

# Pastoral Care in Good Counsel College

## **Rationale:**

Informed by the Augustinian core values of Unity, Truth and Love, the provision of pastoral care in Good Counsel College is envisaged as permeating all activities and interactions taking place in the school community. It is viewed, not as something separate to, but as a fundamental part of all our relationships in the school community.

Pastoral care is not the preserve of particular individuals but is understood to be something all members of staff engage in and take responsibility for. There are specific roles and responsibilities undertaken in ensuring that the needs of all students are adequately met and that the dissemination of relevant information takes place where appropriate.

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of pastoral care in Good Counsel College is

- To support the emotional, social, physical and moral wellbeing of students
- To compliment and support teaching and learning
- To provide a caring response for those enduring difficulties
- To support students in decision making
- To support students in times of change in their lives

The pastoral care policy provides a framework which allows for the wellbeing of students to be catered for, concerns to be identified and support to be provided. It draws on the resources of management, teachers, ancillary staff, students, parents and outside agencies. It understands that the fundamental principles of equality, respect and confidentiality where appropriate are observed.

The pastoral care policy of Good Counsel College aims to be proactive through programmes such as R.S.E., timetabled Guidance and Counselling, class tutor system and initiatives such as Unitas peer mentoring while also providing a framework for responding to care issues which arise.

## **Structures:**

There will be a Pastoral Care 'Team' with specific responsibility for co-ordinating the care provision in the school by reviewing cases of concern, advising on appropriate responses and delegating follow up interventions.

This team, comprising the Guidance Counsellor, Chaplains, S.E.N. co-ordinators, Child Protection liaison personnel, Principal and Deputy Principal, will meet weekly with minutes of meetings recorded.

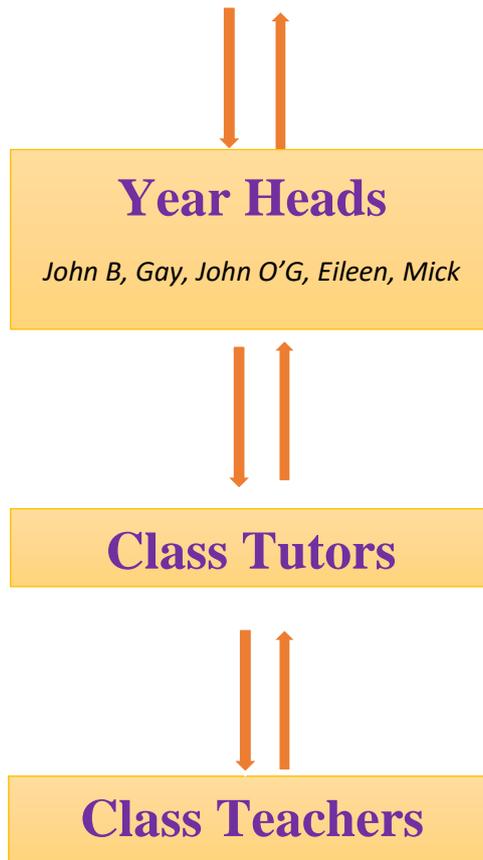


*Pastoral Care in Good Counsel College*

**Communication:**

Communication of appropriate information is facilitated by the principal and deputy principal reporting to and from year heads’ meetings which also take place weekly. Year heads in turn liaise with class tutors and class teachers so that channels of communication are always open. Pastoral care ‘referral forms’ are available in the staff room for members of staff to bring to the attention of the care team any issue which may be of concern. These forms are returned to the school’s counsellor and are brought to the care team’s attention at the next meeting. Parents are made aware of the pastoral care provision in the school and are encouraged to contact any member of the care team or general teaching staff if they have concerns which the school may be able to help with.

**Care Team**  
*Fr Michael, Jane, Helen, Pauline,  
 Brigid, Sheila, Mark, Aidan*



It is intended that by ensuring open and regular communication between all staff members that issues are identified early, dealt with promptly and responded to appropriately.

## **Roles**

### *Class Teacher*

The class teacher will have regular contact with students on a daily basis and is well placed to identify issues of concern. The teacher may make a referral to the Care Team, using the Referral Form, or may bring the matter to the attention of the class tutor initially.

### *Class Tutor*

Each class group has a class tutor, a teacher who voluntarily commits to taking a particular interest in the students in this group. The class tutor will typically monitor academic progress, behavioural issues and also take note of any other issues of concern observed or brought to his/her attention by another member of the community. The class tutor may refer on to the Care Team and/or bring matters to the attention of the Year Head. The class tutor may also make contact with parents when appropriate.

