



# St. Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School

## Pastoral Care Policy

*'Learning That Lights The Way.'*

<b>Ratified by Governors</b>	February 2024
<b>Date for Review</b>	March 2026
<b>Signed – Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Clare Mc Williams</b>
<b>Signed - Principal</b>	<b>Gerard Barrett</b>

## **Vision Statement**

*St Mary's Star of the Sea is a nurturing Catholic School, where every child is known, loved, valued and inspired to achieve their full potential. Guided by our values, we provide an inclusive environment where every talent is celebrated, ensuring all pupils flourish; academically, socially and spiritually.*

*And is underpinned by developing the values of Love, Respect, Resilience, Kindness, Friendship.*

## **Rationale**

Pastoral Care in St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School is a priority. It is acknowledged as playing a crucial role in the development of the ethos of the school. This ethos is based on Christian values with an emphasis on the intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual development of each pupil.

The Pastoral Care Policy supports the school in promoting a caring, supportive environment in which staff and pupils can work in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Pastoral Care in St Mary's Star of the Sea is based on the principles of good relationships and mutual respect. The staff are acutely aware of the challenges and influences that children may encounter in their daily lives i.e. varied models of the family units, the very real challenges in terms of child abuse, parental difficulties in raising children and the everchanging messages and influences from society towards issues such as social media, technology, sex, drugs and leisure in relation to health, violence etc.

At St Mary's Star of the Sea, we recognise that central to the success of our pastoral care provision is the involvement of parents and outside agencies within the community. We strive to work in partnership with them to achieve our aims.

## **Supporting Policies**

Whilst all policies and procedures within St Mary's Star of the Sea take cognisance of the pastoral care of pupils and staff, some support it in very specific areas. Cross referencing the following policies is essential in the delivery of the Pastoral Care Policy:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Intimate Care Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Recruitment, Selection and Vetting of Staff and Volunteers

- Relationships and Sexuality Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Use of Restrictive Practices

### **Supporting Components/Practices**

Regular school practices to support pupils' wellbeing and holistic development include:

- Safeguarding/PDMU Curriculum
- RSE "Flourish" (Diocese of Down and Connor)
- RSE "What's Inside" (Delivered by Love For Life)
- Circle Time Programme
- School Counselling Service
- School Assemblies – academic/non-academic issues
- Golden Time
- Road Safety Programme
- Fire Service
- Medical Professionals Visit
- Dental talks
- Healthy Eating School
- Class/school reward systems - Dojo Points/PATHS.
- Pupil of the Day
- Caught Being Good certificate
- Values of the Month
- Principal's Certificate
- Pupil of the Month
- Anti-bullying week.
- School Council
- Extra-curricular activities e.g. After School Activities/Extended Schools' Activities, choir, Sports Day, School Productions etc.
- Bereavement Support
- CAMHS
- NSPCC support e.g. Speak Out, Stay Safe
- PANTS programme.
- PSNI
- Translink
- RISE
- Spaces to Be
- Autism NI

The Board of Governors and the Principal take overall responsibility for the maintenance of the school environment and the provision of safe accommodation.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Governors holds overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the Pastoral Care Policy. The Principal, Vice Principal and DDT with our Child Protection and Safeguarding governor, make up the Pastoral Care Team who are responsible for ensuring that Pastoral Care and behavioural management is forefront in the School Development Plan and they monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

The Principal is responsible for leading the Pastoral Care team as well as informing and liaising with other relevant policy co-ordinators, outside agencies and providing resources.

All staff will contribute by establishing a class charter, helping children to make good choices and informed decisions in all aspects of school life as well as remaining sensitive to the beliefs of others. Staff will build up pupils' self-esteem and confidence; encourage them to be assertive and to resist peer pressure. All staff will treat children with the highest levels of care, courtesy and respect.

### **Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors play a very active role in the management of the school and the pastoral care of all of the children is at the centre of all their decisions. The Principal's documentation at each meeting informs governors of Pastoral or Child Protection issues.

