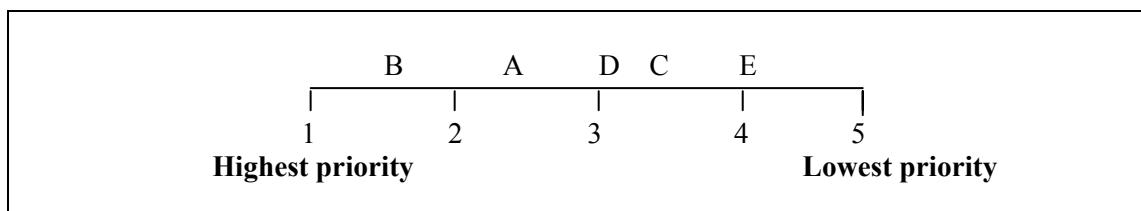
Given that coordinators devote most of their time to working with parents in various ways, it is of interest to try to establish what kind of parent involvement coordinators are attempting to promote. It will be recalled that, in earlier sections, we noted that there is a variety of different types of parent involvement, each with its own rationale and a certain amount of empirical evidence attesting to its importance. One item was included in the questionnaire in which five types of parent involvement were listed and coordinators were asked to "rank them from 1 to

5 in terms of the priority that you assign to them (Highest priority = 1; Lowest priority = 5)." Average rankings for the five statements were calculated to provide an index of the priority assigned to each type of involvement by the coordinators collectively. The five types of involvement and their associated average ratings are shown in Table 4.2 and displayed in Figure 4.1.

Table 4.2: Average priority rating assigned to each of the activities relating to parent involvement

	N	Average priority
A. Activities which are related to parents own educational needs	281	2.48
B. Activities which enhance communication between home and school.	283	1.66
C. Activities that involve parents in the work of the school	279	3.47
D. Activities to stimulate children learning at home	281	3.12
E. The development of school policy	280	4.02

Figure 4.1: Average priority rating assigned to each of the activities relating to parent involvement



It seems clear that the enhancement of "communication between home and school" is regarded by coordinators as the most important type of parent involvement, followed by responding to parents' own educational needs. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that activities to stimulate children learning at home did not receive a higher score. In Section 3, we referred to some evidence that suggested that parent involvement programmes that developed the capacity of parents to support the learning of their children at home (before and after the children began formal schooling) had particular potential in terms of tackling disadvantage.

It is important to emphasise that, although it received a lower average ranking than some other types of parental involvement, “activities to stimulate children learning at home” can comprise a significant part of the work of coordinators. This is evident from material that coordinators enclosed with their questionnaires in response to our invitation to submit plans, reports or other documents “that would help us to understand the nature of your work”. Submissions include descriptions of initiatives designed to help parents recognise and exploit opportunities for learning that arise in everyday family activities and conversation about these activities.

In light of the questions raised in Section 2 of this report about the emphasis in schemes for disadvantage on literacy and numeracy, it may be worth noting that several activities in which coordinators are frequently involved have a particular focus on literacy and numeracy. These include “paired reading” and other initiatives in which parents are helped to take a more active part in their children’s learning to read. In some cases parents have been trained as tutors or mentors for such initiatives. Courses and classes for parents on ways in which their children’s progress in curricular areas (English, Gaeilge and Mathematics in particular) can be supported are common. The documentation submitted includes some specially prepared leaflets for parents on aspects of the curriculum and on ways of helping children prepare for entry to primary school and for transfer from primary to post-primary school.

The sort of activities described in the previous two paragraphs (i.e., those with a particular focus on children’s learning) feature prominently in the documentation submitted by coordinators with their questionnaires. However the documentation confirms the finding of the ranking exercise that such activities received less attention than activities with a focus on relationships between home and school. Several coordinators report a need to devote much of their work to building up trust between

parents and staff. In relation to parents, one coordinator observed that many marginalised parents are “not ready to involve themselves more in their children’s’ schooling or in the work of the school in general because they are suspicious about the school’s agenda.” In relation to staff, Conaty (2002) points out, quoting Stoll and Fink (1996) that schools often “build barriers against potential partners” in order to “maintain control and avoid criticism” (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 133). Conaty argues that, although the HSCL scheme has removed some of these barriers there is still a need for “systematic and regular teacher development to allow each teacher to become a ‘home-school teacher’ in attitude (Conaty, 2002, p. 183). It may be that barriers and lack of trust between teachers and parents represent impediments to the efforts of coordinators to expand activities designed to stimulate children learning at home or activities designed to involve parents in the work of the school.

The 10% (approximately) of their time that coordinators devote to dealing with agencies in the community varies considerably both in terms of the nature of the contact (telephone contact, serving on committees together etc.) and in terms of the agencies involved. We have already mentioned the VEC as an agency with which coordinators deal regularly. Others include the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Gardaí, Area Partnership Companies and Local Drugs Task Forces. An interesting development, reported by a number of coordinators, is the extent to which the HSCL scheme, particularly its Local Committee, is facilitating other agencies to discharge their own remits. For example, Area Partnership Companies have initiated homework clubs and a variety of out-of-school activities through the Local HSCL Committee.

Priority areas for development

In the first part of this section, we mentioned four aspects of the HSCL scheme which, over the 12 years of its existence, had been identified by the National

Coordinator as needing attention. In each case, objectives and targets for progress were established. The questionnaire for coordinators provided an opportunity to examine the extent to which progress has been made. These four areas for development are now discussed in turn.

Home Visitation. From the beginning of the HSCL scheme, visits by coordinators to the homes of pupils' families has been seen as central and has been included in all versions of the scheme's Basic Principles (see Section 3 of this report). Conaty (2002) regards home visitation as "a major part of the role of the coordinators. It is emphasised in the scheme for the purpose of forming bonds of trust and of fortifying all families in a supportive and self-reliant community" (p. 75). During in-career development work, the National Coordinator agreed with local coordinators that 30% of the time of all coordinators would be devoted to home visitation. Ryan's (1994) evaluation had established that, in 1991-1992, coordinators were spending, on average, 26% of their time visiting homes but that a significant minority were spending little or no time on this aspect of their work. The National Coordinator reported, in an interview for this review, that she found that there had been a decline in home visitation during the mid-1990s. We have already seen that the average time spent by coordinators on visiting homes in our recent survey was 31.78%. Table 4.3 provides a more detailed breakdown for the 269 coordinators who provided the relevant information.

Table 4.3: Percentages of co-ordinators' time spent on home visits

No. of responses	0-9%	10-19%	20-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70+%
269	0.37	4.83	27.51	42.75	14.87	5.95	1.86	1.86

Table 4.3 indicates that over two-thirds of coordinators have reached or exceeded the 30% target for home visits and that, of the remainder, a large majority (26.77% of all coordinators) are within 10 percentage points of reaching the target. It is worth noting

that so many coordinators (42.75%) reported percentages that placed them in the 30% - 39% category. Although Ryan (1994) did not present a detailed breakdown of the figures, she did indicate that a significant minority reported that they spent in excess of 50% of their time on home visitation. Overall, it seems that there has been both an increase in the average amount of time spent on home visits and a contraction of the range.

Our survey also reveals an improvement in coordinators' satisfaction with the number of homes visited. We included a question in our questionnaire that had been used in the previous evaluation in which coordinators were asked to indicate "what percentage of those homes you would like to have visited does your workload actually allow you to visit?" In our survey, 65% of respondents reported that they had visited more than half of the homes that they wished to. The comparable figure from Ryan (1994) was between 28% and 42%.

Parents as educational home visitors. A second area for development identified in the course of the operation of the scheme was designed to allow local coordinators to delegate some home visitation to members of the local community who were themselves parents. Conaty (2002) argues that parents can be helped to develop the skills and the confidence to offer support to other parents and thereby exploit the potential of para-professionals to which we referred to in Section 3.

We recognised from the outset, that relying on a self-report questionnaire to obtain information about parents as home visitors might present some difficulties and it did. Coordinator were asked to indicate the number of parents who have been trained as home visitors "either as a result of your own initiative or that of a family or local cluster" (see Question 26 in the Appendix). Unfortunately we are not able to provide reliable estimates of the number of parents trained as home visitors based on responses to this questionnaire item because (a) a significant number of coordinators

skipped all or part of the question, (b) several coordinators did not report a number but indicated that they were in the process of taking an initiative with regard to the training of home visitors and (c) we were unable to deal with the likelihood of double-counting of parents in situations where the training occurred in a local or family cluster. It is possible, however, to provide some indication of the extent to which the idea of parents as home visitors is being implemented. We know from the responses that at least 140 coordinators have had at least some involvement in this work. We also know that the training of home visitors is more likely to occur in the context of a cluster than on the initiative of an individual coordinator.

A final question relating to parents as home visitors was open ended and simply asked coordinators to give the main reasons for home visits by parents. Analysis of the responses, provided by coordinators, confirms Conaty's (2002) account of the parents as home visitor's initiative. Thus, the reasons given by coordinators for visits include the provision of information about HSCL activities, support and advice in relation to issues such as the transfer from primary to post-primary school, and details of school policy and practice. Conaty makes clear that the training of parents as home visitors is part of a wider effort, within the HSCL scheme, to develop community leadership among parents. In designing the questionnaire, we felt that we needed to focus specifically on parents as home visitors and, as a result, our analysis does not reflect the wider context to which Conaty refers.

Targeting the most marginalised families. Ryan's (1994) evaluation indicated that many of the families described by coordinators as "uninvolved" in HSCL activities were, in fact, those who were most in need of help. As a result, there was increased recognition of a need to ensure that, within schools, coordinators directed most of their efforts towards their most marginalised families.

The expansion of the scheme increased the need for a more targeted approach. As we saw earlier, concentrations of disadvantage were lower in the schools that were admitted to the scheme after the ending of the pilot phase. Thus, while there would have been some basis for assuming that most or all of the pupils in the first batch of HSCL schools were disadvantaged, this assumption would have become increasingly dubious as the scheme expanded. For these reasons, great emphasis is now placed, during the induction and in-career development of coordinators, on the importance of a targeted and focussed approach to the involvement of the most marginalised families in HSCL activities.

Three questionnaire items were concerned with the issue of targeting. Coordinators were first asked to indicate how many of the families served by their school(s) that they considered to be “severely educationally disadvantaged”, “moderately educationally disadvantaged”, and “not educationally disadvantaged”. On average, coordinators placed 28% of families in the first (severely disadvantaged) category, 40% in the second category and 31% in the third category.

In the next item, coordinators were asked to make two judgments about each of the three categories: a general assessment of the level of involvement of the three groups and an opinion about whether that level of involvement represented an increase, a decrease or no change. It is worth noting that, despite the efforts of coordinators to reach out to the most marginalised families, almost 60% of the severely disadvantaged group are placed by coordinators in the “not involved” category. However, there is very little evidence that it is non-disadvantaged parents who are most involved in HSCL activities.

There is also evidence that coordinators believe that the situation has improved with regard to the involvement of disadvantaged families. This can be seen in Table 4.4, which is an attempt to summarise coordinators’ opinions about the extent to which the levels of involvement of the different groups have changed.

