



TOGETHER WE LEARN, TOGETHER WE SUCCEED
— IN HARMONY —

Pastoral Care Policy

October 2024

Introduction

Definition of Pastoral Care

'Pastoral care has been defined as concerning the personal relationships which influences the ethos and tone of the whole school. It is of crucial importance in creating an atmosphere in which young people feel secure, knowing they are valued as individuals and are encouraged in their learning growth and social development in healthy and safe environment'

T. J. Shaw, Chief Inspector, Evaluating Pastoral care. DENI 1999

The ethos, or the distinctive character and atmosphere of Harmony Primary school, should reflect how the school promotes the moral, intellectual, personal and social development of its pupils. It provides the context within which children feel secure, free from emotional and physical harm, and able to discuss their interests and voice their fears and concerns, confident that they will receive a sympathetic and supportive response. It should inform and reassure the parents/carers that their children are being educated in a safe and caring atmosphere.

A climate which fosters effective learning is at the heart of the education process. Such a climate, or ethos, is best provided through focusing on the creation and maintenance of good relationships: among the staff themselves; between staff and pupils; among pupils and their peers; between parents/carers and the school; and between the school and the community it serves.

All members of staff at Harmony Primary School are aware that a positive ethos does not come about by chance; it is achieved by the Principal, the School Leadership Team and all the staff, promoting and facilitating an atmosphere of care and respect within the informal and formal life of the school community.

In its booklet "Evaluating Schools", the Inspectorate (ETI) describes a positive ethos as one in which:

- The pupils' confidence and self-esteem are promoted;
- They are encouraged to value one another; and
- They show a strong sense of belonging to the school as a community.

Where the ethos is right, the pupils take a pride in their achievements and recognise the importance of high standards in their works and behaviours.

For pupils the pastoral dimension takes place in two forms: -

- (a) 'The general focus' which requires all staff in the school to care, guide and advise pupils on personal and educational matters either formally or informally. All the staff in the school must work together to ensure that each pupil in the school feels cared for.

- (b) 'The specialised focus' ensures that one particular teacher – the class teacher in our school, has the detailed knowledge of the needs, aspirations interests and academic progress of each pupil in his/her class.

Harmony Primary School recognises that the academic and pastoral dimensions each have a distinctive but interdependent role. Care and development of the whole person is written into our school policy as a central aim. We believe that the pastoral care of our children is at the heart of teaching, helping the school reach its educational objectives.

We as a school recognise the central role of the pastoral dimension as it maintains a healthy balance between the child as a learner and person. Clearly the pastoral and academic aspects of school life have a distinctive but interdependent contribution to make. Throughout the year a variety of activities are arranged to enhance the daily on-going work of pastoral care and extend the pupils' personal experiences and social skills.

School visits, outdoor education, involvement in the community, membership of school clubs and activities, playing for a school team, singing in the school choir and being involved in social and fundraising events help all to develop a sense of responsibility and worthwhile participation. Such activities outside the classroom provide pupils with valued and worthwhile experiences in education.

When pupils have a range of opportunities to contribute to, and participate in the framework of school life, they are more likely to show self-confidence, consideration for others, interest in what they are doing and pride in themselves in their school. This policy supports the school in promoting a caring, supportive environment in which the staff and pupils can work in an atmosphere of mutual respect. As such pastoral care permeates aspects of the curriculum.

POLICY AIMS TO:

- Provide a safe, secure and caring environment in which the pupils and staff can feel supported, valued and members of the school community;
- Instil in the pupils a sense of personal worth and intellectual, moral and spiritual development;
- Encourage the pupils to have a sense of personal accountability for their own actions and learning;
- Empower pupils in building and monitoring good relationships with pupils and staff;
- Promote an appreciation of life and respect for the world in which we live;
- Help pupils to realise that Harmony Primary School is a community itself and also part of the larger community so that they develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards themselves as well as in the social relationships with others;
- Promote the school's Positive Behaviour Policy which respects the rights and responsibilities of staff, pupils and parents/carers;
- Provide pupils with the personal, social and life skills necessary for a successful, fulfilling and happy future;

- To develop effective school-home liaison in order to maintain parental support and co-operation.

