



**Scoil Mhuire agus Íde**  
Newcastlewest,  
Co. Limerick

# **Pastoral Care Policy**

## **Draft Review**

January 2015

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our aim and purpose in Scoil Mhuire agus Íde is to help our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. We want our school to be not only a centre of academic excellence but also a caring community where personal faith is nurtured and developed.

In Scoil Mhuire agus Íde we aim

- To create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and to encourage an awareness of, and a response to, the needs of other
- To foster an appetite for learning and to develop self-discipline, initiative, responsibility and perseverance
- To involve the students in the life-long process of education and to ensure that everyone achieves some degree of success in life
- To value all kinds of achievement, and to learn to cope with success and failure

OUR SCHOOL MOTTO IS

'Ní neart go cur le cheilé'

## **STATEMENT OF CORE VALUES**

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde strives to provide an environment of excellence and care for each member of its school community. We demonstrate our valuing of each person through respect, truth, compassion and challenge. We foster excellence through the highest standards in our teaching, learning and pastoral structures and programmes.

In brief we aspire to help our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. We want our school to be not only a centre of academic excellence but also a caring community where personal faith is nurtured and developed.

We aim to create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and encourages an awareness of, and a response to, the needs of others. We aim to foster an appetite for learning and to develop self-discipline, initiative, responsibility and perseverance. We also aim to involve our students in the life-long process of education and to ensure that everyone achieves some degree of success in life. We value all kinds of achievement and we work to promote a school culture, which values diversity and nurtures an ethos of respect for self, others, and the wider community.

## **PASTORAL APPROACH IN OUR SCHOOL**

Pastoral Care structures have always been a central focus since our doors opened in 1992. Many of these structures and approaches were already in place and were an integral part of the philosophy of education handed on to us by the Mercy Order.

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde realises its core aims and goals through a variety of means, none more important than our pastoral care approach. We understand Pastoral Care, 'as an approach to education which endeavours to value and develop each member of the school community. It promotes learning at every level of the student.'<sup>1</sup> This approach animates the nature of our pastoral care provision. Each member of the school community has access to the relevant pastoral structures and procedures; 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 necessary framework to underpin and support this approach.

---

<sup>1</sup> Monahan, 1998, *The Year Head*, IAPCE.

This policy will address the following areas:

- Pastoral Role - Definitions and Responsibilities
- Pastoral Programmes
- Pastoral Procedures
- Links with SPHE, learning Support, Student Mentoring
- Resources and Continual Professional Development
- Implementation Plan
- Monitoring and Evaluation

## **PASTORAL ROLE - DEFINITIONS AND DUTIES**

This policy document is an effort to draw together And commit to paper structures and roles that have evolved, and have been agreed, over the past twenty years in our school. The roles of Class Tutor, Year Head, Pastoral Team, contribute to the overall pastoral nature of our school community. We also recognise that other key roles in the school carry significant pastoral dimensions and responsibilities - such as the Principal, Deputy Principal, Learning Support teachers and Special Needs Assistants.

### **THE ROLE OF THE CLASS TUTOR**

The role of the Class Tutor is

- To foster in the students a sense of identification with their school and class group
- To help the students feel secure within the school environment.

The duties of the Class Tutor:

- To be responsible, in co-operation with the Year Head, for the pastoral care of the class group assigned to them.
- To be aware of the general needs and feelings of the group and to encourage them to benefit fully from their formal education.
- To be aware, as much as is possible, of the home situation of each member of the class and to liaise with the year Head and the Pastoral Care Team if difficulties arise.
- To impress on each member of the group the importance of:
  - Attentiveness in class
  - Good general behaviour
  - Homework
  - Appearance of class and classroom

- Personal cleanliness, tidiness, proper uniform
  - Regular attendance at school
- To familiarise each student with the school rules.
  - To examine and sign each student's Homework Journal each week
  - To co-operate with the Year head if needed.

## THE ROLE AND DUTIES OF THE YEAR HEAD

- Supervise Resource Area at times designated by Principal.
- Keep record of the following:
  - Attendance/Absences
  - Detention slips
  - Forms signed by parents/guardians and students re acceptance of school's Code of Behaviour
  - Permission Slips allowing students to leave school grounds
  - Receipt Book to record all monies collected from students
- Assign a locker to each student and collect money for locker, Homework Journal and School Fees.
- Attend weekly meeting with Principal where disciplinary matters are discussed.
- Contact parents/guardians where necessary and attend meetings with parents/guardians where necessary.
- Meet with Class Tutors and liaise with Pastoral Care Team
- Provide Progress Reports on students when requested.
- Read Rules to students before Department Exams (if relevant).
- Exercise overall supervision and care of all students within their care.
- Be available in Year head Office each day between 10.55 - 11.05a.m. to deal with students requirements.