### *Year Head*

Each year group is assigned a year head who will typically remain as Year Head with this cohort of students as they move through the school, thus facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the students in the group. The Year Head will monitor academic progress, deal with behavioural issues which have been referred and take a particular interest in the overall wellbeing of the students. He/she will communicate regularly with class tutors and may contact parents and/or make appointments to meet them.

Year Heads will also meet with the Principal and Deputy Principal each week where relevant information from Care Team meetings will be disseminated.

### *Guidance Counsellor*

The Guidance Counsellor meets with all students throughout the year advising on vocational, educational and personal development. She is also available to meet students and/or their parents by appointment to offer advice, support, counselling and is a central member of the Care Team. Referrals of student concerns from teachers and tutors are made to the Guidance Counsellor who will bring them to the attention of the Care Team. The Guidance Counsellor will also offer advice in relation to referral to outside agencies such as G.P., C.A.M.H.S. and N.E.P.S..

The Guidance Counsellor also presents to parents at information evenings, advising on wellbeing, mental health, careers, subject choices, etc..

*(See also Guidance Plan in School Policies on school website)*

### *Special Needs Co-ordinators*

The Special Needs Co-ordinators take a particular interest in those students who have assessed needs or who it is felt may be in need of learning support. They work with class teachers to communicate and implement strategies and supports while also liaising with the N.E.P.S. psychologist and S.E.N.O. where necessary to access resources. The Special Needs Co-ordinators attend Care Team meetings and advise on best provision for particular students' needs.

### *Chaplains*

The school Chaplains foster the spiritual development of students within the Christian community of Good Counsel College, respecting other faiths and values. The Chaplains are part of the Care Team and are available to meet with students as caring listeners who may offer advice and support. The Chaplains also offer support to parents and families, particularly in times of bereavement and ill health and take particular care of students when such circumstances surround them. *(see Appendix 1)*

### *Others:*

Other pastoral supports in Good Counsel College include the peer mentoring programme, *Unitas* (see *Appendix 1*), where 6<sup>th</sup> year students receive training in helping incoming 1<sup>st</sup> years settle in to and adjust to life in secondary school.

The Rainbows programme is also available to students coping with bereavement and separation. This is co-ordinated by the chaplain who is supported by teachers and parents trained as facilitators.

Links are also forged with other agencies in the community as an extension of the Pastoral Care programme. Students are encouraged to get involved in initiatives involving the elderly, the sick and various charities. Speakers are invited into the school to address issues such as substance misuse, mental health, relationships and other topics of concern to adolescents and their parents thereby raising awareness.

## **Appendix 1**

### **The Role of the Chaplain in Good Counsel College**

*‘The school Chaplain, as a faith presence, committed to the values of Christ, and on behalf of the Church and school communities, accompanies each person on the journey through life’.*

In Good Counsel College the Chaplain provides a pastoral care service for all students, staff, past pupils and families. The Chaplain accompanies members of the school community on their journey through life. He/she also responds to the spiritual and religious needs of the students and the whole school community respecting the denominational, religious and personal convictions of all.

#### **Pastoral Care**

The Chaplain is here to show the individual concern and love that God has for everybody. The chaplain shows care for students struggling with a wide range of obstacles, including: self-harm, family problems, confusing relationships, friendship issues, peer pressure, self-esteem issues, bullying, bereavement and separation, stress and anxiety. The Chaplain is also present to share in their joyful experiences.

#### **Pastoral Counselling**

The chaplain has the privilege of walking part of life's journey with each student. Within a faith context, the Chaplain is present to students, staff and parents/guardians when they need to share their worries, concerns and troubles with someone in confidence.

The School Chaplain is a safe person for young people to connect with at school, providing a listening ear, caring presence, and message of hope. This means that the Chaplain is always available to each student and is willing to just sit and listen to what is going on for them at that point in their lives. Where necessary the Chaplain will liaise with parents and recognise when a student needs to be referred on to another professional. It is important to state here that the Chaplain is not a professional counsellor. While some Chaplains may have professional qualifications in counselling, such ‘professional’ counselling is not part of the Chaplaincy role.

In Good Counsel College the Chaplain is available to students throughout the school week, both in classroom settings and at the Chaplain's office. Students can use the open door policy of the Chaplain to drop in or make an appointment for a more suitable time. In addition to dropping into the Chaplain's room themselves, a student visit may arise when they are referred by teachers, or when a member of staff or parent/guardian is concerned about a particular student.

