

# **St. Mary's College Dundalk**



## **Pastoral Care Policy**

Approved by Board of Management on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2006

## **Mission Statement**

*St Mary's College is a Catholic secondary school under the patronage of the Marist Fathers. The primary aim of the school, through its spiritual and humanistic endeavours, is to promote and develop a sense of community where those entrusted to its care can be brought to the fullness of their human potential in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. The school, through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care.*

## **Statement of Core Values**

St Mary's College aims to provide an environment of excellence and care for each member of its school community, based on Christian values. We value an ethos of pastoral care whereby pupils feel that they can approach staff and that staff will respond to such pupils in a caring Christian manner. More than anything else we seek to nurture positive relationships as the core resource in developing a pastoral approach. We demonstrate our valuing of each person through respect, truth, compassion and challenge. We foster excellence through the highest standards in our teaching, learning, pastoral structures and programmes. Each contributes to and benefits from our community of excellence and care.

## **Pastoral approach in our school**

### **1. 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 Form Teacher, Year Head, chaplain and 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, resource teachers and special needs assistants. In this section we deal with the roles of Form Teacher and Year Head. It is the policy of this school that in relation to each of these roles:

#### **Form Teacher:**

- ❖ Where possible that the Form Teacher teach the class for which they have responsibility
- ❖ There is a dedicated Form Teacher time of at least 30minutes with the class occur
- ❖ Form Teachers have a limited sanction-imposing role – no greater than lunch time detention
- ❖ The Form Teacher has access to the relevant information on the students in their class
- ❖ Where possible no major sanction will be imposed on a student without consultation with the relevant Form Teacher
- ❖ Form Teachers will consider appropriate rewards to encourage positive attitudes and build Form Teacher / class relationships.
- ❖ Form Teachers will meet as a group with their Year Head at least once a term.
- ❖ Form Teachers are given opportunities for professional development in their role

### **Year Head:**

- ❖ There is clear access to relevant information on the students in the year group
- ❖ A regular meeting usually once a week occurs of the Year Head team with the principal and deputy with, when possible, a representative of the pastoral team
- ❖ Year Heads have strategies to recognise and acknowledge excellence, effort and contributing to year spirit
- ❖ Year Heads meet with their team of Form Teachers usually once a term
- ❖ Year Heads are given opportunities for professional development
- ❖ Organise assemblies of the year group
- ❖ Report to staff in relation to the year group and from time to time meet with subject teachers
- ❖ Liaise with parents according to agreed procedures in respect of the annual parent-teacher meeting, individual conferences with parents, collaboration with parent groups in the school
- ❖ Have access to appropriate administrative support

### **The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator and Team:**

- ❖ The position of Co-ordinator should be a designated post of responsibility.
- ❖ The core Pastoral Care Team may be made up of the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator, the guidance counsellor, the chaplain, Year Head, Form Teachers, the Learning Support teacher and any other interested staff members.
- ❖ The team will meet at least monthly
- ❖ They will have responsibility for supporting Form Teachers and Year Heads; co-ordinating the pastoral programme; reviewing students with particular difficulties; advising relevant groups within the school community on pastoral issues
- ❖ They will present an annual report on the pastoral life of the school to the staff and the Board of Management

## **2. Pastoral Programme**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core area of school life and its link to pastoral care is clear. At present the school makes provision for SPHE. In addition we recognise SPHE as a whole school concern and therefore ensure that there are opportunities for whole staff consideration of the SPHE in the school, review with parents and management regarding the effectiveness of the programme, on-going professional development for staff is prioritised in this area.

In addition to and in concert with the SPHE curricular programme, this school has its own pastoral provision that is supported by the Pastoral Care Team in conjunction with the Form Teachers and Year Heads. This school's pastoral provision deals with such areas as: *induction to the school and its ethos; class and year group spirit; justice and voluntary projects; school procedures.* The programme is reviewed annually; teachers have an opportunity to prepare for the following year in terms of gathering resources and undergoing relevant training.

## **3. 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. For a more detailed treatment of issues around information refer to the Record Keeping Policy.

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

Dealing with sensitive issues such as sudden death or suicide requires careful consideration. This school's Crisis Response Policy addresses the pertinent issues. In particular the creation of a Crisis Response Team is essential. The effectiveness of this team will be reviewed once a year and be part of the annual Pastoral Review made to the Board of Management.

## **4. Resources and professional development**

The school is committed to providing the necessary resources to underpin this pastoral policy. This includes professional development programmes.

## 5. Implementation Plan

By February 2006 the consultative process will be concluded. The document will be discussed by all staff and a final document will be approved for presentation to the Board of Management by the end of the 2006 academic year.

## 6. 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. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective consideration of the following may be helpful:

### ***Monitoring:***

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator will monitor policy implementation. The terms of reference are as follows: prepare a short written report for the Board of Management and staff on the implementation of the policy at key stages – in addition be prepared to give an oral report. The report should examine the meeting of specific targets and timelines; it should also gather some qualitative reactions to the policy during implementation. At the reporting stage the Board and in its turn the staff should discuss any reactions, concerns, suggestions that may arise during the course of implementation. A procedure for follow up on reactions to the interim reports needs to be established – one form may be that the Pastoral Care Team with school management will set time aside to discuss the feedback and propose any adjustments required.

### ***Evaluation:***

At a specified time 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 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 presenting, following consultations with school management, a report to Board 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.