Table 4.4: Percentages of coordinators who are of the opinion that the level of involvement of the three groups has increased, decreased, and remained the same

	No. of Responses	Increased %	Decreased %	Remained Constant %
Severely educationally disadvantaged	221	66.5	4.1	29.4
Moderately educationally disadvantaged	226	67.1	9.3	23.6
Not educationally disadvantaged	172	29.7	11.6	58.7

Large majorities of coordinators believe that there has been an increase in the involvement of the two disadvantaged groups (about 67% in both cases). Relatively few coordinators believe that there has been a decrease in the involvement of parents in any of the groups. However, some coordinators did express concern, in written comments, about the possibility that involvement might be affected by the fact that more parents are in paid employment and, therefore, less available to participate in HSCL activities.

The third questionnaire item that is relevant to the issue of targeting asked coordinators to indicate the number of families in each of the three categories whose home had been visited. Analysis of the responses indicated that coordinators rarely visit the homes of non-disadvantaged families. Home visits are most common in the case of the severely disadvantaged category.

Parents and teachers working together on policy formation. The last of the areas for development, that we want to consider here, emerged as a focus for the HSCL scheme in the Spring of 1996 (Conaty, 2002). It represents an attempt to provide a mechanism through which parents can be given an opportunity to participate, with teachers, in making decisions about important aspects of the work of the schools. In the Autumn of 1997, following a period of experimentation in which the National Coordinator and a small number of local coordinators worked with groups of parents and teachers on

the development of school policies, an attempt was made to make joint policy formation a feature of the HSCL scheme in all schools.

In the school year 1997-1998, according to Conaty (2002), “94 per cent of the schools in the HSCL scheme formulated a draft policy on home, school, community relationships and practices” (p. 99). She went on to note that participation in the process by parents and teachers resulted in a number of positive outcomes. Trust was enhanced and resistance, on the part of teachers, to the involvement of parents in policy making was lessened. The local coordinator, according to Conaty, was seen as the “key link agent” (p. 101).

As a result of the success of the earlier efforts at joint policy making, HSCL coordinators are now encouraged to become involved in at least one policy formation exercise in each school year. The questionnaire for coordinators afforded an opportunity to examine the extent to which coordinators adopted this suggestion. An item was included in which coordinators were asked to indicate whether they had been involved in any policy formation initiatives during the school year 2000-2001 in each of six specified policy areas. Those who had some involvement were then asked to indicate the extent of parent and staff involvement (see Question 47 in the Appendix). Of the 230 coordinators who responded to this question, 163 (71%) reported that they had been involved in at least one such initiative and that, in almost all cases, parents and staff had been involved to, at least, some extent. It should be noted that 53 of the 67 coordinators who reported that they had not been involved in policy formation were recently (since 1998) recruited as coordinators. Similarly, 38 of the 55 coordinators who did not answer this question were recently recruited. It seems reasonable to suggest that policy formation may be more common in schools that have been in the HSCL scheme for a number of years than it is in schools that were admitted in 1998 and 1999.

It is clear that policy formation takes place across a wide range of areas. The areas most commonly reported are home-school relations and anti-bullying. However, none of the six areas listed in the question was mentioned by fewer than 65 respondents. Some differences between the responses of primary and post-primary coordinators emerged. Anti-bullying and enrolment/admissions were more common in the responses of post-primary coordinators. Curriculum was more likely to be mentioned by primary coordinators.

Resources and other factors that affect the work of coordinators

A number of items on the questionnaire gave coordinators an opportunity to assess some of the supports and resources that are available to them as part of the scheme. One important resource is clearly a parents' room. Almost all coordinators who work in a single school have access to a parents' room or similar facility and, although there are some problems with the data, it appears that a majority of all coordinators who work in more than one school also have access to a parents' room or similar facility. When asked to choose between three descriptions of their parents' rooms, 42% of coordinators selected the statement "well equipped and furnished," 44.5% selected "adequately equipped and furnished" and 13.5% selected "poorly equipped and furnished."

The existence of four types of cluster (family, local, regional, and term) is regarded as very significant by coordinators. Open-ended comments on completed questionnaires refer to the value of cluster meetings as a forum for sharing ideas, solving problems and reflecting on practice. This positive assessment is also evident from the results of a rating exercise on the questionnaire. Coordinators were asked to rate the effectiveness of family, local and regional clusters on a five point scale. The results are summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Coordinators' ratings of the effectiveness of local, family and regional clusters (entries are percentages of coordinators selecting each of five rating categories)

	No. of Responses	Very Effective %	Effective %	Don't Know %	Ineffective %	Very Ineffective %
Family	239	71.5	24.7	2.9	0.4	0.4
Local	275	61.1	34.5	4.4	0	0
Regional	269	25.7	51.3	14.9	6.7	1.5

More than 95% of coordinators regard family and local clusters as “effective” or “very effective,” with 61% and 71% picking the more positive option. The difficulty, noted earlier, of involving almost 25% of coordinators in family clusters should be borne in mind when interpreting this finding. Coordinators are slightly less positive about the effectiveness of regional clusters, with almost 15% selecting the “don't know” option and just over 8% rating them as ineffective or very ineffective. However, over a quarter of coordinators describe regional clusters as “very effective” and over half describe them as “effective”. It is also important to note that many of the coordinators in the “don't know” category are probably recent recruits to the scheme who had little or no experience of regional cluster meetings. Unfortunately, due to an error, the questionnaire did not provide an explicit opportunity to coordinators to rate Term Clusters. However, 121 coordinators recognised the error and provided a rating. Over 95% of these ratings were positive (42.6% describing them as “very effective” and 52.7% describing them as “effective”).

One item on the questionnaire was designed to assess coordinators' satisfaction with four types of support provided in the scheme. The four types of support and the percentages of coordinators expressing varying levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction are presented in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Coordinators ratings of satisfaction with various kinds of support
(entries are percentages of coordinators)**

	No. of Responses	Very Satisfied %	Satisfied %	Not Sure %	Dissatisfied %	Very Dissatisfied %
In-career development for coordinators	280	68.2	26.1	2.5	2.5	0.7
In-career development for others	270	1.9	18.5	36.3	33.7	9.6
Funding	280	15.7	44.3	14.6	21.4	3.9
Access to advice	277	33.9	49.8	11.9	4	0.4

The vast majority of coordinators are clearly satisfied with their own in-career development (more than two thirds saying they are “very satisfied”). Over 84% of coordinators also express satisfaction with the situation regarding access to advice and it seems clear, from comments made, that advice from the National Coordinator and the Assistant National Coordinators and from colleagues in clusters are seen as particularly helpful. The fact that 60% of coordinators express themselves as satisfied or very satisfied with funding is worth noting. The fourth type of support, about which we asked coordinators to supply satisfaction ratings, may be problematic. By “in-career development for others,” we meant in-career development for teachers and principals in the context of the HSCL scheme. Comments on the questionnaires indicate that many respondents may have interpreted the item differently or may simply have been unclear about what we had in mind.

We mentioned in Section 3 that we had evidence that coordinators were, in general, positive about the effectiveness of Local Committees. Table 4.7 contains a summary of the relevant analysis.

Table 4.7: Coordinators' ratings of the effectiveness of Local Committees (entries are percentages of coordinators)

	Number of Responses	Very Effective %	Effective %	Don't Know %	Ineffective %	Very Ineffective %
Valid percentage	180	30.0	52.2	15.6	3	0.6

A relatively large number of coordinators (over 100) did not provide a rating of the effectiveness of Local Committees. This may be due to the fact that so many schools were admitted to the scheme in the recent past and, as we saw, it can take several years to establish Local Committees. An open-ended question about how coordinators saw the functions of Local Committees was answered, in a majority of cases, in a way that reflected the functions of Local Committees as outlined at in-career development sessions. Many described the functions in terms very similar to those used by Conaty (2002): "the Local Committee deals with issues in the community that impinge on learning, learning in the widest sense" (p.97).

Conclusion

The HSCL scheme has undergone very significant expansion since its introduction, as a pilot programme in 1990. There was a particularly significant increase in the number of participating schools in 1999. Resources at national level to provide support and leadership to the scheme have not kept pace with this recent expansion. A survey of levels of disadvantage in primary schools, conducted to facilitate the introduction of Giving Children an Even Break, confirms the opinions of many associated with the HSCL scheme that concentrations of disadvantage are lower in recently admitted schools than in schools admitted earlier. The findings of

the survey also indicate that a large majority of the most disadvantaged primary schools in the country are participating in the scheme.

In the report of her evaluation, Ryan (1994) referred to the “considerable amount of activity” (p.192) that was generated as a result of the introduction of the HSCL scheme. It is clear that the scheme continues to generate a great deal of cooperation and collaboration between schools, families and communities. Coordinators spend the bulk of their time dealing with parents but still devote time to work with school staff and agencies in the community. It is also clear, from data supplied in our recent survey (only some of which is described here) that most coordinators work extremely hard. It would be important to bear this in mind if consideration was being given to the addition of any further duties to coordinators. It seems unlikely that coordinators would be able to assume additional duties without reducing the attention that they devote to other activities.

One area where a shift of emphasis, on the part of coordinators, might be considered relates to the amount of work that is done with parents where the aim is to stimulate children’s learning at home. Parents, who have been trained as home visitors could have an important role in this regard.

The results of our survey of coordinators indicated that considerable progress has been made in relation to four priority areas for development: increased time devoted to home visits, training parents as home visitors, targeting the most marginalised families and joint policy formation by parents and teachers. The survey also reveals high levels of satisfaction, among coordinators with the support that they receive from the National Coordinator and her team (in the form of, for example, advice and in-career development) from other coordinators (through cluster meetings) and from Local Committees.

SECTION 5

OUTCOMES OF THE HSCL SCHEME

This section is concerned with the impact of the scheme on schools, families, pupils, parents and communities and, more generally, with how effectively the scheme is achieving its stated objectives (ToR 4, 5, 8). The findings of the previous evaluations are summarised. Then, based on our recent surveys, the opinions and perceptions of coordinators and principals about (a) the extent to which the aims of the scheme are being achieved and (b) the impact on pupils, families, schools, and communities are presented.

Previous Evaluations

As pointed out in Section 3, HSCL scheme documentation employs the term “aims” rather than “objectives.” Five aims are stated:

1. 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.
2. To promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.
3. To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
4. 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.
5. To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally. (Department of Education and Science, 2002, p.2).

In relation to the first and fourth of these aims, Ryan (1999) points out that “major effects on pupil achievement of a project such as the HSCL scheme would be likely to be long term rather than short term” (Ryan, 1999, p.31). However, Ryan’s (1999) evaluation included analysis of the reading and mathematics achievement, as measured by standardised tests, of pupils in third and fifth class after the scheme had been in operation for five years. Achievement gains were found for third class but not for fifth class. Ryan (1994, 1999) also reported a number of effects of the scheme on pupils as observed by coordinators and classroom teachers. These included “improved behaviour, improved school attendance, improved scholastic achievement, greater care in their school work, and more positive attitude to school and teachers, to themselves and to their parents” (Ryan, 1999, p.25), although she makes clear that these effects are, in many cases, confined to a relatively small number of pupils.

