



# ABBHEY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

## Donegal Town

### PASTORAL CARE POLICY Ammended May 2019

School Pastoral Care is an approach to education, which endeavors to value and develop each member of the school community. It also supports and promotes learning at every level of the student.

The Abbey Vocational School recognises the importance of its pastoral policies, structures, procedures and practices. This pastoral approach is infused by the guiding ethos of the school as expressed in our mission statement.

#### ***Rationale/Mission Statement***

Abbey Vocational School is dedicated to the holistic development of students in a caring environment where tolerance and respect are nurtured and valued.

#### ***Pastoral Goals in the Abbey Vocational School***

To promote an environment which values, develops, cares for and meets the needs of each student.

To create an environment where students are valued and respected regardless of any aspect of their identity, including sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

To nurture the talents and abilities of each student in a positive environment of teaching and learning.

To monitor and evaluate progress at every level.

To acknowledge and support the role of each person in the life of Abbey Vocational School.

To enable the care team to identify vulnerable students and support them appropriately.

#### ***Policy Content***

Pastoral Care permeates the daily lives of students and staff. In implementing our pastoral care policy we will continue to foster a caring atmosphere into the future. We have a system of Class Tutors, year heads, care team and support structures as outlined below.

## **Rationale**

The holds at its core the principle that all members of the school community should support each other in an environment of mutual respect. This principle extends to all students and all members of staff. The purpose of this policy is to promote effective and caring leadership and partnership among all the members of the school community. Through this partnership approach strong relationships based on respect, understanding and a shared goal of a cohesive school community can be forged so that all members of the community feel empowered to reach their full potential. Our pastoral care policy underpins our holistic approach to the educational experiences of the young people in our care. The policy seeks to ensure that there is a continuum of support for the young people in our care.

## **School context**

This policy has been developed in the context of the school's vision and mission statement. It was developed in the context of the school's other policies and relevant publications:

- The Abbey Vocational School Code of Behaviour
- The Abbey Vocational School Admissions Policy
- The Abbey Vocational School Anti-bullying policy, procedures and charter
- The Abbey Vocational School Critical Incident Policy
- The Abbey Vocational School Guidance Plan
- Student Support Teams (DES Publication, 2014)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES Publication, 2013)
- Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools

## **Legislative framework**

The policy is underpinned by the relevant education legislation and by the appropriate Education research. This includes:

- Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs 2004
- Equal Status Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- Children First 2011
- Child Protection Procedures
- Anti-bullying Procedures 2013
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools 2013
- Education and Training Boards Act 2013

## **Pastoral Roles and Responsibilities**

The Abbey Vocational School believes that a whole school approach to pastoral care is the most effective way of ensuring that the needs of all members of the school community are addressed, managed and respected. All members of the community have an important role to play and the following describe briefly some of the key responsibilities appropriate to each role:

### **The Role of the Board of Management**

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that:

- The Abbey Vocational School has a Pastoral Care Policy.
- The policy is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Support is given for all pastoral care initiatives in the school
- Its members have an opportunity to make a contribution to the development of the policy
- The policy is made available to all members of the school community

### **The Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal**

The Principal and Deputy Principal must take the lead role in the pastoral care of the students. It is their primary responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of the students in the care of the school. The school's senior management carry out this function in a number of ways:

- Ensuring that the programmes and curriculum on offer to the students is responsive to their needs and allows them to develop to their full potential.
- Ensuring that the structures are put in place to support the students' pastoral needs.
- Creating and fostering a climate and culture of respect among all members of the school community that allows students to develop to their full potential.
- Promoting a restorative approach to dealing with student discipline which seeks to build relationships based on respect.
- Supporting the continuous professional development of staff to manage the needs of students in our care.
- Supporting staff in responding to the needs of students.
- Coordinating a whole school approach to pastoral care.
- Proactively engaging with the pastoral care of all students including responding to the needs of students who may need extra supports.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities for students to develop all aspects and facets of their character.
- Supporting parents in the holistic development of their children.
- Proactively facilitating the contribution of external agencies to the development of the students in our care.

