

# **St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare**

## **Pastoral Care Policy**

### **1. Statement of Core Values**

In St. Patrick's Comprehensive School we seek to foster mutual respect and an atmosphere of trust. We promote a healthy work ethic and a love of learning in a spirit of collegiality and co-operation so that all may reach their full potential.

The ethos of the Comprehensive School is one of equality and inclusiveness, welcoming and nurturing all of the diverse abilities and talents of the various communities we serve.

We value each other, facilitate our special needs students, celebrate our achievements and look forward to becoming an increasingly multi-cultural school.

### **2. Pastoral approach in our school**

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School realizes its vision through a variety of means, none more important than our pastoral care approach.

Each member of the school community has access to the relevant pastoral structures and procedures, and each is also invited to play their part in contributing to the pastoral ethos of this school community. More than anything else we seek to nurture positive relationships as the core resource in developing a pastoral approach. This policy endeavours to put in place the framework necessary to underpin and support this approach:

- Pastoral role: definitions and responsibilities
- Pastoral role of guidance counselling, chaplaincy, learning support, Parents Association, Students Council and other relevant agencies
- Resources and professional development
- Pastoral programmes
- Pastoral procedures
- Implementation plan
- Monitoring and evaluation

### **3 Pastoral Roles: definitions and responsibilities**

At the centre of our pastoral framework are the pastoral roles we recognise that each contributes to the pastoral nature of the school community – of Class Tutor, Year Head, chaplain, guidance counsellor. We also recognise that other key roles in the school carry significant pastoral dimensions and responsibilities, such as the Principal, Deputy Principal, Learning Support staff, ancillary staff and Special Needs Assistants.

Each will be linked with as the need arises.

It is the policy of this school to take into account each of the following roles:

**Class Tutor:**

- Where possible that the Class Tutor teach the class for which they have responsibility.
- The Class Tutor has access to the relevant information on the students in their class from the Year Head.
- No major sanction will be imposed on a student without consultation with the relevant Year Head.
- Each S.P.H.E class teacher will highlight the role of the class teacher to their students
- Class Tutors will meet with their Year Heads and also with members of the wider pastoral team when necessary
- Class Tutors are given opportunities for professional development in their role
- Communication between the Year Heads and the Class Tutors will occur both formally and informally throughout the year.
- In the event of a Class Tutor being absent for a prolonged period, it is school policy that a replacement be appointed by Management, and the replacement will liaise with the Year Head.

**Year Head:**

- A clear role in the Behaviour Code is designated (see Code of Behaviour).
- There is clear access to relevant information on students in the year group.
- A regular meeting usually once a week occurs of the Year Head team with the Principal and Deputy and, when possible, members of the Pastoral Team.
- Year Heads have strategies to recognise and acknowledge excellence and effort within the year group
- Year Heads meet with their team of Class Tutors usually once a term.
- Year Heads are given opportunities for professional development.
- Assemblies of each year group are held regularly
- Reports to staff in relation to the year group will be given at staff meetings.
- Liaise with parents according to agreed procedures. Individual conferences with parents can be arranged.
- Liaise with student representatives in the year group through the Student Council
- Have access to appropriate administrative support.
- Weekly review of students journals.
- Communication between Year Heads and Class Tutors will occur both formally and informally throughout the year.

Other key pastoral roles have their own role descriptions and the following may be useful outlines in relation to some of these:

**Chaplain:**

The role of the full-time Chaplain is closely interwoven with that of the Pastoral Care Team. This role extends to the personal and spiritual development of the entire school community – students, teachers, non-teaching staff and their families.

The Chaplain:

- Implements a systematic programme of contact with individuals and groups of students;
- Participates in student support structures and teams;
- Liaises with the Board of Management, Principal, Staff, Pastoral Care Team, Guidance and Learning Support Team, etc. in relation to particular students;
- Meets regularly with Year Heads (and Tutors when necessary);
- Furthers the holistic care of all in the school community;
- Promotes among the students a greater awareness of the needs of their peers and others beyond the school;
- Provides a better understanding of the school Christian Ethos;
- Works closely with parents and other agencies that help the healthy development of the students;
- Provides pastoral direction and is a constant point of reference and support;
- Liaises with outside support agencies.

**Guidance Counsellor:**

There are three main areas in which the guidance counsellor exercises her role. The three areas are educational counselling, career counselling and personal counselling. Operating in these areas the guidance counsellor works in conjunction with the students, the parents/guardians, the management of the school, and the staff of the school. Whilst the guidance counsellor has the specific training in educational, career and personal counselling, it is only through a collaborative approach that students experiencing difficulties in any of these areas will be given the necessary support and strategies which will allow them to overcome their difficulties and to optimise their learning.

The role of the guidance counsellor is one which is formative, informative and consultative and encompasses helping to direct and develop students' capacity to become self-directed and independent learners, equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed decisions. Such a role is carried out in consultation with the students' parents/guardians and with other members of staff.