Ryan concluded that a major start had been made in meeting the second aim about “active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies.” She based this conclusion on the high level of activity involving parents that had been generated by the scheme and on the very positive reaction of parents to such activity. For example, she presented evidence to show that the scheme had brought about increases in the numbers of times that most parents visited the school and in the extent to which they became involved in classroom and other school activities.

She reported that there had been an increase in contact between teachers and parents in most schools and “at a more general level, the HSCL scheme made teachers think about the role of parents in the school and in education” (Ryan, 1999, p.18). These changes appeared to be resulting in teachers, at least in some schools, becoming more open and tolerant about cooperation with parents. An important feature of the scheme, according to Ryan, was the development of links between primary and post-

primary schools in the same area. These links were seen as important in terms of facilitating the transfer and transition of pupils from first to second-level education.

Conaty (1999) reported a number of developments that also represent progress towards greater cooperation between school, home and community. For example, co-ordinators, principals and classroom teachers were asked whether major changes had occurred in the school since the HSCL scheme was introduced. Over 70% of respondents indicated that there had been such changes and these respondents were then asked to indicate the nature of the “most important” changes. Conaty lists the four most important changes as “attitude change by school towards parents,” “parent enhancement/participation,” “school development” and “school inserted into community” (see Conaty, 1999, pp.336-338).

Ryan also reported that there was some evidence, in the data gathered from coordinators, classroom teachers and principals that “movement had occurred towards the achievement of the third 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 is based on 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 schoolwork” (Ryan, 1999, p.31). The conclusion that progress was being made towards raising awareness in parents in their own capacities is confirmed by Conaty (1999; 2002), who reported that substantial majorities of parents, in a questionnaire survey, reported increased confidence and other benefits as a result of working with the HSCL coordinator.

Ryan was not in a position to address the fifth aim of the HSCL scheme because her evaluation was focussing on the period immediately after the introduction of the scheme. However, Conaty’s (2002) work reinforces a point made in Section 2 of this

report about the extent to which the HSCL scheme has been influential in the development of schemes that were introduced in recent years. BTC (rural) and the School Completion Programme are two examples of initiatives in which ideas and practices, developed in the context of the HSCL scheme, have been disseminated more widely.

Findings of the Surveys

The questionnaire for coordinators that was described in the previous section, when we were dealing with the implementation of the scheme, contained a number of items that gave an opportunity to provide opinions about what the scheme was achieving. The same or similar items were included in a separate questionnaire for school principals. Response rates for the questionnaire for principals were 82% and 77% for primary schools and post-primary schools respectively. Response rates for coordinators were reported in Section 4 (primary schools: 85%, post-primary schools: 76%). Results of analyses of the items in which coordinators and principals assessed the impact of the scheme are presented below. Analyses were done separately for primary and post-primary schools. However, results are reported separately only where differences between primary and post primary schools emerged. Some of the items that we used were taken directly from or modified from instruments used in Ryan's evaluation.

Perceptions relating to aims

In the surveys, coordinators and principals were asked to rate, on a five-point scale from "very successful" to "very unsuccessful," the extent to which the scheme is achieving its five stated aims. Table 5.1 contains the results for coordinators and principals.

Table 5.1: Ratings by co-ordinators (C) and principals (P) of how successful the HSCL Scheme has been in achieving each of its stated aims (entries are percentages of co-ordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

Aim	Number of Responses			Very Successful %			Moderately Successful %			No Difference %			Unsuccessful %			Very Unsuccessful %		
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
1. To maximise active participation of children in the learning process	274	364	13.5	19.5	81.8	70.9	4.4	7.1	0.4	1.6	0	0.8						
2. To promote active cooperation between home, school and the community	276	367	37.7	45.2	60.9	48.2	1.4	4.9	0	1.1	0	0.5						
3. To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities	274	367	23.7	38.1	73.4	55.9	2.2	4.9	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5						
4. To enhance children's uptake from education	269	357	8.9	15.7	79.6	69.2	10.8	13.7	0.7	0.8	0	0.5						
5. To disseminate positive outcomes	272	360	25.4	29.2	68.4	58.9	5.1	8.1	1.1	3.3	0	0.5						

It is clear that very large majorities of both groups believe that the scheme has been successful in achieving all of its aims. There is no case where more than 4% of respondents regard the scheme as unsuccessful or very unsuccessful. The percentage that regard the scheme as being at least moderately successful range from 84.9% (principals on the fourth aim) to 98.6% (coordinators on the second aim). Given that there is almost unanimity about the success of the scheme, the only way of examining differences between aims, in terms of how well coordinators and principals believe they are being achieved, is to focus on the “very successful” column. One interesting difference that emerges, when we focus on the “very successful” column is that both coordinators and principals seem to regard the scheme as less successful in relation to Aims 1 and 4 (referring to pupil outcomes) than it is in relation to the other three aims.

Table 5.1 reveals a slight tendency for coordinators and principals in primary schools to be more positive than their counterparts in post-primary schools.

The impact on parents

Coordinators and principals were asked to give their perceptions regarding the impact of the scheme on parents. In particular, they were asked to indicate, on a three point scale, the extent to which each of a number of developments had occurred as a result of the HSCL scheme. Table 5.2 contains the results separately for coordinators and principals.

Table 5.2 Assessments by coordinators (C) and principals (P) of the extent to which the HSCL scheme has resulted in particular developments among parents (entries are percentages of coordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

	Number of Responses		To a Great Extent %		To Some Extent %		Not at All %	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
As a result of the HSCL scheme, parents ...								
visit the school more often.	281	373	45.2	38.9	53.4	55.8	1.4	5.4
are more involved in their children's schoolwork.	278	370	14.7	21.1	82	72.4	3.2	6.5
have learned new parenting skills.	279	373	17.9	28.2	74.6	64.9	7.5	7
have learned to use new home management skills.	270	356	4.4	11.5	66.7	71.1	28.9	17.4
help with school activities.	279	373	22.2	25.7	62.7	57.9	15	16.4
help with classroom activities.	278	369	7.2	7.6	42.1	45.8	50.7	46.6
are more confident about helping children with homework.	273	366	14.8	4.8	78	74.6	7.7	10.7
feel less threatened by school and teachers.	283	372	75.6	57.5	24	39.2	0.4	3.2
are more aware of their contribution to their children's education.	282	371	50.4	42	48.6	55	1.1	3
have a new interest in what happens in school.	281	372	45.2	34.9	54.8	59.1	0	5.9

With one exception, large majorities of coordinators and principals believe that each of the developments has occurred to at least some extent. The exception is “parents helping with classroom activities.” This was reported by 50.7% of coordinators and 46.6% of principals to not have occurred at all. Based on the ratings summarised in Table 5.2, the area where the scheme appears to have had most impact on parents is the extent to which “parents feel less threatened by school and teachers.” More than three-quarters of coordinators and 57.5% of principals feel that parents are less threatened to a great extent as a result of the HSCL scheme. More moderate, but still substantial, impact was reported in relation to helping with school activities, learning new parenting skills, and involvement in children’s schoolwork. In relation to home management skills, significant minorities (28.9% of coordinators and 17.2% of principals) reported no impact, while only a few respondents indicated that this development had occurred to a great extent.

There appears to be a slight trend in the data suggesting that principals are somewhat less positive than coordinators about the impact of the scheme on parents. This is most evident in relation to outcomes that could be described as attitudinal (e.g., feeling less threatened by school and teachers). However the trend is less evident and is, in fact, reversed for some items that are task oriented such as “are more involved in children’s schoolwork,” “help with school activities,” and “help with classroom activities.” Comparisons of the responses from primary and post-primary schools (not reported in Table 5.2) again reveal a slight tendency for primary respondents to be more positive than post-primary respondents.

The impact on schools

The recent survey contains data on (a) the extent to which certain outcomes have occurred among teachers due to the implementation of the HSCL scheme, (b) the overall impact of the scheme on school life, and (c) the extent to which a “whole-school approach” has been adopted in schools.

With regard to the impact of the scheme on teachers, coordinators and principals were asked to indicate whether certain outcomes had occurred for “all teachers,” “most teachers,” “some teachers,” or “no teachers.” Table 5.3 contains a summary.

For all the teacher-related outcomes specified in the questionnaires and listed in Table 5.3, large majorities (between 55.1% and 92.2%) of coordinators and principals felt that they applied to most or all teachers. With the exception of the last outcome (awareness of the coordinator as a resource) both groups of respondents were more likely to select the “most teachers” option than the “all teachers” option. Very few respondents selected the “no teachers” option. In fact there are three developments for which no coordinator selected that option. It may be worth noting that both coordinators and principals seem to believe that the HSCL scheme has had a greater impact on teachers’ awareness of and attitude to parents’ role and contribution at home than it has had on teachers’ awareness of and attitude to parents’ role and contribution at school. This is based on a comparison of the figures for the second and fourth items (referring to parents’ role and contribution at school) in Table 5.3 with the figures for the third and fifth items (referring to parents’ role and contribution at home).

Table 5.3: Assessments by co-ordinators (C) and principals (P) of the extent to which the HSCL scheme has resulted in particular developments among teachers (entries are percentages of co-ordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

	Number of Responses		All Teachers %		Most Teachers %		Some Teachers %		No Teachers %	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
As a result of the HSCL Scheme, teachers are ...										
more tolerant of parents' presence in the school.	266	367	24.8	26.7	61.3	50.4	13.9	20.4	0	2.5
more aware of parents' role and contribution at home.	268	367	23.5	30.5	61.2	47.1	15.3	20.4	0	1.9
more aware of parents' role and contribution in the school.	264	366	13.3	26.8	48.9	44.3	36.7	25.4	1.1	3.6
more positive about parents' role and contribution in the home.	269	366	19	25.7	52.8	48.6	27.9	23.8	0.4	1.9
more positive about parents' role and contribution in the school.	263	363	12.9	22.3	42.2	46.8	42.6	28.1	2.3	2.8
more aware of the co-ordinator as a resource.	268	370	45.9	58.6	46.3	28.4	7.8	11.4	0	1.6

With regard to the impact of the scheme on school life, coordinators and principals were asked to indicate whether the scheme has had a positive impact, a negative impact or no impact on each of 7 aspects of school life. These aspects are listed in Table 5.4 together with the percentages of coordinators and principals who picked each of the response options.

There is almost unanimity among coordinators and principals that the impact of the scheme has been positive on the way schools relate with families, on the way the school relates with the wider community and on the school's approach to disadvantage. The fact that over 80% of coordinators and principals felt that the scheme had a positive impact on the way the school develops its policy is, perhaps, significant in view of the fact that the greater involvement of parents and staff in policy formation was a priority area for development in the scheme in recent years. The fact that almost 40% of coordinators and 50% of principals reported "no impact" on the physical structure of the school is surprising in the light of our earlier finding on the presence of parents' rooms in most schools in the scheme.