## **The Role of the Student Support Team**

The student support team is part of the student support system in The Abbey Vocational School. That system encompasses a range of supports that cater for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of students. The team will meet weekly and look at supports for the student population under three headings : 1. Supports for all. 2. Supports for some and 3, Supports for a few.

The Student Support Team comprises the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Career Guidance Counsellors, the teacher who supports vulnerable students. The work of the Student Support Team includes:

- The Student Support Team meets each week and looks at pastoral supports needed for all students/ some students and a few students.
- The team review the needs of all of the students who receive extra supports in the school. A Student Support List has been established and this is reviewed each week. A consensus approach is used for determining which students are included on the list, how they are risk/needs assessed, and, how and when they are removed from the list.
- The Student Support Team having reviewed the needs of the individual student may decide to link in with the student in school but may also decide to seek extra supports outside of the school.
- Year Heads, Class Teachers and Subject Teachers may raise their concerns with regard to particular students and may refer students to the Student Support Team.
- Members of the Student Support Team act as link people for different students who have individual needs. They check in with these individuals on a regular basis to monitor their needs and to ensure the appropriate supports are in place.
- The Student Support Team also reviews best practice, reviews school policies from a pastoral perspective and plans for the future care needs of the students.
- In the event of a critical incident in the school the Student Support Team is the key body with responsibility for managing the school's response to the incident and for managing the pastoral needs of the school community.
- The Student Support Team has the responsibility for the advising on Child Protection issues with the Designated Liaison Person (the Principal) being a member of the team.

## **The Role of the Guidance Counsellor**

The Guidance Counsellor helps students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviour or effect changes in their lives. Counselling is offered on an individual or small group basis. The focus of counselling may be on personal, educational and career issues, individually or in combination. The Guidance Counsellor engages in a two way process of consultation with parents, teachers, school management and referral agencies. The following are the key elements of referral and counselling:

- School management, teachers, the Student Support Team and parents may refer students to the Counsellor. Students may also self-refer and friends sometimes consult the

Counsellor resulting in the issue of an appointment. The voluntary participation in counselling of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

- The Guidance Counsellor may recognize that an individual student needs assistance from other qualified helpers outside of school and organizes the provision of such assistance following agreed procedures with the school, parents and local agencies.
- Referrals may also be made by the Guidance Counsellors to other members of the Student Support Team as appropriate. Particular care is taken to involve all interested in the student's welfare and information will be shared as appropriate on a need-to-know basis.
- Recommendations are made about appropriate agencies. Parents may be requested to refer a student to an appropriate agency through his/her G.P. Where a referral is made, a detailed referral document is prepared and forwarded to the appropriate agency. The Guidance Counsellor liaises with the relevant external agency and provides subsequent in-school support for the student.

### **The Role of the Year Head**

The Year Head, on behalf of the school community, oversees the welfare of a year group so that learning, at every level of the person, is supported. The Year Head works in conjunction with other members of the school community:

- **The individual student and the year group.** Formal contact with the year group may take place during Pastoral Care class. Formal meetings are arranged with individual students while necessary and informal contact with individuals takes place all the time.
- **Class Teachers.** The Year Head supports the Class Teacher in implementing the Code of Behaviour, in monitoring student progress, attendance and punctuality. The Year Head and Class Teacher work closely together and constantly share information.
- **Student Supports.** The Year Head is aware of the supports available to students and makes referrals accordingly. Information is shared with counsellors, the Student Support Team, teachers involved in monitoring punctuality and attendance. Year Heads consult with Special Needs Assistants, where appropriate.
- **Senior Management.** Year Heads work together as a group to ensure a common approach to their role in the school community. The Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads share information on students and collaborate in dealing with problems that arise. The Principal will often delegate responsibility to the Year Head.
- **Parents and Guardians.** The Year Head has two-way communication with parents in matters relating to the student's welfare and progress. Year Heads meet with and provide support to parents, where necessary.
- **Teachers.** Year Heads are available to subject teachers to support them in their work. The Year Head offers particular support to new members of staff who may be experiencing difficulty with classroom management.

