

School Chaplaincy Policy

Chaplaincy Policy

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1 **School Mission Statement**

Blackwater Community School was founded in 2003 as a result of the amalgamation of three existing schools, the Mercy Order, Presentation Order and Christian Brothers. It is a co-educational, non-selective School. The school has a Christian/Catholic ethos. As a Community School, it is open to students of all faiths and none. BCS is committed to quality education.

The school aims to foster the Christian values of truth, honesty, and integrity; to enable students to develop their academic, physical, emotional, and spiritual potential to the fullest extent. It seeks to create a safe environment where students and staff feel included and happy in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It strives to enable students to partake in the local and wider community and to be welcoming to Parents and visitors to the school in general.

Blackwater Community School endeavours to prepare students for living in community with other people of their own faith traditions, those of different faith traditions and those of no faith tradition.

2 **Rationale of the Policy**

Provision is made for the appointment of a Roman Catholic Chaplain in all Community Schools. The School Chaplain is appointed by the Board of Management on the nomination of the local Bishop. The terms and conditions are set out in DES CL 57/2008. The Chaplain is appointed in addition to the allocation of wholetime teacher equivalents and is paid a teacher's salary by the Department of Education and Science.

The School Chaplain in Blackwater Community School is Caroline Flynn. Caroline can be contacted through the office on the school number which is 058 53620

As a Community School, with a Catholic ethos, we are committed to the importance of formal and religious education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect and articulate what it means to be a community school, to be faithful to and a witness to our unique tradition, whilst at the same time being respectful of those in our school community of other faith traditions or none. We hope to channel the religious and spiritual development of our students and to provide opportunities for personal reflection and growth.

3 **Goals or objectives of the Policy**

1. To promote the Religious and overall development of the student
2. To ensure the status of the Chaplain and RE in the school.
3. To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions.

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4. To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.
5. To provide a framework for the profession and work of the Chaplain.

4 Vision and Objectives

The Chaplain in BCS seeks to work in harmony with the Principal and teachers of the school along with the families, communities and parishes of the students. A vital part of the role is to get to know the students within the school and to endeavour to meet year groups, class groups and individual students when necessary.

The school Chaplain seeks to live by Gospel values; recognises the dignity of each individual; promoting the moral, social and spiritual development of the student; and having a special concern for the poor and under - privileged, contributing to the building up of the local community and working collaboratively for peace and justice in society as a whole.

The Chaplain encourages and fosters an awareness of the faith tradition of the school, of the innate spirituality of the person and provides unique ways for the school community to express their own religious identity through liturgies, retreats and other religious and non-religious occasions; to provide opportunities to reflect and develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery.

As Chaplain, it is important that one is available to all members of the school community – students, staff, parents, and to develop an open and trusting relationship with them, to be available to mark the important and transitional moments in life such as Graduation especially during times of loss and bereavement.

The role of Chaplain in BCS involves teaching as part of the RE department, working as part of the school Pastoral Care Team and developing close links with the staff and students of the Special Needs Department and the Hub, collaborating with the Diocesan Adviser, with local clergy Fr, Michael Cullinan and Dean Paul Draper, and charities, and student support groups such as SVP and Aware and Religious communities such as Mount Melleray and Glencairn Cistercian Abbey.

Objectives

1. Being a person of faith in the school, committed to the values of Christ, rooted in Gospel values so that every person is met with love and understanding.
2. Working with the School Management and the Pastoral Care Team to promote a positive, living, and enriching school ethos.
3. Formulation of Policies which relate to the Pastoral Care or Holistic development of students. Part of the Critical Incident Management Team. Pat of the charity Committee.

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4. Following up on referrals of students from the Pastoral Care Team, teachers, or parents. In conjunction with parents and school authorities, advising on appropriate courses of action should the student need further intervention.
5. Celebrating the key events in the Church's Liturgical Calendar and providing opportunities for staff and students to celebrate their faith. To be inclusive of students of all faiths and none.
6. Decorating and maintaining a Prayer Space in the school, where students and teachers can develop their spirituality through prayer, meditation and mindfulness.
7. Teaching Religious education and working closely with the RE team to co-ordinate the annual programme of liturgies, retreats, talks, prayers, meditation, and mindfulness.
8. Seeking opportunities both in school and in the wider parish and local community, where students can develop socially, spiritually, creatively, morally, and personally through outreach initiatives such as Lourdes, Hope Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul, St Declan's Pilgrimage, Penitential Services, Class Masses November Remembrance Service, Christmas Mass, Daffodil Club, etc.

5 Role of the Chaplain

The Chaplain is a person of faith, rooted in Gospel values who accompanies students and staff on the journey of life.

The role of the Chaplain in BCS involves the establishment of a relationship or relationships whose purpose may encompass support in times of trouble and personal and/or spiritual growth through deeper understanding of oneself/ others, and/or God.

