

*Presentation Secondary School,
Ballingarry*



Pastoral Care Policy

Pastoral Care:

At Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry we understand Pastoral Care “as an approach to education which endeavours to value and develop each member of the school community” (The Year Head, Monahan, 1998 IAPCE). Pastoral Care implies caring for the quality of relationships between the partners in the school community. It involves the engagement of all the school policies, processes and programmes in the development of structures, roles and resources to support the development of the young person. Each member of the school community is invited to play their part in contributing to the pastoral care ethos of this school community. Pastoral Care is provided by Subject Teachers, Class Teachers, Year Heads, Chaplin, Guidance Counsellors, Learning Support Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Deputy Principal and Principal.

The policy endeavours to put in place the framework necessary to underpin and support this approach. The policy will address the following areas:

- Pastoral Roles: definitions and responsibilities
- Pastoral Programmes
- Pastoral Procedures
- Resources and professional development
- Policy Monitoring and Evaluation
- Appendix: Hints for creating a positive climate with a class.

Pastoral Roles: Definitions and Responsibilities

The Subject Teacher

The Role of the Subject Teacher is:

- To contribute to the promotion of the school’s aims having particular regard to the Catholic ethos and the expectations of high standards.
- To create a classroom environment which insures quality teaching and learning.
- To provide an environment conducive to the full development of each student.
- To assist students to acquire skills needed for today and to adapt those skills to future needs.
- To be responsible for subject-related matters concerning each student.
- To engage a positive class spirit.
- To affirm and reward the efforts and achievements of each student.
- To engage with parents/guardians and provide feedback on assessments.
- To treat personal information sensitively and confidentially.
- To refer students to Year Head as required.
- To treat information sensitively and confidentially.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality.

The Class Teacher

- Where possible the Class Teacher teaches the class for which they have responsibility. The Class Teacher has access to the relevant information on the students in their class.

The Role of the Class Teacher is:

- To build a relationship with each student in the class.
- To promote class cohesion and class spirit.
- To encourage support and participation in the ethos of the school.
- To explain the school Code of Behaviour on a regular basis.
- To encourage participation in extra-curricular activities.
- To provide support in a professional manner for students experiencing difficulties.
- To treat personal information sensitively and confidentially.
- To work with the Year Head in all matters relating to Pastoral Care for their assigned class.
- To monitor notes and comments in the Student Journal.
- To distribute information and collect administration forms.
- To work in co-operation with the Year Head.

The Year Head

The Year Head meets each class in the year group once per week. He/she has access to the relevant information on the students in their year group. Year Heads meet with the Principal and Deputy Principal and other Year Heads once per week. Year Heads are given opportunities for professional development. Year Heads meet with their team of tutors when necessary.

The Role of the Year Head is:

- To refer students to Class Teachers for Pastoral Care.
- To administer and promote positive aspects of good discipline and behaviour among the students in the year group.
- To report to staff in relation to the year group and from time to time meet with subject teachers.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality.
- To administer and monitor behaviour reports.
- To organise a year group assembly once per term.
- To organise student files.
- To liaise with parents/guardians.
- To report and liaise with the Deputy Principal and Principal.

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator is a Special Duties Teacher in the school when the post structure allows for the same. An agreed time for role allocation is assigned to Pastoral Care Co-ordinator.

Role and Responsibilities

- To support the induction of first year students.
- To set up, promote, organise and review the *Cairdeas Programme* each year.
- To meet first year students individually.
- To organise and supervise Cairdeas activities.
- To conduct Anti-bullying surveys in first year.
- To follow up referrals from individual students, teachers, class teachers with regard to bullying/personal issues.

The Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Team is made up of the whole staff with the sub-committee made up of Pastoral Care Co-ordinator, the Guidance Counsellor, the Learning Support Teacher, a teacher of Religion, a Class Teacher, a teacher of SPHE and the Principal. The team will meet once per month.