The Board of Governors of St Mary's Star of the Sea sees its role with regard to Pastoral care as follows:

- To ensure it is effectively meeting its statutory obligations
- To ensure that the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff in St Mary's Star of the Sea is safeguarded and promoted
- To ensure that roles, responsibilities, procedures and practices of the school are clear to all and are implemented systematically and consistently
- To ensure through effective monitoring and evaluation that further developments and training issues are addressed

### **Teaching and Learning**

St Mary's Star of the Sea aims to foster positive attitudes to learning, develop pupils' confidence, self-esteem and motivation by giving attention to their emotional, social and physical well-being within the teaching and learning context of the curriculum. We believe that the provision of quality education for each child is integral to our pastoral provision and improved pupil achievement affirms the positive outworking of our pastoral policy.

## **Staff Development and Training**

Pastoral care remains a permanent feature of our School Development Plan and subsequently staff development and training are considered essential to support this. Training will be provided through:

- School based courses/ dissemination of good practice
- External courses organised by the Education Authority.
- Other outside agencies where necessary e.g. School Nurse, EWO, Educational Psychologist etc.
- Visits to other schools/ cluster meetings

## **Role of the Class Teacher**

- Having a clear understanding of the vision of the school in respect of its children, it's community and its point of development
- Contributing to the development of policies which establish principles for action throughout the school
- Promoting a caring environment where children's learning is developed within the context of their individual needs and abilities
- Availing of opportunities for professional development
- Establishing appropriate structures of time and support for those in need
- Being aware of the children's individual "backgrounds" and experiences and individual "needs and aspirations"
- Fostering relationships where children feel happy and secure and find staff approachable at all times
- Collaborating with the SENCO/LSC or Pastoral leaders for support when necessary

## **Encouraging and Motivating Pupils at Class Level**

Each class teacher is responsible for knowing the children they teach and for delivering the curriculum. Teachers will provide a listening ear and provide reassurance. It is the classroom teacher who will create a climate in which the children feel safe and secure and the teacher will encourage pupil motivation and commitment.

It is our hope that the personal and social development of pupils will grow from the close relationship between the teacher and the pupils, e.g. recognising personal achievement. Through daily classroom practice as well as the use of the class charter, the self-esteem of children will be developed, positive attitudes will be promoted and the teacher will raise pupils' social awareness.

There will be an opportunity to explore the personal aspirations of each pupil as well as those of others. The class teacher will endeavour to provide time for the children to reflect on what they have learned and provide opportunities for children to evaluate their own learning so that children will appreciate their own development and adopt a positive attitude to learning. Teachers and children will discuss and develop a class charter. and together with PATHs Strategies and playground and dinner hall rules they will seek to develop in an environment in which all children feel safe and happy at school.

### **Inclusivity**

St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School welcomes all pupils and supports the fundamental principle that every pupil is entitled to be educated, and that individual needs are identified or supported. In order to ensure pupils feel part of the school community at St Mary's Star of the Sea we seek to identify and support their individual needs in a caring and sensitive way.

### **Liaison with Parents**

We see ourselves as partners with parents in the education of pupils. Mutual support and co-operation are essential elements in achieving our objectives. On-going activities to ensure communication and parental involvement include:

- School website
- Seesaw
- Annual parent/teacher meetings
- Prospectus
- Open Afternoon for new intake Stay and Play
- Facebook
- Annual Pupil Reports
- Annual Reviews and SEN meetings
- School Policies
- School Calendar
- Induction Morning/Days
- Verbal Communication e.g. Telephone Calls/Messages/Notes
- Parent Volunteers (Trips etc.)
- Contact through external agencies including Education Welfare Officer (EWO), School Nurse, Educational Psychologist etc.
- School Mass, Celebrating the Sacraments and Class Assemblies
- Musical Shows
- Questionnaires regarding school life which contribute to school policies e.g. Anti-Bullying
- Parent Workshops Pyjama Parties.
- Board of Governors

## **Liaison with External Agencies**

The staff of St Mary's Star of the Sea is committed to having good working relationships with relevant external support agencies to enhance, protect and support individual pupils' and teachers' social and emotional welfare. The following agencies work in partnership with us:

- School Psychology Service
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Services (CPSS)
- Special Needs/Behavioural Support Team
- SPS (SSST)
- Autism Support Advisory Services
- RISE Team
- Educational Welfare Officer
- School Nurse
- NSPCC
- Barnardo's
- PSNI
- Translink
- St Mary's University
- Stranmillis University
- Ulster University
- Queens University
- De La Salle Retreat House
- Down and Connor Diocesan Office
- Love for Life
- LIT Team

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

On-going monitoring is an integral part of our policy. The Principal will have overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the pastoral care programme alongside the pastoral care team. Support will be given to those teachers who require assistance in carrying out any aspect of the pastoral role.