## **The Role of the Class Teacher**

- The Class Teacher takes a special interest in his/her tutor class and in the welfare of each of its individual students. For this reason, wherever possible, Class Teachers are assigned on the basis that they have regular contact with the class group.
- The Class Teacher will have access to relevant information on the students in their class. Likewise, the Class Teacher will share information, as appropriate with relevant members of the staff.
- The Class Teacher will work closely with the Year Head in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. He/She will ensure that each student in the class properly maintains the Student Journal. No major sanction will be imposed without consultation with the relevant Class Teacher. The Class Teacher will adopt a restorative approach to discipline in his/her dealings with the students in his/her care. He/She will not apply sanctions unless in relation to their own subject area.
- The Class Teacher will help promote compliance with the Code of Behaviour through positive affirmation. He/she will help develop students' confidence and self-esteem through the use of positive comments in the student's school journal.

## **The Role of the Subject Teacher**

The Subject Teacher also has a key role in pastoral provision in the school:

- Like the Class Teacher the Subject Teacher is in daily contact with the student and is therefore very well placed to identify any pastoral needs that emerge for their students.
- Like the Class Teacher the Subject Teacher also have an important role in modelling appropriate behaviours, in creating a climate of mutual respect and fostering positive relationships.
- Like the Class Teacher the Subject Teacher also plays an invaluable role in promoting self-esteem and fostering confidence and assertiveness.
- The Subject Teacher plays an important role in instilling key values and in communicating expectations of students with regard to behaviour, work ethic and progress.
- The Subject Teacher also promotes positive discipline through positive comments in the Student Journal, praise and encouragement of the student and through their role in determining the Student of the Month.

## **The Role of the SEN Coordinator**

The Special Education Needs Coordinator has a pivotal role in responding to the needs of the young people in our care who may have general or specific learning difficulties. These needs are often complex and may extend beyond the academic to comprise a wide range of interlinked social, emotional, behavioural and psychological needs. The coordinator

- Coordinates the provision of all supports for students with SEN in cooperation with the student's Learning Support Teacher drawing up learning plans and strategies as targeted interventions for addressing the needs of the students.
- Liaises with all teaching staff relating to SEN students in their care.
- Coordinates the activities of our SNAs linking them in with specific students or class groups to ensure the needs of the students are being met.
- Manages the application for resources for our SEN students including securing teaching and SNA supports for our students as well as putting in place appropriate supports for examinations including State Examinations.
- Liaises with the Coordinator of the school's Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) class to ensure the needs of the students are being provided for on an on-going basis.
- Liaises with the feeder National Schools about incoming students who may have SEN to ensure that the school is in a position manage this SEN and to ensure the students have a smooth transition into the Abbey Vocational School.
- Liaises with parents of students with SEN to address all of their needs including those of a pastoral nature.

## **The Role of our SNAs**

Our School acknowledges the role played by our SNAs in meeting the pastoral needs of our students and particularly those students with extra educational needs. Our SNAs:

- Manage the complex variety of needs that some of our SEN students will present to school.
- Cooperate with teaching staff to ensure that they are informed of any emerging needs.
- Work collaboratively with teachers to ensure that the needs of the students are being met.
- Support students in response to any emerging or on-going needs.
- Work with the SEN Coordinator and relevant Subject or LS Teacher in reviewing and managing the needs of the students.
- Promote the wellbeing of the students in their care.

## **The Role of our Non-teaching Staff**

In their daily interactions our non-teaching staff play an important role in managing the pastoral needs of the students in our care. They are well placed to observe any developments that might have an impact on the wellbeing of the students. They promote the sense of community that characterises the school and in doing so contribute to the general wellbeing of the school community. They also bring to the attention of the Student Support Team any concerns they may have regarding student welfare.

