**OUR LADYS SECONDARY SCHOOL**



**Student Support Policy**

**Our Lady’s Mission Statement**

*Our Lady’s Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treated as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realize our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal, the Good News of the Gospel is our story.*

**School Context**

Our Lady’s Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 715 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management comprised of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

**Mercy Philosophy of Education**

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

**CEIST Core Values**

The Core Values of CEIST are:

* Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
* Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
* Showing Respect for Every Person
* Creating Community
* Being Just and Responsible

The policy has been framed in compliance with:

* The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES 2011 & 2017)
* The Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003 as well as the General Data Protection Regulation2016

**Student Support Procedures**

This Student Support policy describes some of the Student Support procedures currently in place in Our Lady’s Secondary School. It is acknowledged that there are times when the support structures offered by the school are not sufficient to meet the needs of students in certain situations. In such circumstances, it is necessary to call on the expertise of outside agencies. This school has a number of policies which outline procedures to support students. These include:

* Admissions Policy
* Anti-bullying Policy
* Child Protection Policy
* Code of Behaviour
* Critical Incident Policy
* Dignity at Work Policy
* School Attendance Policy
* Guidance Plan
* Special Educational Needs Policy

**Whole School Approach**

Our Lady’s Secondary School operates a whole school approach to student support and pastoral care. Supporting all our students is part of the ethos of Our Lady’s Secondary School. We aim to provide a safe, inclusive, happy and caring school that will allow for academic, social, spiritual and emotional development. A Student Support Team is in place which is made up of staff members who have a specific pastoral role. The Student Support Team meet on a weekly basis and deal with individual student issues as well as wider issues that may affect a group of students or the wider school community.

A whole school approach to student support in Our Lady’s Secondary School refers to the role of School Management, Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Tutors, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, SEN team, subject teachers, ancillary and support staff as well as parents, students and local community.

In our school community we foster relationships based on respect. We engender a sense of belonging to our school community and its ethos, values and traditions. We promote a school community that is caring and positive where the uniqueness of each individual is both valued and recognised.

In Our Lady’s Secondary School we believe Pastoral Care permeates all aspects of school life. This implies putting in place appropriate structures, policies and programmes and a whole-school commitment to their development, implementation and evaluation.

## Aims of a Student Support & Pastoral Care Structure

* To break the school down into smaller units so that:
  + Each member of our school community will feel known, valued and cared for.
  + Each member of our school community is able to develop to his/her full potential.
  + Each member of our school community will have a sense of belonging to our school.
* To provide a link between each individual student and the staff.
* To assist the individual to enrich his/her personal life.
* To help prepare young people for Educational Choices.
* To support the subject teacher.
* To develop the students’ self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline, to build resilience and to respond in a sympathetic and understanding way to the concerns, fears and worries of all students.
* To foster a culture of self-awareness, self-motivation & self directed learning among our students leading them to become self assured and mature young adults.
* To act as an early warning system for the early detection of “at risk” students.
* To provide a link for parents through an individual teacher whom they know to have a special knowledge of their child.
* To provide an important conduit for relating information to students.
* To bring together all the school services and programmes in a structured and coordinated way for the benefit of the students in our care

## Student Support Personnel

Though all staff members are engaged to various degrees in the Student Support & Pastoral Care structures there are a number of personnel who have a specific role to play. These include the:

* Principal
* Deputy Principals
* Year Head
* Guidance Counsellor
* School Chaplain
* SEN Coordinator
* RSE Coordinator
* SPHE Coordinator
* Wellbeing Coordinator
* Anti-Bullying Coordinator
* Student Leadership Coordinator
* Peer Support Coordinator
* Class Tutor
* Class Teacher
* Year Heads (who are not members of the Student Support team) may be asked to attend Student Support Meetings to give a review of students in their particular year group.
* Staff Mentors

**Student Support Team**

* The Student Support Team meets each week and reviews the needs of all of the students who receive extra supports in the school.
* 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 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 school.
* Year Heads, Class Teachers and Subject Teachers may raise concerns with regard to particular students and may refer students to the Student Support Team.
* The Student Support Team also reviews best practice, reviews school policies from a pastoral perspective and plans for the future care needs of 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 Principal as the Designated Liaison Person in the school and as the leading person on the Student Support Team has responsibility for all Child Protection issues.