### **Evaluation**

At St Mary's Star of the Sea we believe that our Pastoral Care Programme will only be effective if we have it regularly evaluated by the whole school community pupils, staff, parents and governors. All aspects of the policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis through staff feedback, questionnaires, informal interviews etc.

Whilst the Principal has overall responsibility for evaluation, self-evaluation of pastoral care is integral to the role of the key stage leaders and indeed it is a feature of every teacher's role.

On a whole school level, effective teachers use listening skills in their everyday classroom teaching, and in their pastoral relationships with their class. Classroom Assistants also play an important role in the welfare of our pupils. However, sometimes we can become overwhelmed by some of our thoughts and feelings, finding it difficult to think clearly, and to help cope with this we provide a counselling service. Counselling is a way of helping young people through a process of talking, listening and empowerment. Young people are provided with a safe place to express their feelings and thoughts about what they perceive to be an issue in their life. Counselling can help young people to understand themselves and their situation better. It can give them new ways of coping with issues that cause them upset therefore increasing their capacity for learning. Successful counselling is based on trust, self-motivation and commitment.

### **Referrals**

Counselling can only take place on a voluntary basis. After the first meeting, further counselling can only take place with the pupil's agreement. Referrals to the counsellor may be made by a member of staff (via KS Leaders to the Vice Principal). Parent(s) will also be required to be part of the process if they refer their child to counselling.

### ***Appendix 2***

#### **Bereavement**

No matter how prepared we think we are death is often traumatic and unexpected. A considered, planned and organised response to an event is often more effective than acting on impulse.

#### **Responsibilities**

When news of a death reaches the school, Principal and Pastoral Team can meet to make decisions on how best to progress and to ensure appropriate safeguarding procedures. The Principal will contact the next of kin of the child/member of staff to discuss how the school can best deal with the child's/member of staff's needs.

#### **Death of Child or a Member of Staff**

The sudden death of a pupil or member of staff challenges the very heart of the school community, its identity and its coping mechanisms. By talking to the deceased's family and being sensitive to their wishes, the Team will plan the most appropriate response to the death and the way forward for all those affected. It is important to be open and honest and to follow procedures, communicating with and reassuring all members of the school community. Sharing grief in a supportive environment can facilitate the grieving process. However, for pupils or staff particularly affected, it may be necessary to contact appropriate outside agencies.

## **Supporting a Pupil Dealing with the Bereavement of a Family Member**

Children and young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. Therefore, the circumstances of the death and the age and developmental stage of the pupil will determine the approach used by teachers. The Pastoral Team will advise and support staff.

## **Return to School**

In this phase of the process, the work of the team will be re-active, sympathetic and supportive to meet the needs, feelings and emotions of both staff and pupils. In most cases it is advisable, with the agreement of the bereaved or family of the bereaved, that everyone is aware of the situation before the pupil returns. Teachers will endeavour to foster a compassionate yet disciplined environment. School, with its routines and rituals, often provides a respite at this traumatic time although a phased return may be appropriate. Anniversaries or birthdays often spark a revival of feelings of bereavement and it is important to be aware of such dates and to react with sensitivity and respect.

## **Terminally Ill Pupils/Parent/Staff**

The wishes of the person and their next of kin must always be respected. Honesty about death and dying is the best line of approach.

## **Bereavement Guidance & Trauma Support**

The DENI document - A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools provides guidance for schools in such circumstances (see Appendices 6-18) and should be referred to. We have personalised this to our own needs.

Barnardo's [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

Childhood Bereavement Network [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Cancer Focus NI, support for children of terminally ill parents

Cruse Bereavement Care [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Lifeline 24hr support helpline 0808 808 8000

Samaritans [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) 116 123