### **Confidentiality**

In personal meetings with the Chaplain the confidentiality rule is followed in accordance with child protection guidelines, i.e. the Principal and or parents/guardians are informed if it is felt that the student is in danger, a danger to him/herself or to others. The same applies if it becomes known that another person is in danger.

### **Care Team**

Issues concerning the health and welfare of the students are dealt with by the Care Team, both individually and through their regular meetings. The Chaplain is a member of the Pastoral Care Team where he/she can liaise with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor & SEN Coordinator's.

In consultation with families, in-school and /or externally sourced supports are put in place for students, where appropriate.

### **Spiritual Guidance**

The Chaplain animates the spiritual life of our Augustinian school community and offers opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with God.

The Chaplain cares for the young people's spiritual needs also. While many young people have difficulty with organised religion, they recognise their need for God. They have spirituality. The chaplain is in the privileged position to guide students and to explore various prayer methods which bring peace and fulfilment. Working alongside the Religion Department, the Chaplain ensures the school community has time to celebrate its identity as an Augustinian School in religious worship.

### **Retreats**

The Chaplain along with the Religion Education Department is involved in the organisation of retreats for fifth year groups. The retreat provides the students with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives, the issues they may face every day and where God fits in to it.

### **Liturgy and Sacraments**

The Chaplain facilitates the celebration of Weekly school Masses, Harvests Thanksgiving Mass, Advent & Lenten Reconciliation Services, Sixth Year Graduation Ceremony, Meditation and Prayer Services in accordance with the liturgical year etc.

The Chaplain highlights the liturgical seasons. The Chaplain along with the Religious Education teachers provides each student with opportunities to learn new ways of talking to God. Prayer experiences are offered to help develop a relationship with God.

### **Religious Education**

Typically, the Chaplain teaches a number of hours of Religious Education every week. The Chaplain along with the other members of the Religious Education Department is involved in the subject planning for their department and all that it entails.

### **Unitas Programme**

The Unitas Programme is a training programme for our senior level students. In this programme the students are trained to become mentors for incoming students at junior level. It is a programme based on pro-respect between students and one that enables students to take responsibility for the happiness of others and for the safety and well-being of all who share a school environment.

The programme is advertised among senior students who are invited to become Unitas Leaders in Good Counsel College. All applicants are interviewed and a selection is then made. The students who are chosen to become Unitas Leaders undergo a training programme in the summer prior to their return to school the following September. This training programme covers the areas of personal development, identity, self-esteem, communication

skills, listening skills, assertiveness skills, group dynamics, group management and many other skills that are necessary for the students to develop if the programme is to be successful.

After their training the students return to the school as sixth years and each is given responsibility for a number of incoming first years. It is then the task of the Unitas Leaders to ensure the smooth transition of these young people into the school and to be able and available to assist them in any way necessary during their first few days in school. After this initial work it is then expected that the Unitas Leaders will work with the junior students, developing a relationship of trust and mutual respect. The hope for the remainder of their first year is that if the junior student should experience difficulties or anxieties of any kind that they can turn to their Unitas Leaders and find in them understanding, respect, advice and assistance. The programme has proven to be effective in promoting the happiness of students in general as well as reducing instances of bullying, isolation and early school leaving. The Chaplain oversees the running of the Unitas Programme and is available to leaders as a sounding board regarding their role, or if issues of concern arise among the first years.

### **Ferns Diocesan Lourdes Trip**

Each year two students from the school are chosen to travel to Lourdes as a youth volunteer with the Ferns Diocesan Pilgrimage. The Chaplain oversees the student's application process and the organisation of this trip.

### **Rainbows Programme**

The Rainbow Programme is facilitated in the school by the Chaplain who is a trained Rainbows facilitator. The Rainbows Programme is a group programme which supports students who have suffered a significant loss through death, separation or any painful transition. The aim of this programme is to give participants an understanding of their new family unit, to assist them in the building of self-esteem and to direct them towards a healthy acceptance of the changes that have taken place in their lives.

### **St. Vincent de Paul**

The Chaplain connects in at a local level with St. Vincent de Paul who have in the past and continue to support some of our most vulnerable students in Good Counsel College. Every effort is made on a yearly basis to run events to help fund our local St. Vincent de Paul. E.g. Christmas foods hamper. Currently we are in the process of setting up an SVP youth group in the school.

### **Professional Development**

The Chaplain is encouraged to make themselves aware of and attend professional development courses that may further enhance their role. Regular attendance at Chaplaincy cluster meetings is also strongly advised.