**The Role of School Management**

The Principal and Deputy Principals must take the lead role in the area of student support and 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 team carry out this function in a number of ways:

* Ensuring that the various programmes and range of curricular and extra-curricular activities on offer to 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 of respect among all members of the school community that allows students to develop to their full potential.
* 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.
* Proactively engaging with the pastoral care of all students including responding to the needs of students who may need extra supports.
* Supporting class tutors and year heads, coordinating the student support programme, monitoring students with particular difficulties; advising relevant groups within the school community on pastoral issues
* Supporting parents in the holistic development of their children.
* Proactively facilitating the contribution of external agencies such as the HSE, TUSLA, NEPS outside counsellors etc when relevant in order to help and assist students in our care.

**The Role of the Principal**

As the person entrusted by the Board of Management with the wellbeing of all members of the school community the Principal plays the leading role in supporting students in all areas of school life. As such the Student Support Team works under the direction of the Principal at all times. The Principal will undertake:

* To coordinate all the Student Support elements within the school
* To facilitate the implementation of decisions made in consultation with the Student Support Team.
* To draw up the Student Support Policy Document in consultation with the Student Support Team.
* To review the Student Support Policy Document in consultation with the Student Support Team.

**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:

* Year Heads work together as a group to ensure a common approach to their role in the school community. The Principal, Deputy Principals and Year Heads share information on students and collaborate in dealing with problems that arise.
* The Year Head supports the Class Teacher in implementing the Code of Behaviour, in monitoring student progress, attendance and punctuality. The Year Head, Class Tutor and Class Teacher work closely together and constantly share information.
* The Year Head is aware of the supports available to students and makes referrals to the Student Support Team accordingly. Information is shared with the Student Support Team as well as teachers & staff involved in monitoring punctuality and attendance.
* Formal meetings are arranged with individual students when necessary and informal contact with individuals takes place all the time.
* 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.
* Year Heads are available to subject teachers to support them in their work.
* The Year Heads also promote~~s~~ positive discipline through encouragement of the students and through their role in Year Group assemblies and / or awards ceremonies.
* Year Heads (who are not members of the Student Support team) may be asked to attend Student Support Meetings to give a review of students in their particular year group.

**The Role of the Guidance Counsellor**

Our Lady’s Secondary School has a fully qualified Guidance Counsellor to provide educational, academic, career, personal and social guidance counselling. The Guidance Counselling service is seen as having a central role in the continuous guidance process of each individual student which begins prior to the entry of the student to the school and concludes when the student has left the school.

The role of the Guidance Counsellor will encompass the following:

* To support each student in following an appropriate educational path.
* To facilitate students in choosing and embarking on a career path which will be personally rewarding and will reflect their individual talents and values.
* To put in place a range of learning experiences, which are designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to enable each student to get maximum benefit from their education
* To assist students to understand their abilities, interests and special aptitudes.
* To assist students to acquire information about educational and career opportunities within a changing society.
* While many individual students may not require individual attention, there will be students who will need support either spiritually, emotionally or socially.
* To provide support for individual students of groups of students where a need arises.
* To help students with personal and school-related problems.

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**The Role of the SEN Team**

The Special Education Needs Team 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 SEN team:

* Coordinates the provision of all supports for students with SENs in cooperation with the student’s Learning Support Teacher by 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.
* Liaises with parents of students with SENs to address all of their needs including those of a pastoral nature.

**School Chaplain**

Students in Our Lady’s also have access to a School Chaplain. The Chaplain supports the pastoral, personal and social developments of students in our school as we strive to provide an environment where all our students are both known and valued. The Chaplain is available to talk to and listen to students and to support them in various ways. The role of the Chaplain will encompass the following:

* To convene and chair meetings of the Student Support Team.
* The Chaplain’s role in pastoral care is to show concern for all students and to help them feel that they belong to the school community.
* While many students may not require individual attention, there will be students who will need support either spiritually, emotionally or socially.
* To provide support for individual students of groups of students where a need arises.
* To help students with personal and school-related problems.
* The School Chaplain has a specific Job Profile that has been ratified by the Board of Management of Our Lady’s Secondary School.

