

St Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross

Pastoral Care Policy

Introduction

St Louis Secondary School has a pastoral care approach which seeks to respect and nurture the quality of all relationships in the school community. It promotes effective and caring leadership and partnership among all the members. The school community is a Christian community where the members grow to value their own worth as persons, their loving relationship with God, their links with their family and the interdependence of all people. These core values are outlined in the school's mission statement:

The aim of St. Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, is to foster a school community where all the members live in a friendly environment, where young people are taught to think for themselves, to be responsible for their actions, to hold in respect the world in which they live, and to recognise the importance of spiritual values in their lives.

We live out this mission statement through the respect, truth and compassion we demonstrate in all our dealings with others especially in our dealing with our students. We endeavour to put in action the advice of the founding father, Abbé Bautain when he said:

“Give the young all your care and affection, and try to touch their hearts by the interest you show in them.”

A successful Pastoral Care Programme will only thrive where there is a positive and supportive school climate and atmosphere. More than anything else we seek to nurture positive relationships as the core resource in developing a pastoral care approach. The aim of this policy is to put in place the framework necessary to underpin and support that approach. The policy will address the following areas:

1. Pastoral Roles: definitions and responsibilities
2. Pastoral Programmes
3. Resources and Professional Development
4. Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Pastoral Roles: Definitions and Responsibilities

At the centre of our pastoral framework are the pastoral roles, each of which contributes enormously to the pastoral care nature of the school community. While every staff member has a pastoral dimension to his/her role we recognize that certain people fulfill key roles in this area. These include the Year Head, the Class Teacher, the Chaplain, Home-School Liaison, and the Guidance Counsellor.

The Role of the Year Head in Pastoral Care Provision

The Year Head, on behalf of the school community, oversees the welfare of a year group so that learning, at every level of the person, is supported.

The Year Head works in conjunction with other members of the school community: the individual student, the year group, class teachers, student support services, senior

management, parents/guardians, subject teachers and new members of the teaching staff (new teachers, student teachers, substitute teachers). The type of contact between the Year Head and each of these groups is outlined below:

- **The individual student and the year group.** Formal contact with the year group is at Assembly. Formal meetings are arranged with individual students where necessary and informal contact with individuals takes place all the time.
- **Class Teachers.** The Year Head supports the Class Teacher in implementing the Code of Behaviour, in monitoring student progress, attendance and punctuality. The Year Head and Class Teacher work closely together and constantly share information.
- **Student Supports.** The Year Head is aware of the supports available to students and makes referrals accordingly. Information is shared with counsellors, the chaplain, teachers involved in monitoring punctuality and attendance. Year Heads consult with Special Needs Assistants, where appropriate.
- **Senior Management.** Year Heads work together as a group to ensure a common approach to their role in the school community. The Principal and Year Heads share information on students and collaborate in dealing with problems that arise. The Principal will often delegate responsibility to the Year Head.
- **Parents and Guardians.** The Year Head has two-way communication with parents in matters relating to the student's welfare and progress. Year Heads meet with and provide support to parents, where necessary.
- **Teachers.** Year Heads are available to subject teachers to support them in their work. The Year Head offers particular support to new members of staff who may be experiencing difficulty with classroom management.

The Role of the Class Teacher in Pastoral Care Provision

- The Class Teacher takes a special interest in his/her tutor class and in the welfare of each of its individual students. For this reason, wherever possible, Class Teachers should be assigned on the basis that they have regular contact with the class group.
- The Class Teacher will have access to relevant information on the students in their class. Likewise, the Class Teacher will share information, as appropriate with relevant members of the staff.
- The Class Teacher will work closely with the Year Head in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. He/she will ensure that each student in the class properly maintains the Student Journal.
- No major sanction will be imposed without consultation with the relevant Class Teacher
- Formal meetings between the Class Teachers and their Year Head will be facilitated at least twice per year.
- The Class Teacher will help promote compliance with the Code of Behaviour through positive affirmation. He/she will help develop students' confidence and self-esteem through the use of the school's *Book of Commendation*.

The Role of the Chaplain in Pastoral Care Provision

- The school chaplain is a faith presence in the school who on behalf of the school community accompanies the students on their journey through life as it relates to school. The chaplain's role in pastoral care is to show concern for all students helping them feel that they belong to the school community. While many individual students may not require individual attention, there will be students who will need support either physically, spiritually, emotionally or socially. The school chaplain will liaise with other members of staff as required and information will be shared on a need-to-know basis. The role of the chaplain will encompass the following:
 - To provide support for individual students of groups of students where a need arises.
 - To break down the impersonality of a school that large numbers create.
 - To help students with personal and school-related problems.
 - To put students in need in touch with appropriate persons.
 - To help students develop a healthy respect for themselves and for others.
 - To help students reflect on Christian values.
 - To help students develop appropriate social skills.
 - To help promote warm relationships among students.
 - To help develop a sense of belonging and pride in the school community.
 - To provide support for students experiencing loss through the Rainbows Programme.
 - To be involved in the work of the Critical Incident Management Team.