A significant role of the Chaplain is to ensure that the characteristic spirit of BCS as expressed in the school's Mission Statement finds practical expression in faith formation, alongside pastoral, liturgical and outreach activities.

According to the White Paper on Education, "Pastoral Care" is proactive and seeks to address the totality of the human person. Therefore, the role is holistic in nature. It is vital therefore that the Chaplain, works collaboratively with all members of the school community, with those who hold designated pastoral responsibilities relating to the students, staff and members of the wider community connected with the school. To this end, it is important that the role seeks to involve them in whatever promotes "an integrated development of the pupils, particularly with those at risk or those who struggle with life.

The Chaplain's office is an open and available secure place in an accepting, non-judgmental atmosphere where students can relax and feel at ease. In some cases, students may be referred to the outside agencies for counselling and support. Where issues of Child Protection arise, I maintain regular communication with the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person.

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The Chaplain endeavours to exercise their pastoral role by

1. Personal contact and offering support to individual students
2. Access to classes and small groups.
3. Liaising with, supporting and being available/present to staff and students
4. Communicating with and supporting parents/guardians
5. To be available around school for informal contact.
6. To attend, when practical, retreats or Trips out.
7. To be responsible, in liaison with the Head of RE and Senior Management Team for the key Liturgical events of the year and major school celebrations.
8. To encourage the Sacramental life of the school through events such as Para-liturgies and Services of Reconciliation, we are fortunate to have the support of FR. Michael Cullinan, our Sacramental Chaplain and the Dean of the Church of Ireland, Dean Paul Draper.
9. To maintain close links with people of all faiths and encourage their visits to and involvement with the school.
10. To support local and international charities with staff and student involvement, e.g., Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal, Carol singing in St. Carthages Home, Lismore.
11. To collaborate with the Principal and Deputy Principals, Pastoral Care Team, Career Guidance, AEN Dept, Year Heads, Tutors and staff.
12. To support inclusivity in our community i.e. The Diversity Lounge
13. Support initiatives like the Squashy Couch, Sex Education Programme, the Student Council, the Diversity Lounge.
14. Co-ordinate the John Paul 11 Awards in Transition Year
15. Collaborate with the Diocesan advisors on Links with a school in the Diocese of Lodwar, Kenya
16. Part of the Wellbeing Committee. Initiate Wellbeing Programmes like Aware, Beat the Blues and Pieta House Resilience Programme.
17. As a member of the Mentor Programme for Sixth Year Students

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7 Wider Community Links

1. *Pastoral Care Team.*

The Care Team meet once a week. Here strategies and interventions are co-ordinated to support students who might be vulnerable or are facing difficulties in their lives.

2. *Year Heads*

Individual members of the Pastoral Care Team are linked to a specific Year Head. Students can be referred to the Chaplain by the Year Head. When it is deemed helpful, the chaplain can be available to meet parents together with the Year Head.

3. *Class Tutors/Subject Teachers*

From time to time the class tutor or subject teacher will refer a student to the chaplain. In such cases, feedback is shared with the teacher as appropriate.

4. *Wellbeing Committee*

The Chaplain, is a part of the Wellbeing Committee that initiates activities and support throughout the year, such as “Wellbeing Week “, Walk in My Shoes

5. *Student Council*

The Student Council may report circumstances that benefit from Chaplaincy support

6. Tusla (Child and Family Agency)

When a child is deemed to be at risk of abuse, a report is made to the Designated Liaison Person within the school. This, in normal circumstances, is the Principal and he follows the Child Protection Guidelines, in referring the case to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The Chaplain can be available to link with social workers when they are involved with students and their families.

7. *NEPS*

In the case of a Critical Incident, the support of NEPS will always be invited. If a student's behaviour indicated a need for the intervention of a NEPS psychologist the chaplain can work in conjunction with the AEN Co-ordinator and the School Principal to arrange a referral.

8. *Various Organisations and Charities*

When necessary, the chaplain can contact outside agencies to access support for students, such as Pieta House, Aware, Headstrong, Bodywhys, Teenline etc. However, in general such supports are accessed by parents/guardians following GP visits with the child in need.

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7. **Personal/Professional Support**

As Chaplains, we are aware of the need for support, information, and collaboration. Part of the role is to be a Member of the School Chaplains' Association of Ireland, to meet with a local cluster group and to avail of supervision and counselling to ensure self-care.

8. **Evaluation**

In line with recent educational trends and School Evaluation, the Chaplain is required to provide an evaluation at the end of each term.

9. **Chaplaincy Appointments**

The Chaplain, can meet students on a one-to-one basis when needed to help them cope with whatever issue may be significant and relevant for them. Students can present themselves for support by making a request to talk to the chaplain, or the chaplain can introduce themselves to students when they have been referred by another party. Appointments are arranged discretely.

10. **Continuous Professional Development**

As professionals, Chaplain's should seek and avail of CPD in their area.