## THE ROLE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF SPECIAL NEEDS<sup>2</sup>

- To participate in the formulation of Special Needs Policy.
- To coordinate the schools response to students with special needs and advise the Principal of issues that arise in relation to this.
- To inform parents/guardians of the provision for students with special needs in the school.
- To contact feeder primary schools and collect any relevant information about the special needs of incoming students. To seek copies of any relevant reports, exemptions etc.
- To carry out assessment of First Year (or other new students) to establish the learning profile of students. Inform Principal of results.
- To contact parents re participation of students in supplementary teaching and to obtain a response in writing. To advise parents/guardians of outside support agencies.
- To maintain a list of pupils who are receiving learning support/resource teaching.
- To communicate to Principal and staff at the start of each year, relevant information regarding new students and to provide an update during each subsequent school year as required. To relay any relevant information as it becomes available.
- To liaise with Principal in applying for appropriate resources from S.E.N.O.
- Monitor progress of students with special needs and respond accordingly.
- Advise parents/guardians on progress of students.
- In consultation with parents/guardians, and Principal and guidance counsellor to facilitate referral of students for further assessment.
- Liaise with Pastoral Care Team, Learning Support Team, Year Heads, subject teachers as necessary.
- Liaise with external agencies - visiting teachers, psychologist, speech and language therapists, special needs organiser, etc.
- Liaise with parents, teachers, school authorities and the psychological services to ensure that the needs of S.E.N. students are met as far as practicable.

---

<sup>2</sup> This Section is taken verbatim from the school's *Special Educational Needs Policy*, ratified by the Board of Management, February, 2008

- In consultation with other relevant personnel to ensure the preparation of a suitable learning programme for students with S.E.N. To ensure review of this programme.
- To process the granting of exemptions from certain subjects.
- To apply for appropriate reasonable accommodations for S.E.N. students in the state examinations and to make suitable arrangements for these students in house exams.

#### THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

- Career Counselling
- Educational Counselling
- Personal Counselling
- To liaise with students/parents/guardians/staff/management
- To act as resource in school for students/parents/guardians/staff/management.
- To liaise, on an on-going basis, with members of the Additional Needs Core Team and help administer standardised tests.
- To facilitate referral of students to outside agencies and to support students who have been referred.
- To work with the Pastoral Care Team and other staff in the implementation of, and in the review of, this and other policies on a regular basis.

#### THE ROLE OF THE PASTORAL TEAM

The Pastoral Team will act as a resource group for the school. Its role is to support all, particularly teachers and students. The team will be accountable to the Principal. Also the team will strive to ensure a good communication structure among all concerned with its work. The following are examples of what this team could be concerned with:

- They will provide material for Class Tutors for their classes and assist teachers to deal with the material provided.
- The team will also strive to have SPHE material suitable to each year, preferably with a variety of teaching approaches and methodologies to suit the differing teaching styles in operation. Efforts will be made to adapt the material to the particular context and needs of this school.
- They will oversee the Pastoral Programme - building on the present system, inviting parental involvement, staff support and channelling up-to-date best practice from other schools.

- They will suggest policies on areas such as Pastoral Care, SPHE, Additional Needs, Guidance, Bullying, Substance Use/Abuse, Student Council, etc. The team will make proposals concerning these and other issues to help the school decide policy. They will also play a part in the review process for policies in their area of expertise.
- They will review strategies for dealing with students with difficulties in a proactive manner and to this end it is proposed that a member of the Pastoral Team should attend the weekly Year Head meeting with the Principal and Deputy Principal.
- In the event of a bereavement in the student population, the Pastoral Team, along with the Principal and Deputy Principal, will help implement the school's Crisis Response Plan.

## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT**

The following considerations should be taken into account in relation to each of the above roles:

### **Class Tutor:**

- Where possible that the Tutor teach the class for which they have responsibility
- A dedicated Tutor time of at least 30 minutes be set aside on a regular basis
- A Tutor Resource pack should be prepared to assist Tutors with the Tutor class
- The Class Tutor has access to the relevant information on the students in their care
- Should a major sanction be imposed on a student, the relevant Class Tutor will be informed
- It is suggested that Class Tutors will meet as a group with their Year Head at least once a term and also that members of the wider Pastoral Team be invited to this meeting where possible
- Class Tutors are given opportunities for professional development in their role.

### **Year Head**

- The Year head should be allowed time to fulfil his/her role - at least the equivalent of two class periods a week
- The Year Heads, together with the Principal and Deputy Principal, form the Disciplinary Committee which decides on and recommends disciplinary sanctions, up to suspension.



