

## **PASTORAL CARE & FORM SYSTEM**

The College Statement of Purpose is central to the development and implementation of Pastoral Care policy.

### **College Statement of Purpose**

Methodist College Belfast seeks to educate its pupils to take their place as young adults in society by providing a safe learning environment in which individual knowledge, capabilities, attitudes and standards of behaviour can be developed and mutual tolerance fostered to the full. As a Christian foundation its ethos reflects fundamental Christian values of duty to God and concern for others.

### **Rationale**

The Pastoral Care system in the College plays a central role in reinforcing the ethos and general aims of the school. It recognises the importance of values and of caring attitudes and it aims to contribute to an atmosphere in which all pupils are confident that they are cared for, valued and respected, and where they can receive the guidance and support necessary to reach their full potential.

Pastoral Care is an integral part of school life. All members of staff have a responsibility for pastoral care and can demonstrate it in their day to day contact and relationships with pupils. The important contribution of effective teaching to pastoral care is fully appreciated, while good relationships between teachers and pupils lie at the heart of effective learning. Members of staff have a crucial role to play in nurturing pupils' self-esteem and in promoting self-discipline. They approach the maintenance of discipline in a positive way and, whenever possible, they take the opportunity to encourage, praise and reward.

High standards of behaviour among all pupils will be most effectively achieved by fostering the development of self-control and self-respect and by advocating respect for other persons and for property.

The Pastoral Care system seeks to promote the well-being of all pupils in the College, including their relationships with one another. To assist this a Personal Development programme is in place and this programme is reviewed and developed regularly.

The College appreciates the importance of parental support and it is vital that parents and staff work together in promoting the welfare and development of pupils on both an individual and a whole school basis. Systems are in place to ensure that parents are kept fully informed and these systems are under regular review. Staff and governors are always ready to listen to parents and welcome the opportunity to respond to suggestions and comments.

### **Aims of Pastoral Care**

- To provide an environment in which pupils at all stages of their school life may be educated as fully as possible in the broadest sense and to encourage the pursuit of excellence in all their activities.
- To produce an atmosphere in which all pupils are confident that they are well known, safe, valued, and respected.

- To promote the spiritual, moral and emotional development of pupils alongside their academic, physical and practical skills.
- To enable pupils to become progressively responsible for their own personal and social development.
- To promote the development of self-esteem, self-motivation, self-discipline, independence of thought and action, tolerance, loyalty, concern for others and a respect for property and possessions.
- To afford pupils the opportunity to take on responsibility, to play a positive role in society, and to recognise and respect legitimate authority.
- To ensure that suitable, adequate and ongoing support is provided for pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
- To recognise and value the diversity of the school community and to foster a spirit of mutual tolerance.
- To contribute towards the maintenance of good behaviour and an orderly atmosphere in the College which is essential for effective teaching and learning.
- To inculcate a spirit of collegiality in which all will identify with the College community and protect its reputation and good name.
- To develop and maintain relationships with a range of external bodies such as the Education Welfare service, health promoting organisations and Social Services.
- To comply with all legal and statutory requirements including those which refer to the health, safety, and treatment of pupils.
- To liaise effectively with parents/guardians through good, regular communication and to work together in providing suitable support as pupils progress through the school.

### **Responsibility for the Provision of Pastoral Care**

While the Principal and Governors have the overall responsibility for Pastoral Care provision in the College, the Head of Pastoral Care is the member of staff entrusted with overseeing and developing the Pastoral Care system. He/she consults regularly with the Principal and the Vice Principal (Pastoral) and also meets with the Heads of Section and Deputy Head of Forms.

The Sister in the Sanatorium is available throughout the school day to provide medical help for pupils who are taken ill or who are involved in an accident. She can also give information on general health matters and offer support to pupils facing difficulties. The Head of Pastoral Care liaises with the Sister on a regular basis.

There is a pastoral element associated with every school activity, both inside and outside the classroom, and Pastoral Care may be provided for an individual pupil by a number of members of staff working together. The Form System is, however, the main structure used to ensure that each pastoral concern is noted and addressed. In each Form there is a Head of Form, a Deputy Head of Form, a Form Tutor and a number of Tutors.