11. **Chaplain Programme and Liturgical School Calendar**

Relevant to school year - See attached to the end of the Policy

12 **Confidentiality and Child Protection**

As part of the code of ethics, a Chaplain must store, handle, transfer and dispose of all records, (including written, electronic, audio and video) securely and in a way that safeguards the students' right to privacy. Care should be taken when storing all data related to the student's particular care needs. In obtaining information from or about a student, the Chaplain should deal only with what may be necessary for the student's welfare. The Chaplain will use a specific notebook to record all data.

Confidentiality must be secured from the beginning of the relationship. The confidentiality can only be broken in certain circumstances, and these apply if there is a disclosure of sexual abuse with a minor or if the Chaplain evaluates that the student is a danger to self or others. In the case a Chaplain deems it necessary to breach confidentiality, this will be done with the student's knowledge and is seen as an extension of care rather than a breach of

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confidentiality. Therefore, the student is safe in the knowledge that their confidentiality is guarded unless they are perceived as a threat to themselves or others. It is understood that the Chaplain cannot use any confidential information for any personal advantage. If a student is involved in legal proceedings, this releases the Chaplain from confidentiality in any fact relevant to legal proceedings.

13. Social Outreach and Justice

As Chaplain, it is important to promote a spirit of concern for others within and beyond the school community. This is done through our links to charities like the Hope Foundation that works with street children in Kolkata, many of our own students have had the chance to fundraise and to travel to Kolkata. BCS has built a well in Malawi with the Charity Self Help and a member of staff and a student were able to see the well in action. We are currently hoping to have a student link with the Diocese of Lodwar in Kenya with a view to forming an exchange programme. Our Fifth Year students have been going to Lourdes as helpers every year with the annual Waterford/Lismore Diocesan Pilgrimage. Students have got to go to Rome with the John Paul II Awards. The Irish department have held a very enjoyable "Trad for Trocaire" during Lent. The staff support Unicef Ireland with a cake sale in September.

The school is very proactive in supporting local charities. There is a Charity Committee who organise an annual fun run for the whole school. Staff and students can appeal to the committee for funds for a charity close to them.

We have close ties to the local branch of St. Vincent de Paul and organise hampers every Christmas. There is also a Staff Breakfast which raises funds for SVdeP. We also have a close relationship with St. Carthages nursing home and students enjoy meeting the residents.. Activities have included Bingo, Making Bridget's crosses and Carol Singing in December. First year students support the "Samartan's Purse" by putting together "Shoeboxes", with the help of the Fifth Year Cairde.

Raising issues of social justice problems and moral issues in our locality and worldwide, for example poverty, climate justice, child labour, human rights etc.

14. Spiritual Guidance

The Chaplain animates the spiritual life of the school community and offers opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with God. Whilst many young people have difficulty with organised religion, they have a need to find meaning, purpose and to belong to something greater than themselves. Also, the Chaplain is in the privileged position to guide students and to explore various methods which bring peace and fulfilment. Working alongside the Religion Department, with the school, with the support of the local Clergy and Religious Communities, the Chaplain ensures the school community has time to celebrate its identity in religious worship.

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15. **Retreats and Pilgrimages**

The Chaplain organises retreats for different year groups. Students may go to St. Declan's Way in Ardmore, to the Cistercian Monastery of Glencairn and Mount Melleray Abbey, Cappoquin. We have also used Scala retreats in Cork and have had retreat teams such as the Columban Missionaries, and Glencommera retreat team, Tipperary. John Paul students have attended retreat days in Mount Melleray.

16. **Religious Education in the Whole School Community/Life/Day**

The morning prayer and the reflection on the school app seeks to be inclusive by acknowledging other faith traditions and Sacred times in the year, and by accompanying others on their own journey of faith. The John Paul students normally take charge of the morning prayer and the sacred space in the school. The Dean of the Church of Ireland supports is supportive of liturgies in the school such as our November Service of Remembrance and Graduation Mass. Students do reflections on prayers for Africa Day, Martin Luther King Day, Earth Day etc. Students do prayers in their own language at Christmas and other times of the year.

17. **Sacred Space**

The Prayer Room allows opportunities for individual Class Mass and Penitential services as well as Meditation and time for reflection and prayer.

18. **Policy Review and Update**

The Chaplain will work with the BOM and Chaplain's Cluster Group to review and update the policy.

19. **Resource Sharing**

The Chaplain will work with the Cluster group to share resources for the good of the students, for collegiality, and to be up to date with current educational trends.

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Appendix One Evaluation

1. In general, how was the last term?
2. What were the highlights of the term?
3. What areas could be improved?
4. Who are the students I am currently working with?
5. Who are the parents/guardians I am currently working with?
6. Comment on work with staff members
7. What difficult areas need to be addressed?

Appendix Two School Liturgical Calendar