Because the term "whole-school approach" features in HSCL documentation, items were included in the questionnaire in which coordinators and principals were asked to assess the extent to which the HSCL scheme has lead to the adoption of a whole-school approach ("To a great extent," "To some extent" and "not at all"). The results were very similar for both groups. Approximately a quarter of both groups indicated that the HSCL scheme had lead to the adoption of a whole-school approach "to a large extent," while just under 10% of coordinators and just over 10% of principals selected the "not at all" option. A majority of both groups (65.3% of coordinators and 63.5% of principals indicated that a whole-school approach had been adopted to some extent as a result of the HSCL scheme.

Table 5.4. Assessments by of coordinators (C) and principals (P) of the impact of the scheme on aspects of school life (entries are percentages of co-ordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

Aspects of school life	Number of Responses			Positive Impact %			Negative Impact %			No Impact %		
	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P
The physical structure of the school.	262	366	59.5	47.5	0.8	2.5	39.7	50				
The way the school relates with families.	269	373	99.6	95.7	0	1.1	0.4	3.2				
The way the school relates with the wider community.	268	374	96.6	89.3	0	0.5	3.4	10.2				
Curriculum.	260	369	51.2	58.3	0	0.8	48.8	40.9				
The way the school develops its policy.	263	374	81.7	82.1	0	0.3	18.3	17.6				
Staff relationships within the school.	261	372	72.8	63.4	0.4	2.2	26.8	34.4				
The school's overall approach to disadvantage.	269	374	99.3	92.5	0	0	0.7	7.5				

Coordinators and principals were also asked to list the three aspects of a whole-school approach in relation to which “most progress” and “least progress” had been made. Some trends can be discerned from our analysis of the responses to these open-ended questions. For example, policy formation in schools and links with community agencies are mentioned by a number of respondents as areas in which progress, towards a whole-school approach, has been made. However, the wide diversity of responses made it impossible to conduct a full analysis in the time available. Therefore, we are not able to arrive at a firm conclusion about the issue, raised in Section 3, about the extent to which there is a shared understanding of the concept of a whole-school approach among participants in the scheme.

The impact on the community

Table 5.5 contains the results of an examination of the responses of coordinators and principals to a question that was designed to assess perceptions of the impact of the scheme on the community. As with other questions, coordinators and principals were asked to indicate whether various developments had occurred “to a great extent,” “to some extent” or “not at all.” The pattern of responses is similar to the patterns from our analysis of other kinds of outcome. Thus, very few respondents (20.1% being the largest) in either group, make use of the “not at all” category. In addition, there is a marked preference among respondents to favour the middle category (“to some extent”). The tendency for coordinators to be somewhat more positive than principals, noted in previous tables, seems particularly pronounced in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Perceptions of co-ordinators (C) and principals (P) of the impact of the HSCL scheme on the community (entries are percentages of co-ordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

	Number of Responses	To a Great Extent %		To Some Extent %		Not at All %	
	C	P	C	P	C	P	P
As a result of the HSCL scheme ...							
school became a focal point of the community.	271	372	28.8	22.3	61.6	64.2	9.6
parents became more aware of local services/resources.	276	370	37	39.5	62.7	56.2	0.4
parents made more use of local services/resources.	273	367	23.4	27.5	73.3	67.6	3.3
there is greater community spirit in the area.	262	359	13.7	18.1	69.1	61.8	17.2
there is greater community spirit among community agencies.	270	362	36.7	31.8	56.7	57.2	6.7
							11

Promoting coordination of the work of voluntary organisations, schools and other statutory agencies with a view to ensuing “integrated delivery of services to marginalised children and their families” is one of the basic principles of the HSCL scheme listed in the most recent DES leaflet. In light of this, an item was included in the questionnaire for coordinators in which respondents were asked to pick one of four statements which, in their opinion, “best describes the relationship between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage in your community.” Results reveal divergences of opinion among coordinators. The most positive statement (“The HSCL scheme is part of a well integrated package of measures to tackle poverty and disadvantage”) was selected by 11.8% of coordinators. A further 34.3% of coordinators indicated that the situation is best described by the statement: “There is a satisfactory level of cooperation between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage.” However a majority of coordinators (53.9%) picked one of the two statements that are critical of the relationship between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives. The most negative statement (“Initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage are fragmented”) was selected by 15% of coordinators, while 38.9% opted for the statement: “There is some cooperation between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage but it is not entirely satisfactory.”

The impact on pupils

Perceptions of the impact of the scheme on pupils were examined, in the survey, using a format similar to that used in relation to the impact of the scheme in other areas. A number of outcomes were listed on the questionnaires and coordinators and principals were asked to indicate whether they thought each outcome had occurred “to a great extent,” “to some extent” or “not at all.” The responses are summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Perceptions of co-ordinators (C) and principals (P) of the impact of the HSCL scheme on pupils (entries are percentages of co-ordinators and principals choosing each rating category)

	Number of Responses	To a Great Extent %			To Some Extent %			Not at All %		
		C	P	C	P	C	P	C	P	
As a result of the HSCL Scheme, pupils ...										
were better behaved in school.	266	360	9	15.6	81.2	63.3	9.8	22.1		
had increased attendance at school.	273	371	24.9	20.8	72.5	67.7	2.6	11.6		
had a more positive experience of school.	274	369	32.5	33.6	66.1	59.6	1.5	6.8		
had a more positive attitude to school.	272	368	30.1	30.7	68	61.4	1.8	7.9		
had a more positive attitude towards own parents	254	346	13	14.7	77.6	74.3	9.4	11		
had more pride in themselves and in their own work	262	360	11.8	17.8	80.2	70.3	8	11.9		
showed improvements in school achievement.	239	338	12.6	18.3	81.2	66.9	6.3	14.8		

In addition to the pattern of responses evident in other areas (i.e., the tendency for coordinators to be more positive than principals), it may be worth noting that what might be regarded as affective outcomes (pupils attitude to and experience of school) are described as having occurred to a greater extent, by both groups, than are outcomes relating to pupils behaviour, attendance or performance.

Conclusion

This section began with a review of previous evaluations of the HSCL scheme. We suggested that these evaluations contained evidence of progress on a number of fronts. Some gains, by pupils, in achievement in English reading and mathematics were noted. There were a number of very clear signs of improved cooperation between parents and teachers in participating schools and some indications that the scheme was beginning to have an impact on parents' awareness of their own capacity to enhance their children's educational progress.

Evidence collected, for this review, on outcomes of the scheme is confined largely to the perceptions of people who are directly involved in the implementation of the scheme (principals and local coordinators). These perceptions are overwhelmingly positive in relation to all aspects of the scheme about which questions were asked. Almost all coordinators and principals believe that the scheme has been at least moderately successful in achieving each of its five stated aim. In addition, large majorities of coordinators and principals believe that the scheme has had a positive impact on parents, schools, the community and pupils.

Apart from the obvious tendency for coordinators and principals to view the HSCL scheme in a favourable light, a number of interesting trends emerge. First, although there are some exceptions, coordinators and principals tend to regard

changes relating to attitudes as more common than changes relating to behaviour. Secondly, principals are slightly less positive in their judgments than coordinators and post-primary personnel are slightly less positive than their primary colleagues. Thirdly, principals and coordinators seem a little less convinced of the impact of the scheme on pupils than they are of its impact in other areas. This was most evident in ratings of how successful the scheme has been in achieving its stated aims. Fourthly, concerns, that we expressed in Section 3, about the extent to which there is a shared understanding of the concept of a “whole-school approach” are not resolved by the findings of our survey. Fifthly, a little over half of the of coordinators surveyed believe that there is room for improvement in relation to the integration of initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage in communities.

All of the available evidence on the HSCL scheme points to positive outcomes and progress in relation to stated aims. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the available evidence. This is particularly important in relation to the evidence presented, for the first time, in this section. As we pointed out earlier, this new evidence is based entirely on the perceptions of people who are directly involved in the implementation of the scheme. Therefore, while we want to highlight the encouraging nature of our findings with regard to the HSCL scheme, we also recognise that firm conclusions about outcomes must await more comprehensive and broadly based data collection.

For example, there would be a value in putting in place procedures for monitoring the educational achievement and attainment of pupils and students from HSCL schools. The survey of levels of literacy in designated disadvantaged schools, proposed in The National Anti-Poverty Strategy Framework Document (Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2001) will yield some useful information on achievement.

Some procedures for monitoring attainment (retention rates) are being put in place as part of the School Completion Programme and these procedures will yield data for many HSCL schools. The Post-primary School Student database also contains useful information in this regard. A further development might be a tracking system that would allow rates of transfer to third-level institutions from HSCL schools to be monitored. These suggestions about the monitoring of educational achievement and attainment are, arguably, more appropriate to an evaluation of the overall strategy for disadvantage than to the HSCL scheme, given the significant overlap between the various elements of the overall strategy. Nevertheless, we believe that the suggestions are worthwhile and that it may be possible to devise creative ways of distinguishing the effects of the HSCL scheme on achievement and attainment from the effects of other aspects of the strategy.

There would also be value in collecting data from parents associated with HSCL schools and from people involved in community groups and agencies on which the scheme might have an impact. The two previous evaluations contained data indicating that parents react very positively to the scheme. However, further work in this area would be useful. There is also a particular need to provide opportunities to community groups and agencies to describe the impact of the scheme from their perspectives.

SECTION 6

THE COST OF THE HSCL SCHEME

This section is concerned with the costs to the Exchequer of the HSCL scheme. It is hoped that, read in conjunction with the previous two sections, it will be possible to make some judgments in relation to that aspect of the Terms of Reference dealing with the efficiency with which the HSCL scheme has achieved its stated objectives (TOR 5). In our initial discussions with the Steering Committee, it was agreed that we should distinguish between four types of cost:

1. salaries and expenses of local coordinators
2. supports for local coordinators such as in-career development
3. grants given to schools to be used at their discretion
4. administrative costs in the Department of Education and Science.

The HSCL scheme is not accounted for separately within the Department of Education and Science. Therefore, it was necessary to collect financial information relating to the year 2001 from different sections of the Department. Our aim was to provide an indication of annual costs, using 2001 prices, rather than attempting to provide an accurate account of what was actually spent in 2001. This distinction is important because expenditure in 2001 proved to be untypical in a number of ways.

We will now consider the four types of cost listed above. We will then present a summary table relating to costs and comment on some aspects of that summary.

Salaries and Expenses of Coordinators

All coordinators are qualified teachers employed by a school in the scheme (the base school). They are all on the common basic salary scale for teachers and are

paid in accordance with their experience, qualifications and any allowances to which they may be entitled. It is not possible to compute the actual total salary costs of employing coordinators because the fact that an individual teacher is working as a coordinator is not routinely recorded on the data base of the salaries sections of the Department. However, there are strong indications that, in general, coordinators tend to have longer than average service in teaching and are, therefore, on higher than average salaries. For example, of the 112 coordinators at primary level for whom information was available, 56 were at the top of the scale.