Each Form team monitors the progress and development of pupils and ensures that each pupil receives appropriate encouragement and support. If a pupil is failing to achieve his/her academic potential, various strategies are used to deal with the problem. Similarly the members of the Form team will provide appropriate support if a pupil is encountering non-academic difficulties. The Head of Form has a responsibility to ensure that the system is operating satisfactorily for his/her Form and should meet regularly with the appropriate Head of Section to discuss any concerns.

Within each Form team, Pastoral Care is the primary responsibility of the Deputy Head of Form. The Deputy Head of Form works under the guidance of the relevant Deputy Head of Pastoral Care and should be aware of all the pastoral matters relevant to his/her Form. He/she depends on the Head of Form and Tutors passing on their concerns but information will also come from other sources. It would be neither desirable nor practical for the Deputy Head of Form to deal with each pastoral concern personally but he/she should be satisfied that each is being dealt with appropriately. This will inevitably mean working closely with the Form staff and deputy Head of Pastoral Care and, when appropriate, with other members of staff who can assist in the resolution of a problem or who need to know that a problem exists. The Deputy Head of Form, under the direction of the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care, should also ensure that parents are being consulted and informed. Each Deputy Head of Form meets the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care on a forthrightly basis, both to advise him/her of pastoral concerns in the Form and to discuss the strategies being used to deal with them. It may be necessary, on occasions, for a Deputy Head of Form to consult the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care more frequently than this depending on the nature of a particular problem.

All members of staff have a responsibility for Pastoral Care and can demonstrate it in their day to day contact and relationships with pupils. If approached by a pupil about a pastoral matter, members of staff should listen to the pupil and either give advice if they feel confident to do so or, with the agreement of the pupil, pass the matter to another member of staff. It is important to recognise the implications of listening to a pupil in such a situation. Professional judgment must be used in each case but it is good practice never to allow a situation to develop where the pupil expects complete confidentiality. When necessary, members of staff should explain that they cannot be placed in such a position and that they must reserve the right to talk to the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) or the Head of Pastoral Care if they need advice.

If members of staff become concerned about the pastoral welfare of a particular pupil, they should consult with the Deputy Head of Form responsible for that pupil. In some instances the member of staff may contact the Head of Form in the first instance but in such cases it is important that the Deputy Head of Form is also informed. There may also be occasions when, due to the urgency or delicacy of a situation, it may be necessary to contact the Head of Pastoral Care directly.

Members of staff should appreciate that while every effort will be made to keep them informed of pastoral information concerning pupils for whom they have a direct responsibility, there will be occasions, when due to the confidential nature of pastoral matters it will not always be possible to provide full information.

The College encourages parental involvement in pastoral matters. Initially, parents will often contact the Tutor if they have a concern which is not directly related to academic achievement.

If the concern is of a pastoral nature, the Tutor will bring it to the attention of the Deputy Head of Form. There may be occasions, however, when parents prefer to speak to another member of staff. This may arise, for example, in the case of a particularly delicate matter when the parent may contact the Principal, Vice-Principal (Pastoral) or Head of Pastoral Care directly.

The Vice-Principal (Pastoral), the Head of Pastoral Care and the Heads of Section will monitor and review the operation of the Form system and the provision of Pastoral Care. It is their particular responsibility to ensure that:

- the Form System identifies the pastoral care needs of individual pupils and provides a high level of pastoral care for pupils.
- whole school and general pastoral care needs are identified and responded to.
- the extra-curricular Personal Development programme is meeting the needs of pupils and is regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- members of staff have sufficient expertise to deal with the pastoral concerns they encounter.
- effective and sympathetic pastoral contacts with parents are maintained.

## Familyworks

A counsellor visits Methody each week to support the emotional health of our pupils. One to one counselling is provided for pupils after consultation with the Head of Pastoral Care. The counsellor understands the dynamics and ethos within the College and the issues young people face. All the counsellors deliver the service according to the 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice' of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Note:

1. Pupils can refer themselves to the counsellor either through a member of staff, who will bring the request to the Head of Pastoral Care, or via the Post Box in H Block.
2. Staff may also refer pupils via the Head of Pastoral Care. If you are unsure whether to refer a pupil for counselling you should discuss your concerns with any member of the Pastoral team in order to clarify the most appropriate way forward.