The Role of Home-School Liaison in Pastoral Care Provision

The Home-School Liaison Teacher plays an important pastoral care role in supporting students and their families. In our school this service is geared in the first instance towards students in First Year ensuring a successful transition from primary school to secondary school. It is also targeted at students who are considered at risk due to poor attendance and/or poor application to work. Its aims are as follows:

- To maximise the active participation of the students in the schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure.
- To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the students.
- To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
- To enhance the student's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to lifelong learning.

The Role of the Guidance Counsellor in Pastoral Care Provision

The Guidance Counsellor helps students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviour or effect changes in their lives. Counselling is offered on an individual or small group basis. The focus of counseling may be on personal, educational and career issues, individually or in combination. The Guidance Counsellor engages in a two way process of consultation with parents, teachers, school management and referral agencies. The following are the key elements of referral and counselling:

- School management, teachers, the chaplain and parents may refer students to the Counsellor. Students may also self-refer and friends sometimes consult the Counsellor resulting in the issue of an appointment.
- The voluntary participation in counselling of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.
- The Guidance Counsellor may recognize that an individual student needs assistance from other qualified helpers outside of school and organizes the provision of such assistance following agreed procedures with the school, parents and local agencies.
- The school employs a Counselling Psychologist for one day per fortnight. As well as her own referrals, the Counsellor manages referrals from the variety of sources outlined above. Referrals may also be made to the Chaplain as appropriate.
- Particular care is taken to involve all interested in the student's welfare and information will be shared as appropriate on a need-to-know basis.
- Recommendations are made about appropriate agencies. Parents may be encouraged to refer a student through her G.P.
- Where a referral is made, a detailed referral document is prepared and forwarded to the appropriate agency. The Counsellor liaises with the individual psychologist/psychiatrist and provides subsequent support for the student.

2. Pastoral Programmes

There are a number of programmes with a strong link to the Pastoral Care Programme of the school.

Social, Personal and Health Education, (SPHE) as part of the curriculum, supports the personal development, health and well-being of students and helps them create and maintain supportive relationships. The aims of this programme are as follows:

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

All Junior Cycle students receive one period per week of SPHE. Teachers of this subject plan the programme together and all attend relevant inservice training.

The Rainbows Programme is a group programme which supports students who have suffered a significant loss through death, separation or any painful transition. The aims of this programme are as follows:

- To give participants an understanding of their new family unit.
- To assist them in the building of self-esteem.
- To direct them towards a healthy acceptance of the changes that have taken place in their lives.

Rainbows is facilitated in school by the Chaplain who is a trained Rainbows facilitator.

The Peer Ministry Programme is where a group of Fifth Year students (normally twenty-four) work with the First Year classes as part of the school's R.E. Programme. The aims of this programme are:

- Help First Years in the transition from Primary to Secondary School.
- To enable First Years to get to know each other better and extend their range of friendships.
- To provide an additional network of support for First Years.
- To provide an opportunity for young people to share their gifts and talents with other young people.

The Peer Ministry Programme forges strong bonds between the First Year classes and their chosen Peer Ministers. The Peer Ministers carry out a wide range of activities with their classes which build on the students' self-esteem and confidence. This programme occurs for one period per week throughout the school year.

The Anti-Bullying Programme reflects the school's total opposition to bullying and its commitment to deal swiftly with any bullying incidents that arise. Early in each school year there is an Anti-Bullying Week.

The aims of this programme are:

- To raise awareness about bullying and related issues among the student body
- To remind students of the policy and procedures for dealing with bullying incidents
- To provide coping strategies for students
- To enhance students' self esteem

The school adopts an active whole-school approach to bullying. The full range of activities aimed at preventing bullying and the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying are outlined in the *Anti-Bullying Policy*. Copies of this policy are displayed in all classrooms and in each student's homework journal.

3. Resources and Professional Development

The school is committed to providing the necessary resources to underpin this pastoral policy. In particular we are committed to providing tailored professional development

programmes for Class Tutors and Year Heads. There will also be annual opportunities for the staff to review the effectiveness of these roles and other pastoral issues.

4. Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. The Principal will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and will inform the Board of Management annually of this.

At specified times during the life of the policy an evaluation of its effectiveness is required. This review will have the following elements:

- The Pastoral Care Team is charged with leading the evaluation of the Pastoral Care Policy. This team will consist of the Year Heads, the Chaplain, the Guidance Counsellor along with the Principal and Deputy Principal.
- The evaluation will include consultation with students, staff and parents as to its effectiveness in meeting its stated aims.
- Leading a process to articulate and implement new developments in the pastoral care area with particular reference to the Pastoral Care Policy

Such a review should occur every two years.