For the purposes of the present review, the fact that we can not present figures for actual salary costs is not necessarily a problem because it is, arguably, the cost of replacing coordinators as classroom or subject teachers that is the real cost to the Exchequer of the HSCL scheme. The primary and post-primary sections of the Department have both calculated, for general planning purposes, average replacement costs of teachers. The primary section uses a figure of €31,750; the post-primary section uses a figure of €27,733.61. The difference between the two figures reflects the recent experiences of recruitment of new teachers. The current shortage of primary teachers has resulted in a situation in which new recruits typically have some experience (e.g., teaching outside Ireland). On the other hand, the vast majority of new recruits, at post-primary level, are recent graduates and are appointed at or near the bottom of the salary scale.

As indicated in Section 4, the equivalent of 176 whole-time coordinators have been sanctioned for the HSCL scheme at primary level. Using the replacement cost of €31,750 per coordinator, the total replacement cost comes to €5,588,000. The full complement of coordinators at post-primary level is 210 giving rise to a total replacement cost of €5,824,058.10. The overall figure for salaries, therefore, comes

to €11,412,058.10. Coordinators' expenses are paid out of the HSCL grant to schools (see below) except in very exceptional circumstances. In 2001, for example, approximately €1,500 was paid to a small number of coordinators at primary level in dispersed rural areas who incurred travel costs that could not be met from the grant. The effect of adding such expenses to salaries is very small. Our aggregated figure for this type of cost is, therefore, €11,413,558.10.

Professional Support for Coordinators

There are two specific costs in this category. The first relates to the provision of in-career development for coordinators, principals and other teachers (see Section 4 for a description of this provision). The second relates to the support (in the form of advice, encouragement etc.) that is provided by the National Coordinator and her two assistants and by a Divisional Inspector who allocates about 40% of his time to managing the scheme.

We have not made any provision in our estimates for any time that other Inspectors devote to the HSCL scheme, although Inspectors do have a role in relation to monitoring the operation of the scheme (e.g., in the context of school inspection). We feel that the exclusion of Inspectors time is justified on the basis that there is no evidence of any recruitment to the Inspectorate that is attributable to the existence of the HSCL scheme. On the other hand, we have included all of the salaries of National Coordinator and her two assistants in our estimates, although the National Coordinator has significant other responsibilities (e.g., for the rural dimension of BTC).

The In-Career Development Unit of the Department confirmed expenditure of €74,856.48 for the HSCL scheme for 2001. However, it is important to note that in-

career development in 2001 was seriously curtailed because of travel restrictions to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease. The figure that had been budgeted for in-career development for 2001 was €129,540 and this is the figure that we will use in our estimate of annual costs.

The full year cost of the salaries of a National Coordinator and two Assistant National Coordinators is €166,940.23. The actual cost for 2001 was somewhat lower because there was a vacancy for one of the Assistant National Coordinator posts for part of the year. Approximately €18,000 was spent on travel and subsistence for the National Coordinator and her assistants. According to the Manager of the scheme, most of the work that he devotes to the scheme should be placed in the professional support category. Accordingly we are suggesting that €220,000 is a reasonable estimate of total salary costs in this category. Combining this figure with our earlier estimate for in-career development, results in a total cost for the professional support category of €349,540.

Grants to Schools

Schools in the HSCL scheme at both primary and post-primary levels receive grants that are to be used exclusively to support HSCL activities. Primary schools receive a payment of €6.35 for each pupil and post-primary schools receive €2.54 per capita. Both are subject to a minimum payment of €1,905. Total expenditure on these grants in 2001 was €850,200.23 (€452,690.23 to primary schools; €397,510 to post-primary schools).

Administrative Costs

Our contact with officials of the Department indicates that the costs associated with the administration of the scheme are very small. For example, the personnel involved at primary level estimate that administration of the scheme requires one eighth of the time of a Clerical Officer, one eighth of the time of an Executive Officer and one tenth of the time of a Higher Executive Officer. Using the mid-points of the appropriate salary scales, we estimate that the cost of time allocated is €9,797. Personnel at post-primary level have indicated that they spend somewhat less time on the HSCL scheme than their colleagues at primary level. Accordingly we are suggesting €16,000 as the total administrative cost of the scheme.

In Table 6.1, we have brought the four components discussed above together and presented a grand total. Table 6.1 also contains information on the percentage of the total cost that is allocated to each of the four components.

Table 6.1: Summary of costs of the HSCL scheme

	Cost (000s)	Percentage of Total (%)
Coordinators salaries and expenses	€11,414	90.4
Professional Support	€ 350	2.8
Grants to Schools	€ 850	6.7
Administration	€ 16	0.1
Total	€12,630	100

A number of comments can be made about Table 6.1. First, it is important to point out that the total cost given (just over €12.6 million) is our estimate of what the cost of the scheme would have been if the scheme was fully operational in 2001. In fact, the actual costs were somewhat lower because, for example, a number of eligible schools had not been included.

Secondly, although it is not possible to calculate a unit cost (in this case, the cost per family), some indications are possible. For example, we know that there are in the region of 200,000 students in the primary and post-primary schools that are eligible for the HSCL scheme. Data from our recent survey and consultations with coordinators indicate that the ratio of children to families is about 4 : 3. On this basis, we estimate that approximately 150,000 families send children to schools in the HSCL scheme. Dividing the total cost of the scheme (€12.630 million) by 150,000 suggests a unit cost of €84.42 per family. However, we saw earlier that coordinators reported that, overall, 31% of the families in their schools are not disadvantaged and that these families are not targeted by the scheme. Therefore, the cost per targeted family is, by our estimate, €122.03 (€12.630 million divided by 69% of 150,000).

Thirdly, it is clear that expenditure on the HSCL scheme is dominated by the pay of coordinators. It is, perhaps, worth noting that the percentage of expenditure that is spent on coordinators' salaries (90.4%) is very close to the 91.55% of expenditure on primary education that is spent on teachers' salaries and superannuation (Kellaghan & Flanagan, 1999).

Fourthly, the fact that only 2.8% of total expenditure is devoted to professional support is noteworthy in view of the extensive work that is done in this area as part of the HSCL scheme. The very large expansion of the scheme in 1999 is likely to have had the effect of reducing, by as much as 50%, the percentage of total cost that is devoted to professional support.

Fifthly, it is somewhat surprising, in view of the complexities of the various schemes for addressing disadvantage, that the administrative costs of HSCL scheme are negligible.

Our analysis of expenditure takes no account of money (much of it from statutory agencies) that is spent on local initiatives that are developed or facilitated by HSCL coordinators or by Local Committees. For example, Area Partnership Companies provide funding for activities such as Homework Clubs, in which HSCL coordinators are centrally involved. In addition, Vocational Education Committees, in accordance with their adult education remit, pay for the teachers and facilitators of many of the courses and classes for parents that are provided in the context of the HSCL scheme. We are not aware of any data that could be used to quantify this kind of expenditure. In any event, it seems to us that it would be inappropriate to regard such expenditure as a cost of the HSCL scheme. It is more appropriate to see it in terms of the HSCL scheme having a role in enabling other agencies to discharge their own mandates.

There is one final issue that can be raised in this section. A feature of the HSCL scheme is that it involves using teachers in innovative ways. A question arises, therefore, about what would be the impact on the system of deploying those teachers in more conventional ways (opportunity cost). To cast some light on this question, we conducted an exercise in which we examined what would have happened to average class sizes if the 176 HSCL coordinators in primary schools had been allocated to classroom teaching instead of HSCL. We found that the impact would have been quite small.

We were only able to obtain the data we needed to calculate average class size from 191 of the schools that are designated disadvantaged. In these 191 schools, average class size is 20.68 pupils. An extrapolation from this average indicates that there are 3,307 classroom teachers in designated primary schools. The introduction of

176 additional classroom teachers would only result in a reduction of just over one point in average class size to 19.64.

It is possible that class sizes in the 191 schools from which we had data are smaller, on average, than other designated schools because, for example, all BTC urban schools are included in the 191. However, the substantive point made in the previous paragraph remains valid. If the average class size was higher than our estimate the impact of an extra 176 teachers would be only marginally greater. If, for example, 23 was the actual correct average, the introduction of 176 extra teachers would only bring the average down to 21.71.

Conclusion

In Section 4 of this report, we presented evidence that the HSCL scheme is generating a great deal of activity in terms of cooperation and collaboration between participating schools, the families that the schools serve and the communities in which the schools are located. We have also presented, in Section 5, evidence that the scheme is making progress in relation to at least some of its stated aims. In light of the evidence presented in the previous two sections, it seems to us that the costs of the HSCL scheme are low. Our opinion, in this regard, is strengthened when the large number of families targeted by the scheme is taken into account. It is also important to bear in mind that the opportunity cost of the scheme, at least in terms of reducing class size, is very low.

Two other points can be made. First, there has been a significant reduction, in recent years, in the percentage of overall spending that is devoted to the professional support of local coordinators and other school staff. Good quality professional support has been a feature of the HSCL scheme since its inception and our survey indicates that there is a high level of satisfaction, among coordinators with that support.

However, it is worth recalling that the National Coordinator has expressed concern about the fact that she and her team are no longer able to make as many visits to schools as they used to before the recent very large increases in the numbers of participating schools. It seems reasonable to suggest that an increase in the amount of resources devoted to professional support is already needed and that this need will become more apparent in the near future.

Secondly, if it is decided that it is desirable to monitor the efficiency of the HSCL scheme or the overall strategy of which the scheme is a part, then some changes in the way the Department maintains financial and other data may be necessary. For example, it would be useful if all teachers who are working on a scheme for teaching disadvantage could be identified on the databases relating to salaries. It would also be useful if a section of the Department could take responsibility for integrating data from the primary and post-primary sections in the case of schemes, such as the HSCL scheme, that operate in both sections. More generally, it is a weakness of current procedures that it has not been possible to calculate the percentage of overall expenditure on education that is spent on tackling educational disadvantage through the various Department schemes.

SECTION 7

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THE HSCL SCHEME

This section is concerned with “identifying and commenting on available performance indicators for the scheme and developing further appropriate performance indicators to the extent that deficiencies are identified in available indicators” (ToR 10). Kellaghan and Flanagan (1999) define indicators as “statistics which contain information about the status, quality or performance of an education system” (p.48). They distinguish between three types of indicator: input, process and output. In the context of the HSCL scheme, inputs are the available resources (the time of the local coordinators, the grants paid to schools etc.); processes are the ways the resources are used; and outputs refer to what the scheme tries to achieve (e.g., improved learning by pupils and raised awareness on the part of parents). According to Kellaghan and Flanagan, indicators “serve to establish, after a period of time, if an objective had been met or the degree of progress being made towards its achievement” (p.49, see also White Paper, 1995, p.193). In these terms, the identification of available indicators depends on the existence of clearly specified objectives and/or targets. For present purposes, a target is seen as a step on the way towards achieving an objective.

As we saw in Section 3, objectives are not specified in HSCL documentation. Instead, broader aims and principles are outlined and, from time to time, more specific objectives or targets are set. Some of these were described in Section 3 and others were mentioned in Section 4 in the context of priority areas for implementation and development. Most of the objectives that we mentioned in these two sections can readily be translated into indicators. For example, we examined progress towards the

objective that there would be at least one instance of parents and teachers engaging in policy formation in a school year by calculating the number of coordinators who reported that they engaged in the process in a school year (a process indicator). Several of the other measures, used in our report of the survey of coordinators to assess progress in relation to priority areas are, in fact, performance indicators (e.g., percentage of coordinators who spend at least 30% of their time on home visits).