Factors for staff to be aware of when considering referring a pupil to the Head of Pastoral Care:

- Standard of work dropping dramatically.
- Becoming subdued or over-excited; marked mood swings, behaviour that is 'out of character'.
- School refusal.
- Those who engage in bullying behavior and those who experience bullying behaviour.
- Have difficulties due to family breakdown.
- Peer group difficulties/relationships.
- Have been bereaved or suffered loss or separation.
- Low self-esteem.
- Misuse of alcohol and drugs.

Some key questions to ask are:

- How extreme is the behaviour or attitude?
- How long or persistent is it? How sudden is the change?
- How is the behaviour affecting other members of the school community?

Familyworks is a voluntary and confidential service and is a means of support, not a disciplinary measure. It is made clear that it is an opportunity to talk about problems and worries with a view to resolving or managing them more easily. Staff help them to understand what is involved and that this is a normal and ordinary approach to supporting young people with difficulties. The care taken at this stage can make a big difference to whether or not the pupil attends the first appointment and how he/she approaches it. In discussions with a pupil it is helpful to use the information sheet on Familyworks.

The first session is an opportunity for them to make a decision as to whether to continue or not.

## TUTOR GROUPS

All members of staff have a pastoral function. Tutors are in a unique position to establish a relationship with the pupils in their Group which is quite different from that of the subject teacher: it is their rôle to monitor the general welfare and demeanour of the pupils, to show interest in the activities, achievements and progress of individual pupils, to offer advice and encouragement, to reinforce a positive sense of community within the school and to maintain high standards of behaviour. Tutors thus contribute not only to the smooth running of the College through the efficient execution of tasks, but also to the caring and supportive ethos of the College.

Tutors have a key role in the pastoral system. Their role is to:

- Establish a rapport and get to know their pupils as individuals;
- Encourage the engagement of their pupils with the values and aims of the College;
- Provide help to resolve the day to day issues/problems of the pupils;
- Offer pastoral guidance/ support to the pupils;
- Assisting with pupils' academic achievements by gaining an overview of their academic performance and doing follow-up on issues, reports etc;
- Act as the first point of contact for parents' general queries/concerns;
- Improve/reinforce standards of punctuality, attendance, behaviour, uniform;
- Create sense of identity within the Tutor Group;
- Celebrate the successes of the pupils;
- Work as part of the Form team in charity events, end-of term/year activities, Form Assemblies.

It is important for Tutors to:

- Adopt an active, positive approach to Tutor Group time;
- Have high aspirations for the pupils. (Be determined that they will be the best that they can be.);
- Treat them as individuals (not defined by academic ability, behaviour, life-style);
- Give time to each pupil;
- Be an advocate for the pupils whenever possible;
- Use even routine/administrative tasks as opportunities;
- Aim to make a real difference to pupils' time in MCB.

The Tutor meets the Tutor Group each morning from 8.45 - 8.55 am in the room allocated. He/she should insist on a punctual and orderly gathering of the Group and register the pupils' presence or absence at 8.45 am. The Group should remain in the room for the full time to allow other members of staff to contact pupils, if necessary, unless attending Assembly when the pupils may be released from 8.50 am onwards. Pupils should sit behind desks and behave as in a normal class and should not be given permission to leave the room temporarily. Regularly, each week, the Tutor Group will meet for a longer period of time, from 8.45 - 9.10 am, to allow time to deal with pastoral issues, and to carry out particular duties and administrative tasks.

## **INFORMATION**

The Tutors are to a large extent the "eyes and ears" of the Head of Form and the Pastoral Care team and should keep them as fully informed as possible. Lesson Monitor should be used to record information about attendance and lateness patterns. Notes should be kept of interviews with pupils, contacts with parents and other concerns. Where specific information is requested, this should be supplied as promptly and as comprehensively as possible.

Details, which help keep the school informed, whether of events at home or of outside achievements, should be given to the Deputy Head of Form.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Tutors will conduct interviews with each member of the Tutor Group, at times of the year and in a format determined by the Head of Form. These interviews will give the Tutor the opportunity to discuss the pupils' general progress, the organisation of their work and, where appropriate, of their revision and to offer guidance, encouragement and praise. They give pupils the opportunity to raise concerns of a general nature with a member of staff whom they know well, in an informal setting.