SCHOOL CHARTER

Through consultation with our school community we have established a School Charter which is based on the six articles from the '**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**'.

Our School Charter is as follows:

Article 2 (without discrimination)

Every child must be treated equally no matter of race gender, nationality or religion and treated fairly whatever their ability or need.

Article 3 (best interest of the child)

The best interest of the child must be a top priority in everything we do.

Article 12 (respect the views of the child)

Every child has the right to say what they think in matters affecting them.

Article 19 (protection from all forms of violence)

Every child must be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment.

Article 24 (Health and Health Services)

Every child has the right to good health care.

Article 29 (goals of education)

Every child has the right to develop their personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own cultures, and the environment.

We believe, through this Charter, the pastoral care of our school community is more effective and beneficial to all.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

As the class teacher has the opportunity to get to know each member of his/her class very well over the course of the academic year, he/she does have a central role in the pastoral dimension.

In some instances, it may be necessary to inform the Principal/Designated Teacher of aspects of a pupil's welfare, academic, personal or otherwise which maybe causing concerns. The principal will also keep a pupil's class teacher aware of any concerns she is aware of with respect to the pupil's pastoral care.

The Designated Teacher & Principal are responsible for co-ordinating pastoral care throughout the school, this includes:

- Liaison with teachers, parents/carers and the external support agencies;
- Attending relevant training;
- Co-ordinating the provision of school-based training;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Pastoral Care Policy.

Pupils

We encourage pupils to develop:

- Independence of mind and to take responsibility for their own actions;
- Self-respect and self-discipline;
- An understanding of their own strengths and limitations, their personal qualities, values and attitudes;
- A respect for other people and their way of life;
- Tolerance and an understanding of differences;
- An understanding of the world in which we live.

All staff should:

- Promote the values of the School's Charter;
- Value each pupil as an individual;
- Provide friendly support and reassurance to build pupils' confidence;
- Make every reasonable effort to ensure the safety of pupils;
- Place an emphasis on the reinforcement of positive behaviour, while carrying out consistently and fairly the school's Positive Discipline Policy;
- Build up a working knowledge of the pupils, both as individuals and collectively;
- Encourage pupils to become increasingly responsible for their own behaviour;
- Display a positive and caring attitude to children;
- As appropriate liaise with other staff e.g. teachers, Non-Teaching staff, School Leadership Team, Designated Teacher for Child Protection and/or the Principal.

The Class teacher

The class teacher should become aware of situations early and, where appropriate, intervene positively and modify behaviour.

The class teacher should have detailed knowledge of the needs, aspirations, interests and academic progress of each pupil in the class. With this knowledge, the teacher can integrate the work of the school, parent/carer and others to support the learning and development of each pupil.

Relationships with their teachers and other pupils influence pupils' personal, social and academic development.

Consequently, the teachers should:

- Ensure that learning takes place in a happy atmosphere within the classroom;

- Encourage pupil motivation
- Employ a range of teaching strategies in response to pupils' perceived needs;
- Give pupils responsibility for some of their own learning;
- Provide pupils with appropriate tasks which challenge and stretch them;
- Through praise, recognition and displays of pupils' work, promote a sense of achievement;
- Accept responsibility for standards in behaviour in own classroom through the effective implementation of the school's Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Ensure that knowledge of particular home circumstances and other relevant information is passed on to the Designated Teacher and other relevant teachers including the teacher who inherits the class;
- As appropriate liaise with the parents/carers, Principal, Vice-Principal, SENCO, and/or the Designated Teacher for child protection;
- Ensure that attitudes, expectations and actions are influenced by knowledge of particular family situations and/or home circumstances;
- Be responsible for standards of attainment, dress, punctuality and attendance within on class.