- There is clear access to relevant information on the students in the year group
- A regular meeting, usually once a week, occurs where the Year Head team meet with the Principal and the Deputy Principal and, where possible, with a representative of the Pastoral Team
- Year Heads meet with their team of Tutors usually once a term
- Year Heads are given opportunities for professional development
- Report to staff in relation to the year group and from time to time to meet with subject teachers
- Liaise with parents/guardians according to agreed procedures, particularly in respect of the annual Parent-Teacher Meeting, and be available for individual conferences with parents/guardians
- Have access to appropriate administrative support

### **Pastoral Team**

- The Pastoral Team will be drawn, on a voluntary basis, of some or all of the following: the Guidance Counsellor, one Year Head, the SPHE Co-ordinator, Student Council Co-ordinator, Student mentor, Additional Needs Co-ordinator. Other members may be co-opted at any time, as needs arise.
- They will have responsibility for supporting Class Tutors and Year Heads; co-ordinating the pastoral programme; reviewing students with particular difficulties; advising relevant groups within the school community on pastoral issues; in the event of a bereavement or sudden death among the student body they will support the Principal in implementing the school's Crisis Response Plan

## **PASTORAL PROGRAMME AND LINKS**

The school's pastoral programme deals with such areas as:

- Induction to the school and its ethos
- Class and year group spirit
- Study skills and approaches
- Justice and Third World projects
- School procedures
- Senior Student Council
- Student Mentoring
- Learning Support
- Bullying Awareness
- Class retreats and liturgies
- Counselling

The link between Guidance and Pastoral Care is very strong. Guidance And Counselling refers to a wide range of learning experiences designed to assist students to make effective choices about their lives and to make the necessary transitions demanded by these choices. These choices may be categorised into three distinct but interlinked areas:

- Personal and Social
- Educational
- Careers

SPHE is another core area 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 of Education and Skills guidelines. In addition we recognise SPHE as a whole school concern and therefore the school endeavours to ensure that there are opportunities for whole staff consideration of the SPHE programme in the school; that there will be regular review with parents/guardians and management regarding the effectiveness of the programme; and that on-going professional development for staff is prioritised in this area.

As part of the Pastoral Care Programme students with Special Needs are provided for by our Learning Support Programme. This involves:

- Liaising with parents/guardians, feeder schools, Principal, subject teachers and outside agencies
  - Assessment of students
  - Supporting students with S.E.N. as resources allow.
- This help is provided by the Learning Support Team.

The role of the Study Skills Co-ordinator is an important part of the Pastoral Care Programme. The Co-ordinator provides regular contact and support, especially to the exam classes, around the area of continual assessment and the Pre Exams. This is carried out in liaison with the subject teachers and the Principal. It provides an opportunity for:

- Keeping in touch with the students
- Helping them cope with stressful situations
- Giving encouragement and support
- Being available to students on an on-going basis.

It can be seen then that this school has, over the past twenty years, developed its own Pastoral Programme in the spirit of our Mission Statement. This programme is facilitated by the Pastoral Team in conjunction with the Class

Tutors and Year Heads. It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Team and the SPHE Co-ordinator to review the programme and provide for the optimum experience for the student.

The programme is reviewed annually in May, teachers have an opportunity to prepare for the following year in terms of gathering resources and undergoing relevant training.

## **PASTORAL PROCEDURES**

The school has a number of procedures with pastoral implications.

- In the area of data collection 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 with parents/guardians. Our policy commitment in this area is to constantly work in partnership with parents in order to achieve the optimum quality of relationship. This requires respect, listening, patience, and a 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 Crisis Response Plan addresses the pertinent issues. In particular the setting up of a Crisis Response Team, on a strictly voluntary basis, to co-ordinate the crisis is essential. The effectiveness of this team will be reviewed following each critical incident.

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

## **POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Any effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective, consideration of the following may be helpful.

### **MONITORING**

The Pastoral Team will monitor policy implementation. The terms of reference are as follows: The Pastoral Team will prepare a short written report for the

Board of Management, Principal and staff. The report should examine the meeting of specific targets and timelines. It should also give some qualitative reactions to the policy during implementation. The Board and staff should set aside time to discuss any reactions, concerns or suggestions that may arise during the course of implementation. The Pastoral Core Team and the Principal/Deputy Principal will then meet to discuss the feedback and propose any adjustments required. Apart from the usual on-going informal monitoring that would occur with every area of policy, formal monitoring would be appropriate at least once a year.

## EVALUATION

At specified times during the life of the policy an 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 and monitoring reports that were gathered during the life of the policy
- Surveying staff, students and parents/guardians as to its effectiveness in meeting the stated aims
- Collating these responses and presenting, following consultation with school management, a report to the Board of Management and staff with 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.

Active from September, 2008

First ratified by the Board of Management in January, 2009

Reviewed in January, 2012.

Most recent review January 2015