Role and Responsibilities

- To support Subject Teachers, Class Teachers and Year Heads.
- To support students with particular difficulties.
- To liaise with the Special Needs Assistants.
- To function as part of a Crisis Response Team.
- To review the Pastoral Care Policy in consultation with the stakeholders.

Career Guidance Counsellor

The Guidance Counsellor undertakes career, educational and personal counselling. Counselling is offered on individual and group basis as part of a developmental and learning process and at moments of personal crisis or difficulty. The Guidance Counsellor provides support on an individual basis for self-referral and for students referred to him/her by teachers and school management.

Learning Support Co-ordinator

The Learning Support Co-ordinator plays a supportive role and works closely with the subject teachers. She provides supplementary teaching to students with learning support needs. She communicates information to parents/guardians and meets with them when necessary.

Other key personnel have their role descriptions outlined in other relevant school policies and documentation.

Pastoral Programmes

The school offers Junior Certificate, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Repeat Leaving Certificate to cater for the diverse needs of the student population.

SPHE

The school has commitment to SPHE and demonstrates this in its provision on the curriculum which adheres to the official Department guidelines. The overall aims of this programme are:

- The imparting of information.
- The development of an understanding of oneself.
- The clarification of values and regarding health and social behaviour.
- The development of an ability to make individual decision and choices in the important areas of health, life-style, careers and social interaction.

SPHE is not a dimension apart from the formal curriculum, but compliments it. Students are exposed to many aspects of SPHE through parts of the syllabi of related subjects-Religious Education, Physical Education, Career Guidance, Home Economics, Science and other areas. The Anti-bullying Policy and the Substance Use Policy and R.S.E. Policy support the SPHE Programme.

Student Council

The Student Council, as the elected representatives of each Year Group, see their role as that of negotiators on behalf of students and ensure that their voices are heard when decisions are being made which affect them. The Student Council gives students a significant voice in the development of policy and affords students the opportunity to play an active and positive part in the life of the school. The Council is designed to encourage students to become self-confident, responsible, caring and independent young people. The council is co-ordinated by two voluntary staff representatives.

Mentors

Mentors is part of the anti-bullying strategy in our school. Fifth year Leaving Certificate and L.C.A. students volunteer to become mentors and they give up some of their free time to assist First Year students as they settle at Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry. The Fifth years act as mentor, answer queries, assist students in finding their way around the school, check in with students on a regular basis especially at the very beginning of the year and they also organise a number of lunchtime activities during the year. Principal/Deputy Principal will co-ordinate.

The Role of Parents/Guardians

The Constitution recognises parents as the primary educators. At Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry it is recognised that parents/guardians play an integral role in the education process and therefore a partnership approach to education is promoted. This is characterised by a shared sense of purpose and mutual respect. Positive links between home and school are maintained and developed through the Pastoral Care system and communication between the school and the home.

Parents/guardians are requested to support the Pastoral Care programme and to communicate student difficulties to the school.

There is an active Parents' Association in the school, which aims to promote the educational development of our students and to assist with the various school activities. A Parents' Council is elected every two years. Two parent/guardian representatives are elected to the Board of Management for a three-year period.

Religious Education and Spiritual Development

The school seeks to promote the spiritual and religious growth of the students by creating a Christian atmosphere. It aims to lead them to maturity within the context of the Christian faith, which should inform and colour their lives during their school days and continue to guide their conduct all their lives. To best promote and foster the religious growth and development of the students, opportunity for prayer, celebration of the sacraments, retreats and meaningful liturgies are provided during the school year.

The Religion Team and the Chaplin form an integral part of school-life, yet we acknowledge that spiritual and moral development is not the exclusive responsibility of religious education.

Guidance and Counselling

The Career Guidance Counsellor plays a pivotal role in the school. He/she provides for the needs of students under three integrated areas of activity:

- Personal/social guidance and counselling
- Educational guidance and counselling
- Career guidance and counselling

A more detailed description of the work of the Guidance Counsellor is outlined in the Whole School Guidance Policy.