In Section 3, we noted a number of reasons why it might not be appropriate to fully adopt SMI guidelines in relation to the specification of objectives for the HSCL scheme. To the extent that our arguments about objectives are valid, questions also arise about performance indicators. Despite our reservations, we believe that there is some scope, within the HSCL scheme, for the specification of some additional objectives and associated performance indicators. However, we believe that, in accordance with the emphasis in the HSCL scheme on participation and consultation, those involved in the scheme should be given an opportunity to discuss the issue. In particular, there should be a process designed to establish which aspects of the scheme are and are not amenable to the specification of objectives. It seems to us that there is a strong case for the specification of objectives derived from the first and fourth aims (related to pupil outcomes) and, to a lesser extent, from the third aim (related to parent outcomes). Performance indicators, that can be used in assessing progress towards these objectives, can then be identified. Indicators can also be developed in relation to inputs and processes. Indeed, as we noted earlier, some input and processes indicators are already in place in the scheme.

Some suggestions for objectives and performance indicators are outlined below. In making these suggestions, we are not precluding the setting of other objectives that reflect particular local needs identified by schools or clusters of

schools. In identifying output indicators, we have also tried to take account of, the fact that it may not be possible to separate the impact of the HSCL scheme from the impact of other schemes. At present all primary schools in the HSCL scheme are also in DAS (i.e., they are designated as disadvantaged) and ways of extending the HSCL scheme to the small number of DAS schools (primary and post-primary) that are not part of the HSCL scheme are being explored (Department of Education and Science, 2002). For these reasons, some of the objectives and performance indicators suggested below refer to designated (DAS) schools rather than HSCL schools.

Finally, the suggestions should only be seen as examples because we have not attempted to offer a comprehensive set of objectives or indicators. We have however, tried to incorporate the relevant targets from the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS, 2002) into our suggestions although we recognise the need to clarify several aspects of these targets (see Section 2 of this report and Kellaghan, 2002).

Our suggestions are set out in tabular form. Table 7.1 contains 15 objectives (three relating to inputs; four to processes and eight to outputs). For each objective, we have suggested at least one indicator. In most cases, we have also suggested an intermediate target. The table is being offered for discussion as the first part of a consultation process with local coordinators and others involved in the scheme. Subsequent parts of that consultation process would focus on whether the SMI approach should be extended to aspects of the HSCL scheme other than those covered in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Examples of possible specific objectives, intermediate targets, and performance indicators

Inputs			
Objective	Intermediate Target	Performance Indicators	
1. Restore the proportion of expenditure on the scheme that is devoted to professional support to the level it was in 1997 by 2005.	Increase expenditure on professional support in 2003, 2004, and 2005.	Percentage of total expenditure allocated to professional support.	
2. Maintain current levels of in-career development for coordinators and principals.		Percentage of coordinators attending annual in-career development sessions. Percentage of principals new to the scheme who participated in in-career development.	
3. Provide in-career development on home/school/community relations to the staffs of all schools in the scheme by 2015.	Provide in-career development to the staffs of at least 10 new schools in the scheme each year.	Percentage of schools in the scheme in which in-career development has been provided to staff.	
Processes			
Objective	Intermediate Target	Performance Indicators	
4. Ensure that all schools in the scheme have access to a group of parents who have been trained as home visitors by 2006.	Double the number of parents who have been trained as home visitors by 2004.	Percentage of schools that have access to a group of parents who are trained as home visitors.	
5. Ensure that all parents from disadvantaged backgrounds participate in at least two HSCL activities in a school year (e.g., attend a course, help out in a classroom, participate in a homework club or paired reading programme).		Percentage of parents who participate in at least two HSCL activities in a school year.	

Table 7.1: Continued.

6. Ensure that all parents from disadvantaged backgrounds, in HSCL schools, have at least one opportunity to engage in decision making relating to the school(s) attended by their children in a school year (e.g., joint policy formation, parent's councils and other governance structures).	Issue at least three invitations to all parents to engage in school-related decision making.	Number of invitations issued to parents to engage in school-related decision making.
	Percentage of parents who engage in school-related decision-making in a school year.	
7. Ensure that Local Committees undertake a systematic assessment of educational needs in its area at least once every three years	Percentage of Local Committees that have undertaken a needs assessment within the last three years.	
Outputs	Performance Indicators	
Objective	Intermediate Target	Performance Indicators
8. Reduce the percentage of children, in designated schools, with serious literacy difficulties to the national norm by 2010. This might be operationalised in terms of bringing the percentage of pupils at or below the tenth percentile to 10% on an agreed test of reading.	Halve the proportion of pupils in designated schools, with serious literacy difficulties, by 2006 (NAPS, 2002 supplementary target).	Percentage of pupils in designated schools at or below the tenth percentile on the agreed test of reading.
9. Reduce the percentage of children, in designated schools, with serious numeracy difficulties to the national norm. This might be operationalised in terms of bringing the percentage of pupils at or below the tenth percentile to 10% on an agreed test of mathematics.	Halve the proportion of pupils in designated schools, with serious numeracy difficulties, by 2006.	Percentage of pupils in designated schools at or below the tenth percentile on the agreed test of mathematics.
10. Eliminate early school leaving, before Junior Certificate in designated schools by 2015.	Halve the rate of early school leaving before Junior Certificate in designated schools by 2006.	The rate of early school leaving aggregated across designated schools.

Table 7.1: Continued.

11. Bring senior cycle completion rates in designated school up to the national norm by 2015 (NAPS, 2002 envisages that the national norm will be 85% in 2003 and 90% in 2006. It is currently 81%).	Increase senior cycle average completion rates in designated schools to levels to be arrived at following consultation with personnel from the School Completion Programme.	Senior cycle completion rates aggregated across designated schools.
12. Reduce the incidence of poor examination performance in designated schools (less than 5 D's on ordinary level papers) to the national norm on the Junior Certificate and Senior Certificate Examinations by 2015.	Halve the incidence of poor examination performance in designated schools by 2006.	Percentage of students in designated schools obtaining less than 50sw on ordinary level papers on (a) the Junior Certificate and (b) the Leaving Certificate examinations.
13. Ensure that parents of children under 7, with whom HSCL coordinators work, have achieved specific skills related to the development of children's literacy and numeracy before the children complete first class. (The particular skills to be named in the light of best practice.)	Double the number of parents in the target group who have acquired the named skills by 2006.	Percentage of parents who have acquired the named skills.
14. Ensure that parents of students preparing for public examinations, with whom HSCL coordinators work, have the knowledge necessary to help their children in relation to study skills, decisions about subject choice, etc.	Double the number of parents in the target group who have acquired the specified knowledge by 2006.	Percentage of parents who have acquired the specified knowledge.
15. Bring the rates of transfer from designated post-primary schools to third-level education up to the rate of transfer across the system as a whole by 2015.	Double the percentage of students proceeding to third-level education from designated post-primary schools.	Percentage of students proceeding to third-level education from designated post-primary schools.

It is important that the objectives and targets specified in Table 7.1 be seen as referring to the HSCL scheme as a whole. Some schools, within the scheme, will be closer to achieving objectives than others. Indeed it is likely that some schools may already have achieved some of the objectives. For example, there may be schools that currently have access to a group of parents who have been trained as home visitors (Objective 4). It is also important to emphasise the provisional nature of the suggestions in the table. All of the suggestions should be the subject of further discussion in the context of the proposed consultation process. In particular, consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of the time scales specified in the objectives and targets. Finally, the fact that the table covers only a small part of the HSCL scheme should be noted. Whether and, if so, how the SMI process should be extended to other aspects of the HSCL scheme is a matter for the proposed consultation process.

SECTION 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In an attempt to place the HSCL scheme in its wider policy context, we have, described the various schemes that are in place. We tried to show that, although there is scope for better integration, there is an underlying coherence to the Department's strategy and that the strategy has evolved in line with findings of research on the kinds of interventions that are likely to be effective. Attention was drawn to two gaps in the strategy: the fact that literacy and numeracy are not prioritised in the way that they are in successful initiatives in other countries and the absence of concerted efforts to raise the expectations of teachers and parents. An emphasis on literacy is a feature of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS, 2002). In our discussion of that strategy, however, we identified a number of problems about the way that targets have been set. We noted, for example, that none of the key targets refer to reductions in inequality.

HSCL documentation is discussed with regard to the adequacy and appropriateness of the schemes' objectives. It was concluded that the objectives of the HSCL scheme are not adequate in terms of the guidelines of the SMI. There are, questions, however, about the desirability of applying SMI guidelines to the HSCL scheme and, in our view, any proposal to bring the scheme's documentation into line with SMI guidelines should first be discussed with personnel involved in the scheme. Although its objectives are not adequate in terms of SMI criteria, our assessment of HSCL scheme documentation is that it is appropriate both in the sense that it reflects overall Government policy and in the sense that it is well grounded in the national and international research literature on educational disadvantage and poverty. Proposed

objectives and associated performance indicators relating to some aspects of the scheme are outlined in Section 7 of this report. It is envisaged that these would be the basis for discussion with those involved in the HSCL scheme.

The HSCL scheme has undergone very significant expansion since its introduction, as a pilot programme in 1990, with a particularly significant increase in the number of participating schools in 1999. Resources at national level to support and provide leadership to the scheme have not kept pace with this recent expansion. Findings from a survey conducted for primary schools indicate that concentrations of disadvantage are lower in recently admitted schools than in schools admitted earlier and that a large majority of the most disadvantaged primary schools in the country are participating in the scheme. It is clear that the HSCL scheme is generating a great deal of activity in terms of cooperation and collaboration between participating schools, the families that the schools serve and the communities in which the schools are located. Coordinators spend the bulk of their time dealing with parents but still devote time to work with school staffs and agencies in the community. Given that coordinators work extremely hard, the addition of any further duties to coordinators would ultimately mean reducing the attention that they devote to other activities.

We have presented some evidence that the scheme is making progress in relation to its stated aims. Previous evaluations contained evidence of progress on a number of fronts including some gains by pupils in achievement. There were a number of very clear signs of improved cooperation between parents and teachers in participating schools and some indications that the scheme was beginning to have an impact on the wider community. Surveys, conducted for this review, indicate that the perceptions of people who are directly involved in the implementation of the scheme (principals and local coordinators) are overwhelmingly positive in relation to all

aspects of the scheme about which questions were asked. Almost all coordinators and principals believe that the scheme has been at least moderately successful in achieving each of its five stated aims. They also believe that the impact of the scheme on parents, schools, the community and pupils has been positive. While we want to highlight the encouraging nature of our findings with regard to the HSCL scheme, we also recognise that firm conclusions about outcomes must await more comprehensive and broadly based data collection, including procedure to monitor attainment and achievement of pupils and to obtain the views of parents and community agencies.

It seems to us that the costs of the HSCL scheme are low considering the large number of families targeted by the scheme. It is also important to bear in mind that the opportunity cost of the scheme, at least in terms of reducing class size, is very low. There has been a significant reduction, in recent years, in the percentage of overall spending that is devoted to the professional support of local coordinators and other school staff.