The guidance counsellor has a role in informing school management and staff about the operation of the department, in contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate

programmes, in administering psychometric tests and interpreting their results, in managing information, in administering the guidance department and in liaising with appropriate professionals, bodies, and agencies outside of school. The remit of guidance involves three distinct, yet very much interlinked, areas; personal guidance, educational guidance and career guidance.

**Personal guidance** is a key part of the school guidance programme and may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or a combination of these.

Counselling is available on a referral basis. Students are referred by management, staff, parents, or they may self- refer.

- Every student in fifth year is afforded the opportunity to meet the guidance counsellor on personal and career related matters. Students in all other years are seen by the guidance counsellor on a request or referral basis.
- Counsellor initiates consultations with students', teachers and parents when particular circumstances arise that impinge on school life.
- Counsellor is consulted by school management and pastoral care personnel on such issues.

#### **Learning Support Team:**

- The learning support teachers, having studied assessments and student files, offer extra tuition to the students.
- This tuition is carried out on a one-to-one or small group basis which should greatly benefit the students.
- These classes may include work on social skills.
- The Pastoral Care Team is available to support these teachers when requested.
- English classes are offered to foreign-national students as resources allow.
- Learning support teachers liaise with Parents, Management, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Subject Teachers and Outside Agencies.
- Learning Support staff gives a report at staff meetings as and when required

#### **Subject Teacher:**

- Enables every student to reach their full potential.
- Holds a key role in monitoring and relating any concerns they may observe (or have) about an individual student to the Class Tutor, Year Head or Pastoral Care Team.
- Assign a seating arrangement for all junior classes, to alleviate the problems of barging and isolation.

## **The Pastoral Care Team:**

- The purpose of this Pastoral Care Team is as follows:
  1. To raise the awareness of the pastoral care role of all staff;
  2. To assess the care services in the school for students, staff and parents;
  3. To identify additional needs that are not already being met; and
  4. To investigate how best to address these needs.
- The Co-ordinator will be appointed from among the Pastoral Team.
- Representation on the Pastoral Team will include Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support, SPHE/RE, School Management and the Board of Management designated liaison persons for Child Protection. Other members may be co-opted at any time. Links will be made via the Year Heads and Class Tutors.
- The team will meet regularly.
- They will liaise with Class Tutors and Year Heads on pastoral issues that may arise, co-ordinate the pastoral programme, review students with particular difficulties as referred to the group, and advise relevant groups within the school community on pastoral issues.

## **4. 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 where possible tailored professional development programmes.

## **5. Pastoral Programme**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core of school life and its link to pastoral care is clear. This school has a commitment to SPHE and demonstrates this in its provision on the curriculum which adheres to the official Department guidelines.

### **Pastoral Procedures**

This school has a number of procedures with pastoral implications. In the area of information we are committed to respectfully and sensitively dealing with how information is received, shared, stored, and accessed.

Another area of relevance is the relationship of the school to the parent. Our policy commitment in this area is to constantly work in partnership with parents to achieve the optimum quality of relationship – this will require respect, listening, patience, willingness to reach consensus, creativity, co-operation, and generosity.

Dealing with sensitive issues such as sudden death or suicide requires careful consideration. The school's Critical Incident Policy addresses the pertinent issues. The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed as part of the Pastoral Review.

There will also be opportunities for the staff to review the effectiveness of these roles and other pastoral issues, e.g., at staff meetings, regular meetings between Pastoral Care Team and Year Heads, and between Year Heads and Class Tutors.

## **7. Implementation Plan**

The implementation of this policy will be rolling in nature and will need to be revised from time to time. Below is given the outline implementation plan for a number of key areas:

- The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator will liaise with the Principal to arrange Professional Development as appropriate.
- The Pastoral Policy will be constituted in Spring 2014 and reviewed in 2016.
- Class Tutors are given opportunities for professional development in their role.
- Communication between the Year Head and the Class Tutors will occur both formally and informally throughout the year.
- Meetings of Class Tutors and their Year Head will occur at the beginning of each school year.
- The Year Heads meet regularly with timetabling provision in place.
- The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator will meet with the Parents' Council at least once a year to take part in a discussion on pastoral care. The date for this will be set in the first term.
- The Student Council will have at least one meeting with the Pastoral Care Team each year, the date for which will be set in the first term.

## **8. 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.

### **Monitoring**

The Pastoral Care Team will monitor policy implementation. This will include:

- Examination of the meeting of specific targets and timelines;
- Gathering of qualitative reactions to the policy during implementation;
- Staff discussion of any reactions, concerns, and suggestions that may arise during the course of implementation.

## **Evaluation**

At specified times during the life of the policy and evaluation of its effectiveness is required. The review will have the following elements. The Pastoral Care Team are charged with:

- Leading the evaluation of the Pastoral Care Policy;
- Reviewing the monitoring reports that were gathered during the life of the policy;
- Surveying staff, students and parents as to its effectiveness in meeting its stated aims;
- Collating these responses and, following consultations with school management and staff, presenting recommendations for further phases of the Pastoral Care policy.
- 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 would be appropriate at least every two years.