

PASTORAL CARE POLICY

2023/2024



Blackwater Community School

Introduction

Blackwater Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational school which caters for students of all abilities, preparing them for life. The school is an amalgamation of 3 Catholic Voluntary Schools with Mercy, Presentation and CBS traditions. We aspire to the nurturing and growth of the individual in a pleasant working environment where:

- We foster the Christian values of truth, honesty, and integrity.
- Each student and staff member are involved, and individual talents are developed and enhanced.
- Parents and local community involvement is encouraged.
- True community is fostered through open communication and respect for each person.
- Students and staff feel cherished, secure, and happy.
- Students are equipped with a strong sense of self-belief and self-motivation.
- Students access a broad and balanced education.

Rationale

Pastoral care is an integral part of the school community in BCS. The school is set up in a system to ensure the support and development of young adults. Each student will interact with their teachers, class tutors, year head, mentor (6th years), AEN department, Guidance department, Chaplain services and Pastoral care team. Pastoral care is an integral part of our approach to a holistic education, which puts the educational, emotional, and social development of the student at the centre of its learning values. This policy sets a formal structure for pastoral care, setting out clear and defined roles and expectations to ensure that every member of our school community has access to relevant pastoral structures and procedures.

Aims

- co-ordinate the support available for students in the school
- facilitate links to the community and other non-school support services.
- enable students with support needs to continue to access a full education.
- assist staff to manage those students effectively.
- ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to student wellbeing and support.
- advise school management on the development and review of effective student support policies and structures.
- promote an environment which meet the needs of each student.
- acknowledge and support each person's role in the school community.
- nurture teaching and learning relationships.
- recognise talents and abilities.
- act as an early warning system for the early detection of "at risk" students.
- help the young person to make their own decisions through greater self-awareness and independence.

Child Protection

The principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the vice-principal is the DDLP, they have the responsibility for the implementation of child protection procedures (2023) and oversees all issues related to child protection, including reporting to the BOM. However, each member of the school community shares the responsibility for implementation of the procedures, and it is particularly important that, we the members of the student support team have a clear understanding of the procedures, as outlined in our child protection policy and of our role in relation to them.

Critical Incident

There is a crossover of members between the Pastoral care team and the critical incident management team (CIMT). On an ongoing basis throughout the school year preventative approaches are put in place. Examples of this include wellbeing awareness week, Anti-

bullying programme, lunchtime clubs (e.g., chess), sports clubs, choir, drama and Cairde run events for first years. The team will also try to minimise opportunities for students to be vulnerable, watch out for hot spots in the school and be conscious of less protected areas e.g., toilets. In the case of a Critical incident the Pastoral care team will support the CIMT during the event and be a big support to all after.

Core members of the Student Support Team

- Management representative
- Guidance Counsellors
- AEN co-ordinators
- Religion Techer
- Chaplain
- There is a link person for referrals to the pastoral care team.
 - 6th Caroline Flynn
 - 5th/LCA Lucie Higgins
 - 4th Maria O'Brien
 - 3rd Angelina Howard
 - 2nd Jane Prendergast
 - 1st Emma Barry

Additional participation in some meetings may be appropriate for others as follows:

- Parents/Guardians or Students from time to time may be invited to meet with the team for a particular purpose, such as a project that relates to the well-being of students.
- Professionals form other services or agencies such as NEPS, SENO etc. may attend when appropriate.

Responsibilities of team members

The co-ordinator will:

- organise and make preparation for the meetings.
- liaise prior to the meetings with any additional attendees and arrange for the relevant year heads, other teachers, parents/guardians, students to be present.
- brief any 'extra' attendees about issues and procedures
- ensure documentation is circulated.
- make appropriate referrals or allocate the task to another person.
- liaise with relevant agencies and, if appropriate, with parents/guardians
- provide structured feedback to those agencies.
- convene and chair case meetings or arrange for someone else to chair.
- ensure relevant staff are kept informed of appropriate decisions/action.
- provide support in the development of criteria for monitoring the operation of the student support system.

The guidance counsellor:

- may have detailed information on particular students.
- may agree to provide on-going support or specific interventions to individual students as an outcome of the meeting.
- may support subject teachers in their work.
- may liaise with outside agencies.
- may be a contact for parents/guardians who have concerns about their children.

The Coordinating Teachers for Additional Education Needs:

- will have specialised information on students with learning difficulties.
- can advise on appropriateness of supports for particular students.

The Chaplain:

- provide a faith presence committed to the values of Christ, rooted in gospel values, and supporting the holistic development of the student.
- may have detailed information on particular students.

- accompany staff and students on the journey of life by providing spiritual guidance.
- may agree to provide on-going support to individual students as an outcome of the meeting.
- may support the whole school community as someone to confide in, who listens and cares.
- may be a contact for parents/guardians who have concerns about their children.

Link to other staff members:

Situations may arise where information may be passed from the pastoral care team to the year heads, a particular group of teachers or the wider teaching staff. To ensure effective communication, it will be decided in each meeting who is the best link person. This will depend on the student, their situation, who is at the pastoral care team meeting at the time and to whom the information needs to be delivered to. The team will ensure to maintain good communication within the team as well as with the rest of the school staff and with external agencies. All members of the Pastoral Care team are aware of the available external agencies. This will be reviewed each year to ensure the most up to date information regarding external agencies is held.

Procedures:

1. Regular designated meeting times
2. Adequate time needs to be allocated for preparation to ensure the best use of time.
3. Clear and easily accessed referral procedures. Where possible the referral route will take the least intrusive pathway and involve the least number of people.

Pastoral care team meetings will follow the principles of good practice for meetings. These include:

- clarifying the purpose of the meeting
- ensuring that all views are heard.
- staying within time schedules

- recording actions

Whenever possible, a collaborative approach is used to reach decisions, but the co-ordinator may at times have to make a decision if agreement cannot be reached. Our student support team aim to be non-judgemental and use a structured problem-solving approach.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a balance between keeping teachers informed to help them carry out their duties and unnecessary disclosing of personal information about students and their families. Professional boundaries will be upheld in meetings and factual information will be used when making decisions on a course of action.

Our key question when considering confidentiality is: Will the disclosure of information be of benefit to the student? The welfare of students is the deciding factor.

Record Keeping

Referrals: there is a student support referral form available to all staff members. This will be available in the staffroom or from a team member. Referral forms will be kept by the relevant link person in a filing cabinet, for example, the Guidance Counsellor will keep the pastoral care concerns and the Additional Educational Needs department will keep the learning concerns. See appendix A for Student Support Referral Form.

Meetings: The record of the meeting is taken by the co-ordinator. They follow the guidelines by taking the class, initials, level of concern and follow up. See Appendix B for same meeting record.

Appendix A

Student Support Referral Form

Private and Confidential



Name of Student: _____

Year: _____

Class: _____

Tutor: _____

Year Head: _____

Is it a pastoral care/learning concern (please tick one)?

Pastoral care

Learning

Reason for concern:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please hand to a member of the Pastoral Care Team/Additional Educational Needs Department depending on the nature of your concern.

Appendix B