### **The Role of the Parent**

The Abbey Vocational School acknowledges and welcomes the role of the parent in meeting the needs of their children. Parents can play an active role in pastoral care within the school by:

- Taking an active interest in all aspects of the education of their children from the academic and intellectual to the social, physical, personal, moral and spiritual development of their children.
- Communicating with teachers, SNAs and school management on a regular basis about the progress and needs of their children and in particular by monitoring and recording comments in their children's school journal.
- Attending regularly at Parent / Teacher meetings.
- Supporting teachers and SNAs in meeting the needs of their children.
- Encouraging their children to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of school life so that their children develop as fully rounded individuals and enjoy their time in school.

### **The Role of the Student**

Our students naturally have a very important role in their own pastoral development. This role takes a number of different forms:

- Respecting all other members of the school community including other students, teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff.
- Cooperating with staff who seek to help address their pastoral needs.
- Engaging in all aspects of school life for a more rounded and holistic educational experience.
- Seeking out opportunities for their own development within the school.
- Taking responsibility for their learning and for their development as young individuals.
- Acknowledging the rights of all other students to learn in a positive climate which value and nurtures learning and acting on this by behaving responsibly.
- Communicating any needs that they may have to the appropriate member of staff.
- Supporting other students who may have particular needs.
- Reporting any behaviours that are damaging to themselves or other students including bullying or other concerns about the health of fellow students.

## **The Role of the Student Council**

The Student Council has an important role in pastoral care in the school:

- The Council proactively seeks out opportunities to develop the school for the benefit of all members of the school community thereby meeting the needs of that community.
- The Council acts as an advocate for students ensuring that the school community is responsive to the concerns and issues that impact directly on our students.
- The Council provides a support network for all students so that each student's voice can be heard.
- The Council liaises with the school management on issues that impact on our students.
- The Council models confident, positive behaviour and attitudes which empower other students to develop similarly.

## **The Role of External Agencies**

The school engages the services of our Educational Psychologist on an occasional basis. As well as his own referrals, the Educational Psychologist manages referrals from the variety of sources outlined above.

The school also facilitates visits by fully trained Care Workers from CAMHS on a regular basis to visit students with extra needs on an individual basis.

Our local Chaplain and Ministers visit the school on occasion to talk to the students and to offer them support on a variety of spiritual and social issues.

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In addition to all of the above external agencies the school will also welcome guest speakers to discuss different contemporary social issues with the students. All such guest speakers are invited subject to the permission of the Principal and are always accompanied by teachers. These speakers contribute to the social, spiritual, intellectual and moral development of the students and therefore fulfil an important pastoral function in the school community.

## **Pastoral Supports**

The Abbey Vocational School has in place a number of pastoral supports to help ensure students have a healthy and fulfilling school life. Many of these are provided for all students in the school while some are provided in response to the individual needs of students.

### **Whole School Supports**

**Tutor class:** Students have a Tutor class every second week in which students have an opportunity to raise issues which may be of concern to them. The class Tutor works closely with the students in their class and develops a strong bond with them,

**Year Head:** The Year Head links in with all stakeholders to ensure that all of the students' needs are being met.

**Guidance:** The Career Guidance Counsellors offer a wide range of services and supports to all students. All incoming students are interviewed to assess any needs they might have. Both counsellors also meet with students on an individual basis to support them in programme and subject choices, the selection of college course, career choices and to offer counselling where the need exists.

**Variety of Programmes:** The Abbey Vocational School offers a wide range of programmes to cater for all our students. We recognise the different strengths that students have and offer programme that suit all our students' needs. These include the traditional Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate level 2 programme, The Transition Year Programme, the traditional LCVP and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). This variety has positive implications for the pastoral health of our students.

**Sport:** Sport plays an essential role in the school and is integral to a holistic and fulfilling educational experience for our students. All students receive two classes of PE each week. The PE teachers offer a wide range of sporting experiences to cater for all abilities, interests and aptitudes. We are an ACTIVE school.