Recommendations

1. The extent to which there is a particular focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills in schemes for disadvantage needs to be examined. If our assessment that literacy is not receiving the attention that it warrants is confirmed, new initiatives need to be identified. The international literature on teaching reading to children from poor backgrounds contains some descriptions of successful initiatives that might be adaptable for use in designated schools in Ireland (see, for example, Shanahan, 2001). The survey of reading in designated schools, proposed in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, could provide useful base-line data in this regard. Subsequent administrations of such surveys could be a means of assessing progress. Consideration should also be given to the

- systematic monitoring of literacy and numeracy outcomes in all schools participating in schemes for disadvantage.
2. The HSCL scheme should play a role in any initiatives that might emerge from implementation of our first recommendation. For example, local coordinators could be very important in facilitating the implementation of family literacy programmes as an extension of work in which they are already involved (see page 62 of this report).
 3. Examples, in other countries, of programmes that seek to raise the expectations of parents and teachers for what disadvantaged children can achieve (especially in reading and oral language) should be studied with a view to adapting them for use in this country. In the context of the HSCL scheme, parents and teachers come together for a variety of purposes. The raising of expectations for children's learning could become one of these purposes.
 4. Work that is already underway to bring about better integration of initiatives for tackling poverty and educational disadvantage needs to continue.
 5. In the context of implementation of the previous recommendation, particular attention needs to be given to recognising the complementary nature of the roles of HSCL coordinators, Visiting Teachers of Travellers and Education Welfare Officers.
 6. A few aspects of HSCL documentation need to be clarified. For example, the term "whole-school approach" needs to be defined.
 7. The position of primary schools, that have been found to have high levels of disadvantage but are not part of the HSCL scheme, should be investigated. It is likely, however, that the total number of schools that would need to be investigated will be quite small. The possibility that some HSCL primary schools may now have relatively low concentrations of disadvantage should also

be considered. The number of schools involved here will probably also be small. The existence of similar anomalies at post-primary level (e.g., schools that are in the School Completion Programme but not in the HSCL scheme) needs to be investigated.

8. The resources available, at national level, to provide professional support to local coordinators need to be increased to keep pace with the very significant expansion of the scheme in recent years. This is particularly important in the case of the National Coordinator and her team.
9. Despite the considerable progress that has been made to involve the most marginalised parents in HSCL activities, there is still a need for new ways of securing the involvement of previously uninvolved parents who are in the most marginalised circumstances.
10. There is a case for a slight shift in emphasis in the work that local coordinators do with parents in favour of work designed to stimulate children's learning in the home. Work that is designed to help parents to support their children's development of oral language might be a particularly useful example of this kind of work.
11. Further development of the parents as home visitors initiative would seem to be worthwhile on a number of counts, including as a way of implementing the previous recommendation.
12. Further research on the impact of the HSCL scheme on pupils, families, schools and communities would be worthwhile. The collection of data from parents would be particularly useful. In addition, an assessment of the scheme from the perspective of people working in community groups and other community-based agencies is needed, especially in the context of the new emphasis, in

Government policy, on integrated area-based approaches. In relation to the impact of the scheme on pupils, mechanisms for tracking the retention of students in second-level HSCL schools and their transfer to third-level education need to be put in place (see also Recommendation 1 above).

13. If it is intended to monitor expenditure on the HSCL scheme in the future, changes in the way that the Department of Education and Science maintains financial data on the scheme will be needed.
14. Objectives, that meet SMI criteria, derived from the first aim of the scheme, (relating to pupil achievement) from the third aim (relating to parents capacities and skills) and from the fourth aim (relating to attainment), should be specified. Performance indicators, linked to these objectives, can then be identified. The scheme can also benefit from the identification of indicators for some inputs and processes. Some suggestions for objectives and indicators are made in Section 7 of this report.
15. Consultations should be initiated about (a) the precise content of the objectives and indicators referred to in the previous recommendation and (b) whether the process should extend to other aspects of the scheme. Such consultation is proposed because of the concerns, expressed in Sections 3 and 7, about the appropriateness of applying the SMI process to all aspects of the HSCL scheme.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COORDINATORS

Review of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme

Questionnaire for Coordinators

Your Name: _____

(You may omit this information if you wish to remain anonymous.)

Please name the school(s) in which you work as a coordinator and indicate the year in which it became part of the scheme. Please name your base school (i.e., the one that is your employer) first. (You may omit this information if you wish to remain anonymous.)

	Name	Roll No	Year
1			
2			
3			
4			

1. Is the school(s) in which you work (Please tick one)

Primary? Post-primary?

2. For how many years have you been a teacher, including the time spent as a HSCL coordinator?

_____ Years

3. For how many years have you been employed in your present base school, including the time spent as a coordinator?

_____ Years

4. Did you work in your present base school before your appointment as a HSCL coordinator?

Yes No

If 'Yes', for how many years and in what capacity? _____ Years

Capacity: _____

5. Please tick all of the school years below during which you worked as a coordinator.

1990/1991	<input type="checkbox"/>	1994/1995	<input type="checkbox"/>	1998/1999	<input type="checkbox"/>
1991/1992	<input type="checkbox"/>	1995/1996	<input type="checkbox"/>	1999/2000	<input type="checkbox"/>
1992/1993	<input type="checkbox"/>	1996/1997	<input type="checkbox"/>	2000/2001	<input type="checkbox"/>
1993/1994	<input type="checkbox"/>	1997/1998	<input type="checkbox"/>	2001/2002	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Have you worked as a coordinator every year since you first became a coordinator?

Yes No

**7. If you answered 'No' to the previous question was this because
(Please tick one)**

a. you had a career break?	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. you were seconded to another position?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. you returned to other duties within the school for a while and you are currently working as a coordinator for a second time?	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Other (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Do you have any duties in your school(s) other than those related to the HSCL
scheme?**

Yes No

If 'Yes', please describe these duties:

**9. In addition to your answers to the questions on this questionnaire, copies of any or
all of the following would be extremely useful in the context of our work.**

- a. A sample monthly plan
- b. A report to the Board of Management or Principal
- c. An extract from a journal or diary
- d. Any other document that would help us to understand the nature
of your work.

**We would be grateful if you would attach any such document to this
questionnaire.**

- 10. During the 2000-2001 school year, approximately what percentage of your time (excluding travel) was spent on each of the following (if none, write 0)? Do not be concerned if the total does not equal 100% exactly. In addition, please indicate whether the amount of time spent on these items has 'Increased', 'Decreased' or 'Remained constant' since you began working as a HSCL co-ordinator. If you were not working as a coordinator in the 2000/2001 school year please answer this question in relation to the first term of the current school year.**

	Approx. % of time	Please tick one box			
		Increased	Decreased	Remained constant	Not applicable
a. Home visits		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Informal and/or incidental meetings with parents		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Individual formal meetings with parents (outside the home)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Working with a core group of parents		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Meetings/contacts with school principal		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Meetings/ contact with pupils		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Meetings/contact with teachers		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Meetings with agencies or individuals from the community		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Contacts (including telephone) with agencies or individuals from the community		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Organising courses for parents		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Acting as course presenter or facilitator on courses for parents		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Organising other activities for parents (e.g., coffee mornings, parent outings)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Planning, monitoring and evaluating your work		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Arranging funding		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Administration/ Paperwork		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Cluster meetings		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Policy formation in the school		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. Organising or helping to organise after-school educational activities (e.g., home-work club) for pupils		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. Other (Please specify):		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Apart from changes noted in question 10, how has your work changed/evolved since you became involved in the HSCL scheme?
-
-

12. Listed below are five types of parent involvement that you may, through your work, be attempting to promote. Please rank these from 1 to 5 in terms of the priority that you assign to them. (Highest priority = 1; Lowest priority = 5)

Parent involvement in ...	Rank
a. activities related to parents' own educational needs.	
b. activities that enhance communication between home and school.	
c. activities that involve parents in the work of the school.	
d. activities to stimulate children learning at home.	
e. the development of school policy.	

13. To what extent are each of the statements below, about the impact of the HSCL scheme, true in relation to parents in your school(s)? (Please tick one in each case)

As a result of the HSCL scheme, parents ...	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
a. visit the school more often.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. are more involved in their children's schoolwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. have learned new parenting skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. have learned to use new home management skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. help with school activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. help with classroom activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. are more confident about helping children with homework.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. feel less threatened by school and teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. are more aware of their contribution to their children's education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. have a new interest in what happens in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Other (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Please give a general assessment of the number of parents in your school(s) who are (or have been) involved in each of the activities listed below: (If none, write 0).

Number of parents who	Number
a. help or have helped with curricular activities in the classroom.	
b. help or have helped with extra-curricular activities in the classroom.	
c. help or have helped with curricular activities in the school (e.g., paired-reading tutor, school library/toy library).	
d. help or have helped with after school educational activity such as a home-work club.	
e. help or have helped with extra-curricular activities in the school (e.g., school concert, sports, book fair, shop).	
f. help or have helped organise course(s) for parents.	
g. act or have acted as course presenter (facilitator) for other parents.	
h. help or have helped recruit participants for HSCL courses and activities.	
i. run or have run a Crèche, Parents' Room, etc.	
j. are or were members of school committee (e.g., Board of Management, Parents' Council).	
k. are or were members of Local Committee.	
l. help or have helped with fundraising.	
m. are or were involved in policy formation for the school.	
n. are or were members of core group of parents.	
o. Other (Please specify):	

15. Please list the HSCL courses and classes in which parents were involved during the 2000/20001 school year and the total number that attended. Please indicate how many of the total number were parents of children in your school(s). If you were not working as a coordinator in the 2000/2001 school year, please answer this question in relation to the first term of the current school year.

Courses and classes	Total number of parents attending	Number of parents from your school(s) attending

16. Please indicate the total number of families that have children enrolled in the school(s) in which you work: _____

17. Of the total number of families that have children enrolled in your school(s), how many do you consider to be:

- a. Severely educationally disadvantaged? _____
- b. Moderately educationally disadvantaged? _____
- c. Not educationally disadvantaged? _____

18. Please give a general assessment of the number of parents in each of the three categories in Question 17 who are 'Very involved', 'Involved' and 'Not involved' in HSCL activities. Also give your opinion about whether this involvement has 'Increased', 'Decreased' or 'Remained constant' since you began work as a co-ordinator in the HSCL scheme.

	(Enter the number)			(Please tick one)		
	Very involved	Involved	Not involved	Increased	Decreased	Remained constant
Severely educationally disadvantaged						
Moderately educationally disadvantaged						
Not educationally disadvantaged						

- 19. Please estimate the number of families in each of the three categories to whom you have made home visits 'At least once' and 'Regularly'.**

	At least once	Regularly
a. Severely educationally disadvantaged		
b. Moderately educationally disadvantaged		
c. Not educationally disadvantaged		

- 20. In deciding on which homes to visit, what factors do you consider?**

- 21. What percentage of home visits were carried out at the request or suggestion of:**

a. Classroom teacher? _____% d. Principal? _____%
b. Resource teacher? _____% e. Parents ? _____%
c. Learning Support teacher? _____% f. Other (*Please specify*): _____%

- 22. Approximately what percentage of those homes you would like to have visited does your workload allow you to actually visit? (Please tick one)**

76% or more
51-75%
26-50%
25% or less

- 23. Please elaborate about home visits if you wish.**

24. If you are part of the following clusters please indicate the number of cluster meetings which took place in the 2000/2001 school year. If you were not working as a coordinator in the 2000/2001 school year please answer this question in relation to the first term of the current school year.