School Leadership Team

- Members of the School Leadership Team will support staff in their efforts to achieve the aims of the Pastoral Care Policy.
- They will assist in the monitoring, evaluation and review of the effectiveness of this policy.

Parents should:

- Be involved in their child's education by support and encouragement of the child's learning at school and at home;
- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- Ensure that their child is prepared for school both physically and emotionally;
- Inform the school of any factors which may affect their child's progress and well-being;
- Support school policies in relation to pastoral care;
- Play their part in implementing agreements made with the school in respect of their child.

Governors will:

- Be kept informed about proposed changes to the pastoral care policy;
- Be invited to participate in training as appropriate;
- Monitor the implementation of the school's Pastoral Care Policy.

RANGE OF PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

Opportunities to be provided at the appropriate stages of development are included in the following:

- All curricular areas – particular reference to Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU);
- Promotion of the school charter;
- Use of Golden Time;
- Circle time;
- Use of outside agencies;
- Extra-curricular activities – E.G Sports;
- Educational visits (including residential)
- A modular or separate unit of work approach (including workshops) may also be used when appropriate;
- Informal and formal rewards; and
- School assemblies

LIAISON WITH PARENT/CARERS

As school is an extension of the home, and parents/carers are the primary educators of children, we should see parental/carer involvement as essential. Communication with, and co-operation of, parents/carers is necessary for the successful education of children socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. We seek to communicate with the parents/carers in a variety of ways:

- Letters home;
- Newsletters;
- School App/Website;
- Social communication app – seesaw
- Written reports – distributed in June;
- Parental/carer interviews – both formal and informal;
- Contact through education Welfare Officer (EWO);
- Verbal contact – messages/phone calls;
- Appointment with class teacher or Principal
- Curriculum involvement E.g. Project work/homework;
- Parent presentations;
- Social events;

LIAISON WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES

After appropriate consultation and communication, a range of agencies may be utilised each with a particular specialism.:

For example:

- EA Belfast Region officers;

- Education Welfare Service
- Educational psychology Service;
- PSNI;
- Clinical Medical Officer & School Nurse; and
- Department of Health and Social Services.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked with the following school policies which include:

- Child Protection
- Positive Behaviour
- Intimate Care
- Special educational Needs
- Use of reasonable Force;
- Anti-bullying;
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Drugs
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED)
- Attendance
- Managing attendance at Work
- E-Safety
- Acceptable use of mobile phones and related technologies

RESOURCING

Although most situations will be addressed within the classroom, time will be made available for visits, interviews, consultations etc. Material gathered by teachers on specific issues will build up over time and be made available to all staff.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Staff are provided with opportunities to attend in-service training in the area of pastoral care. This can be facilitated during directed time and staff development days as well as formal and informal communication between individual members of staff. Staff will be kept informed of what training is available from outside the school. As needs are recognised and communicated they will be addressed in the appropriate manner. Outside agencies may be used for development and training if it is deemed necessary.

STAFF WELFARE

It is widely recognised in the world of work that care of staff is vital to ensure that stress and low morale do not jeopardise the success and prosperity of school life. In schools, high pupil morale and expectations are difficult to establish and sustain without high teacher morale and expectations.

At school level the promotion and development of staff welfare and development is an obvious responsibility of the Board of Governors, Principal and School Leadership Team but it is also the mutual responsibility of all colleagues in school.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

This component of pastoral care refers to the school's Child Protection Policy. This policy puts in place procedures to ensure that pupils are protected from physical and emotional harm, from neglect and sexual abuse.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The teaching staff will monitor the progress academically and pastorally of children in their classes. Where a pastoral concern is identified about the well-being of any child, records will be kept of incidents or concerns and appropriate action taken if necessary. As a pupil progresses through the schools, records of pastoral concerns or issues will be passed onto the child's next teacher. If appropriate the Designated Teacher will be informed.