**The Role of the Tutor**

* The Class Tutor 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 Tutors are assigned on the basis that they have regular contact with the class group.
* The Class Tutor will have access to relevant information on the students in their class. Likewise, the Class Tutor will share information, as appropriate with relevant members of the staff.
* The Class Tutor 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 supporting students in Our Lady’s:

* Like the Class Tutor the Subject Teacher is in regular contact with the student and is therefore very well placed to identify any pastoral needs that emerge for their students.
* The Subject Teacher has an important role in modelling appropriate behaviours, in creating a climate of mutual respect and fostering positive relationships.
* The Subject Teacher also plays an invaluable role in promoting self-esteem and fostering confidence and assertiveness.
* The Subject Teacher also promotes positive discipline through positive comments in the Student Journal, praise and encouragement of the student.
* The Subject Teacher may bring concerns about a particular student to the attention of the Student Support Team.

**The Role of SNAs**

Our School acknowledges the role played by our SNAs in supporting 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 under the guidance of the Principal.
* Inform the class teacher and SEN Team of any emerging needs among students.
* Promote the wellbeing of the students in their care.

**The Role of Non-teaching Staff**

In their daily interactions our non-teaching staff plays an integral role in addressing the pastoral needs of the students in Our Lady’s. They may observe and refer on to the appropriate personnel incidents that might have an impact on the wellbeing of students. They promote the sense of community that characterises the ethos of our school and in doing so contribute to the general wellbeing of the school community. They also bring to the attention of the Principal any concerns they may have regarding student welfare.

The Role of the Staff Mentor

Staff mentors are members of staff who volunteers to act as staff mentors for students who may be experiencing difficulties in different areas of school life. Staff mentors meet the students on an informal basis throughout the school year to support any student who may be finding school difficult. The staff mentors liaise with members of the Student Support Team regarding the progress and development of the student in question.

**Confidentiality**

* All staff members who are supporting students at different levels are aware that they cannot guarantee student confidentiality in relation to certain disclosures that students may make. All staff are aware of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES 2011 & 2017) and of their responsibilities as mandated persons. All staff are advised to use the confidentiality statement below when approached by a student to discuss difficulties that they may be experiencing:

*I cannot guarantee confidentiality; however, what we talk about might not be discussed with anyone else unless I am concerned for you as a child and student at the school. I may need to talk with others if I am concerned for you, but will let you know who I will be talking with. I will talk with these people so that we can help you with any difficulties you might be having*

**The Role of Parents**

Our Lady’s Secondary School acknowledges and welcomes the importance of parents 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 journals.
* Attending regularly at Parent / Teacher meetings and Information Evenings.
* 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 Students**

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.
* Engaging in all aspects of school life for a more rounded and holistic educational experience.
* Acknowledging the rights of all other students to learn in a positive climate which values 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 & safety of fellow students.

**The Role of the Student Council**

The Student Council has an important role in the support system in our school:

* 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 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 Student Leaders

## Student Leaders are chosen towards the end of fifth year. They act as a liaison between staff and teachers. These senior students assist with supervision. They are exemplary students and are role models for our younger students. They foster a sense of community and show leadership to other students. Student Leaders make a valuable contribution to the overall ethos of the school’s student support systems and positive behaviour support structures. Senior students help and support 1st Year students to become familiar with and settle into their new environment. Senior students meet 1st Year students on a formal and informal basis, acting as role models of good behaviour.

**Amber Flag Committee**

The Amber Flag Committee under the guidance of the Chaplain is a team of staff and students who organise events and activities and other initiatives to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in school. The focus is on students providing activities and resources that may be of benefit to their peers.

**Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme: Wellbeing Co-ordinator and Teachers**

Wellbeing teachers deliver the SPHE Programme to Junior Cycle students. The aims of the SPHE programme are:

· To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities

· To promote self-esteem and self-confidence

· To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making

· To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion

· To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

**Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a specialized module within the SPHE programme for which special training is required and with which parents have to be engaged. Our Lady’s has a special policy document on Relationships and Sexuality Education.

All members of our Student Support Team may recognize that individual students may need assistance from other qualified personnel outside of school and will refer through the Principal the provision of such assistance following agreed procedures with the school, parents and local agencies.

***Policy Evaluation***

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. Our Lady’s Secondary School recognise the need for all stakeholders to play a part in reviewing, contributing to and developing the range of supports and pastoral care in our school. This review and evaluation will be led by the Principal and Student Support Team.

The review process will include consultation with:

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

Staff, students and parents were consulted in the review of this policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on: May 7th

Date of Review: June 2021

Chairperson of Board of Management: Gary Carville