- a. Family _____
- b. Local _____
- c. Regional _____
- d. Other (*please specify*) _____
-

25. How effective do you consider family, local, regional and other clusters to be?
(Please tick one for each type of cluster)

Cluster	Very effective	Effective	Don't know	Ineffective	Very ineffective
a. Family	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Local	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Regional	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Other	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please elaborate if you wish.

26. Either as a result of your own initiative or that of a family or local cluster, please indicate the number of parents trained as home visitors. (If none, write '0').

a. Own initiative	
b. Local cluster	
c. Family cluster	

27. In your experience, how many families does a parent who has been trained as a home visitor typically visit in the course of a school year? _____

28. What are the main reasons for these visits?

NOTE re Questions 29 to 35 inclusive:

For coordinators working in more than one school, S1 refers to your base school and S2 and S3 to your other school(s). Coordinators who work in one school should respond to S1 only.

29. Do the parents in your school have access to a parents' room?

	S1	S2	S3		S1	S2	S3
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. If no to question 29, please indicate if any other facility similar to a parents' room exists, and describe that facility.

	S1	S2	S3		S1	S2	S3
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. Who has access to the parents' room or similar facility? (Tick all that apply)

	S1	S2	S3
a. Parents in your school(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Parents in other schools nearby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Others (<i>Please specify</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. Which of the following best describes the parents' room or similar facility? (Please tick one)

	S1	S2	S3
a. Well equipped and furnished	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Adequately equipped and furnished	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Poorly equipped and furnished	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. Is the parents' room or similar facility accessible to parents (Please tick one)

	S1	S2	S3
a. at all times when the school is open?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. at designated times when the school is open?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

34. Is the parents' room or similar facility accessible to parents when the school is not open?

S1 S2 S3	S1 S2 S3
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

35. Approximately how many parents from your school(s) visited the parents' room or similar facility since the start of the present school year?

S1 _____ S2 _____ S3 _____

36. Is there a Local Committee with responsibility for the HSCL scheme in your school(s)?

Yes No

If 'No', skip to Question 45.

37. In your opinion, how effective is the Local Committee?

Very effective	Effective	Don't know	Ineffective	Very ineffective
<input type="checkbox"/>				

38. Apart from the school(s) in which you work, please name the school(s) for which the Local Committee has responsibility in relation to HSCL. (You may skip this question if you wish to remain anonymous.)

	Name	Roll No. if known
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

39. How many times did the Local Committee meet

	No of meetings
a. during the 2000/2001 school year?	
b. during the first term of the 2001/2002 school year?	

40. How many members does the Local Committee have? _____

41. How many of the members of the Local Committee are in each of the following categories? (If none, write '0').

a. HSCL coordinators	
b. School principals	
c. Classroom or subject teachers	
d. Parents	
e. Representatives of local voluntary groups	
f. Representatives of statutory bodies	
g. Personnel from other DES initiatives (e.g., ESLI/SCP)	
h. Other. (Please specify):	

42. Please describe the function of your Local Committee.

43. Would you like to change the function of the Local Committee and, if so, how?

Yes No

How?

44. Has the Local Committee been involved in matters other than HSCL?

Yes No

If 'Yes', please describe these matters.

45. Please elaborate on Local Committees, if you wish.

46. Please name the five 'Voluntary' and five 'Statutory' agencies with which you have most frequent contact and list some of the matters dealt with during such contact. Please also indicate whether you or the agency usually initiates the contact

<i>Tick one</i>			
Agency	Matters dealt with	I usually initiate	Agency usually initiates
<u>Voluntary:</u>			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
<u>Statutory:</u>			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

NOTE: If you are working in more than one school, please answer Questions 47-52 (inclusive) in relation to your base school. Space is provided after Question 52 for you to indicate, if you need to, how you would have answered Questions 47-52 differently in relation to your other school(s).

47. During the 2000/2001 school year, were you involved in any initiatives concerned with school policy formation in each of the policy areas listed (discipline, uniform etc.)? If you were not working as a coordinator in the 2000/2001 school year, please answer this question in relation to the first term of the current school year.

Yes No

If 'Yes', please indicate the extent of both parent (excluding parents on the Board of Management) and staff involvement.

	Tick one		Parent involvement			Staff involvement		
	Yes	No	To a great extent	To some extent	None	To a great extent	To some extent	None
a. Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>							
b. Uniform	<input type="checkbox"/>							
c. Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>							
d. Enrolment/admission	<input type="checkbox"/>							
e. Anti-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>							
f. Home-school relations	<input type="checkbox"/>							
g. Other (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>							

Please elaborate if you wish.

48. To what extent is the following true of teachers in the school(s) in which you work? (Please tick one in each case)

As a result of the HSCL scheme, teachers are...	All teachers	Most teachers	Some teachers	No teachers
a. more tolerant of parents' presence in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. more aware of parents' role and contribution at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. more aware of parents' role and contribution in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. more positive about parents' role and contribution at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. more positive about parents' role and contribution in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. more aware of the co-ordinator as a resource.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Teachers were always positive about the HSCL scheme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

49. Please rate the impact of HSCL on each of the aspects of school life listed below. (Please tick one box in each case).

	Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact
a. The physical structure of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. The way the school relates with families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The way the school relates with the wider community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. The way the school develops its policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Staff relationships within the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. The school's overall approach to disadvantage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

50. Please describe the changes that have occurred in relation to two of the aspects of school life in Question 49. If possible, describe the changes in relation to the two aspects where you believe the HSCL scheme had most impact.

1. _____

2. _____

51. To what extent has the HSCL scheme lead to the adoption of a “whole school approach” in your school(s)?

a. To a great extent	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. To some extent	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

52. In relation to which aspects of a “whole school approach”, has most progress been made and in relation to which aspects has least progress been made?

Most progress	Least progress
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

NOTE: If you are working in more than one school, please use the space below to indicate how, if at all, you would have answered Questions 47-52 differently in relation to your school(s) other than your base school.

53. To what extent has the HSCL scheme had each of the following effects on the community? (Please tick one in each case)

As a result of the HSCL scheme,	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
a. school became more a focal point of the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. parents became more aware of local services/resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. parents made more use of local services/resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. there is greater community spirit in the area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. there is greater co-operation among community agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Other (<i>Please specify</i>):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

54. Which of the following best describes the relationship between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage in your community? (Please tick one)

a. The HSCL scheme is part of a well integrated package of measures to tackle poverty and disadvantage.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. There is a satisfactory level of cooperation between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage.	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. There is some cooperation between the HSCL scheme and other initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage but it is not entirely satisfactory.	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Initiatives to tackle poverty and disadvantage are fragmented.	<input type="checkbox"/>

55. Please elaborate on the impact of the HSCL scheme on the community, if you wish.

56. To what extent has the HSCL scheme had any of the following effects on pupils? (Please tick one in each case)

As a result of the HSCL scheme, pupils ...	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
a. were better behaved in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. had increased attendance at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. had a more positive experience of school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. had a more positive attitude to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. had a more positive attitude towards own parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. had more pride in themselves and in their own work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. showed improvements in school achievement. (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Other (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

57. The Basic Principles of the HSCL scheme describe the coordinator as “an agent of change” and indicate that the attitudes and behaviour of parents and teachers are “the focus of the scheme.” Seeing your role in these terms, please select from the following statements, the one that best describes (i) your experience of the work of a coordinator and (ii) how you would like the work to be in “an ideal world.”
(Please tick one box in each column.)

	(i) Your experience	(ii) Ideal world
a. The focus of all or nearly all of my work is on parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Most of the focus is on parents but a significant part is on teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. The focus is fairly evenly divided between parents and teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Most of the focus is on teachers but a significant part is on parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. The focus is all or nearly all on teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

58. The Basic Principles contain the following statement “the thrust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative.” Please select from the following statements, the one that best describes (i) your experience of the work of a coordinator and (ii) how you would like the work to be in an “ideal world.”
(Please tick one box in each column.)

	(i) Your experience	(ii) Ideal world
a. All or nearly all of my work is preventative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Most of my work is preventative but a significant part is curative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My work is fairly evenly divided between preventative and curative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Most of my work is curative but a significant part is preventative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. All or nearly all of my work is curative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

59. One of the Basic Principles states: “The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having those needs met.” How satisfied are you that HSCL activities in your school are responding to real needs experienced by local people? (Please tick one)

a. I am very satisfied that activities are based on real needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I am satisfied that activities are based on real needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am not sure that activities are based on real needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I am satisfied that activities are <u>not</u> based on real needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I am very satisfied that activities are <u>not</u> based on real needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>

60. Overall, what is your rating of the success of the scheme in achieving each of its stated objectives?

	Very successful	Moderately successful	No difference	Unsuccessful	Very unsuccessful
a. “To maximize active participation of the children in the scheme schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure.”	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. “To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.”	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. “To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.”	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. “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 attitudes to life-long learning.”	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. “To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.”	<input type="checkbox"/>				

61. In your experience, how did each of the following affect the success of the HSCL scheme (in the school)? (Please tick one in each case)

	Contributed to success		Hindered success		Not relevant
	To a great extent	To some extent	To some extent	To a great extent	
a. Level of support from principal	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. Level of support from teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Parental response to the programme	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Level of community involvement in HSCL	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Extent of 'whole-school approach'	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. Availability of facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. Availability of funding	<input type="checkbox"/>				
h. In-career development for coordinators	<input type="checkbox"/>				
i. Coordinator's workload (manageability, level of focus)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
j. Local Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>				
k. Other (Please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>				

62. How satisfied are you with each of the following types of support provided as part of the HSCL scheme.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not sure	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a. In-career development for coordinators	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. In-career development for others	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. Funding	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. Access to advice	<input type="checkbox"/>				

63. Please elaborate, if you wish, on these or other types of support that are provided or which you think should be provided as part of the HSCL scheme.

- 64. What if any, changes in the approach to disadvantage pursued by the Department of Education and Science would you recommend?**

- 65. Please use the space below to**

- (a) elaborate on any aspect of your work that you feel has not been adequately dealt with in the questionnaire, and

(b) make any general comments about the HSCL scheme that you have not had the opportunity to make so far in the questionnaire.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE
IN FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please use the enclosed pre-paid envelope to return the completed questionnaire to reach
The Educational Research Centre
St Patrick's College
Dublin 9
by Friday, January 25th, 2002

Please remember to enclose, with the completed questionnaire, any or all of the following:

- a. A sample monthly plan
- b. A report to Board of Management or Principal
- c. An extract from a journal or diary
- d. Any other document that would help us to understand the nature of your work