**SPHE:** All students in The Abbey Vocational School receive a class of SPHE each week. This subject directly addresses the pastoral needs of students through modules such as personal development, RSE and Staying Healthy. A new component of the course that has been introduced for 1<sup>st</sup> Years is the WHO-recognised **Friends for Life Programme** which seeks to build resilience in young people and which equips them with the social skills needs to build healthy relationships.

**CSPE:** Again, Civic, Social & Political Education is a subject which helps to develop many different dimensions of a person and prepares them for active and responsible citizenship in society. It addresses issues such as rights and responsibilities as well as human dignity and community spirit – all values that are in keeping with the pastoral development of the students.

**Induction:** The school operates an Induction Programme for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> Years to ease the transition into The Abbey Vocational School. This involves a two day bonding and orientation session at Easter. There is also an information evening for Parents.

**Anti-bullying policy, procedures & charter:** The school has developed an Anti-bullying and set of procedures which fully comply with the National Procedures published in September 2013. These procedures adopt a restorative and pastoral approach to dealing with bullying. Each class group signs an anti-bullying charter as part of their SPHE class.

**Extra-curricular & Co-curricular activities:** The Abbey Vocational School offers all students the opportunity to engage in a wide range of activities that will allow them to develop in many different ways.

**Health Promoting Schools Programme:** Our school is part of the Health Promoting Schools programme and our staff proactively seek opportunities to promote both the physical and mental health of our students where possible.

**Active School :** We are one of four pilot schools for the new Active School flag

**Amber Flag For Menal Health :** We have been awarded this flag for our continued work in promoting positive mental health

**Ambassador flag for cycle agains suicide:** We have been awarded this for our continued work in promoting positive mental health

**Wellbeing programme, policy, culture and relationships:** We have a very comprehensive policy in place for all of our ongoing work on wellbeing in the school

**Student Council:** Our school recognises that students should have a say in how the school is run. We have a vibrant Student Council who meet regularly to discuss ways of developing the school for the students and who act as advocates for the student body.

**Annual Prize-giving Awards:** The Abbey Vocational School recognises the achievements of our students in a number of way s and also acknowledges the importance of this for the pastoral development of the students. Our Prize-giving includes awards for attendance, sporting achievement....

**Other Pastoral Provision:** The school also supports our students through a number of other initiatives

1. Mentoring programmes
2. Big /Brother Big sister programmes
3. Behaviour for learning programme
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## **Targeted Interventions**

In addition to all of the above supports which are made available to all students our school also puts in place more specific measures to support students who may have extra pastoral needs.

**Student Support Team:** The school has a Student support team that meets each week to review the needs and draw up strategies to support individual students who may be struggling in the school.

**ASD:** The school has an ASD unit and this supports students with ASD in all aspects of their school life including both academic and pastoral.

**SNA's:** The SEN Coordinator assigns our SNAs to support specific students identified as having specific needs.

**Donegal ETB Education Psychologist:** The school makes use of the services of Mr Martin Gallen, Educational Psychologist to provide extra support for some students who have been identified as struggling with specific aspects of school life.

**CAMHS:** Counsellors from CAMHS will on occasion visit the school to provide extra supports to students who have extra pastoral needs.

**Other external agencies:** Other agencies such as NEPS, Jigsaw and Foróige will visit the school to offer support to individual students as needed.

## **Policy Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. We recognise the need for all stakeholders to play a part in reviewing, contributing to and developing pastoral care in our school. This review and evaluation will be led by the Student Support Team.

The review process will include consultation with:

- School Staff
- Students
- Board of Management
- Parents
- External agencies where appropriate

The review mechanism may take the form of surveys on the perception of the relevant stakeholders on how best to promote student wellbeing. Focus groups may also be used to inform future pastoral care planning in the school.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

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Chairperson

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Secretary to the Board