Special Educational Needs Provision

The Learning Support Team is co-ordinated by the Learning Support Co-ordinator. The Learning Support Teacher and Subject Teacher provide assistance with literacy and numeracy. The additional classes take place during Irish and French time when students are given exemption from these subjects. Special Needs Assistants provide additional support for a number of students under the guidance of subject teachers.

Information regarding Special Educational Needs is sought during the application process. On receipt of psychological assessments, the school makes an application for additional resource hours and for special concessions in state examination each year. Other students who in the view of the school, formed on the basis of assessments carried out by the school may also be deemed to have Special Educational Needs. In this instance the parents/guardians are contacted and support is provided.

Every effort is made to support and include students with learning difficulties. Having regard for all relevant information and professional documentation, the school

assesses how the needs of the student can best be met. The school uses the resources, provided by the Department of Education and Science to ensure full participation in the life of the school insofar as is reasonably practicable.

Other Programmes

- A structured Class Teacher-Year Head Programme.
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities including educational excursions, sport, music, debating and drama.
- The School Book Scheme reduces the financial burden for eligible students.
- The After School Study Programme enables students to study within a structured and supervised environment.
- Continuous Professional Development for teachers equips teachers to be aware of and meet the changing needs of young people.
- Efforts, achievements and contributions to school life are publicised in the notes section of the local newspaper and in the newsletters.
- The school works closely with the HSE and other professionals in relation to students at risk.

Pastoral Resources

The school is committed to respectfully and sensitively dealing with how information is received, shared, stored and accessed. Appointments with school personnel are arranged through the school office.

The Student Journal is used to promote good communication between the school and the home. The journal system gives parents/guardians the opportunity to note their son/daughter progress, to correspond with both the subject teachers and Class Teacher/Year Head.

Students experiencing crisis are dealt with in a caring confidential and sensitive manner, and every possible support is given. We are a “telling school”; students are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying or harassment and complaints are dealt with in line with an Anti-bullying Policy.

Parent Teacher Meetings are arranged once yearly for each Year group. Information sessions for parents/guardians are organised at different times throughout the year.

Dealing with sensitive issues as death or suicide requires careful consideration. The Critical Incident Policy will address this issue.

Resources and Professional Development

Effective policy implementation requires constant monitoring and evaluation. The Pastoral Care Team will review this policy annually and amendments will be brought to the attention of stakeholders.

This policy was devised in consultation with staff, students, and parents/guardians and was forwarded to the Board of Management/Trustees.

Appendix

Hints for creating a positive climate with a class group

- **Make a point of greeting students in your class:**

Meet them at the door as they enter, wherever possible. Use their first names. This helps promote a good class atmosphere and good classroom management.

- **Congratulate a student on a sport/competition/project success:**

Acknowledgement is crucial and costs little in effort.

- **Send a “Get Well” card (Class Teacher):**

(In the case of illness): Have all the class members’ sign.

- **Welcome a student back after an illness:**

No fanfare necessary, just a simple gesture.

- **Help a new student settle in:**

Discuss with the class beforehand to sensitise them to what can be a very traumatic experience for an individual. Appoint a specific student to befriend and assist the newcomer.

- **Phone if a student is absent regularly (Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal)**

This demonstrates both your concern and your vigilance. Be conscious of patterns of absence.

- **Talk to a student for a few minutes if he/she reports a particular anxiety to you:**

The purpose here is not to offer solutions, but simply to show awareness and concern.

- **Share insights about your class with colleagues:**

Significant information concerning a student that would be beneficial to other staff members can be shared. This could be with regard to bereavement etc.

- **Implement the Award System:**

Assign merit stickers and merit cards for effort, improvement and achievement.

- **Give positive feedback to parents/guardians:**

When there is good news to report, every opportunity should be availed of to do so.

- **Offer advice on an individual basis regarding study:**

Set agreed targets with each student after exams. This can be achieved in the course of a very brief chat while others are engaged in work.