



Coláiste na Carráige

**Student Support
Policy**

Student Support is taken as a whole school responsibility engaging parents, students and all staff members. The essence of the policy is to 'promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students', as stipulated in The Education Act (1998).

The Student Support policy has been drawn up in the context of the school mission statement, Code of Behaviour and other school policies.

School Mission Statement

Coláiste na Carraige welcomes all members of the community and strives for excellence in delivering holistic educational services based on the principles of respect, co-operation and partnership.

Initial work on this policy was undertaken by a working group guided by the following principles;

- Mutual respect and trust
- A shared sense of purpose
- Willingness to listen and negotiate
- Joint action / flexibility and adaptability

Rationale

We hope that all students will find in our school an atmosphere which encourages the equal recognition of all abilities. We aim to develop each student's particular talents. We believe in the benefits of a well ordered and structured school environment in which students may experience guidance and care from those in authority and may also find opportunities to make a positive contribution to their own education.

Aims of Student Support in Coláiste na Carraige

- To promote the overall welfare of the school.
- To promote high self esteem.
- To acknowledge and support each person's role in the school community.
- To encourage parents to have an active role in the education of their children.
- To help students to strive to achieve their best at all levels.
- To encourage the development of individual talents.
- To provide a warm and caring environment for all.
- Collaborative leadership and clarity of policies, roles, responsibilities and tasks.

Student Support Core Team

While every staff member has a pastoral dimension to his/her role we recognise that certain people fulfil key roles in this area. They include Class Tutors, Year Heads and the Pastoral Care Core Team.

The Core Team consists of: Student Support Coordinator, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator, Principal and Deputy Principal. This team has been set up, taking into consideration the NEPS publication 'Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools'(2014).

The core team will meet once a term and if an emergency meeting is required to review students with particular difficulties. They will also review the student support policy and report to staff and board of management annually on the pastoral life of the school.

Role of the Board of Management

The board will promote and approve this policy so long as it complies with the Education Acts of 1998.

Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal

- Responsible for the day to day management of the school.
- Encourages the creation of a positive school environment, which is supportive of learning among the students.
- Set aims/objectives for the school, monitor their achievements and evaluate the objectives laid down.
- Encourages the involvement of parents in the education of their children to achieve these objectives.

Role of the Student Support Coordinator

- Facilitates the review of the Student Support Policy.
- Oversees the induction program for incoming first years.
- Sets up and facilitates the work of the student council
- Leads the team that organises awards night
- Facilitates meetings of the core student support team.
- Reports on the pastoral programme at staff meetings.

Role of the Guidance Counsellor

- Member of the core student support team.
- Facilitate information sessions for parents of incoming First Year Students (May), Leaving Cert. Year One and Year Two (September), Third Year and TY (February)
- Administer aptitude tests to incoming first year students to help define their educational needs and to third year students to help them decide on career paths and subject choices (DATS).

- The guidance counsellor is always available to meet students to give advice on career options and provide counselling help to those individual students who need it.
- Counsels students on other issues when referred by a year head, senior management or if a student requests an appointment themselves. The voluntary participation of the referred student in such counselling must be respected by all concerned.

Role of the RE Coordinator

- Member of the core student support team
- Organises meetings of the RE department and maintains department folder
- Notifies RE teachers about training courses available
- Maintains the resources of the RE department

Role of the SPHE Coordinator

- Member of the core pastoral care team.
- Organises meetings of the SPHE department and maintains department folder.
- Notifies SPHE teachers about training courses available.
- Maintains the resources of the SPHE department.

Role of the SEN Coordinator

- Member of the core pastoral care team
- Facilitates the transfer of students with special educational needs from primary school to ensure that the resources they require are in place when they arrive.
- Assesses students that present with learning difficulties.
- Communicates with parents, NEPS psychologist, SENO, Deputy Principal and teachers on issues regarding students with special educational needs.
- Organises Resource and Learning support time timetable
- Organises meetings of the Resource and Learning support teachers.
- Informs Exam Secretary of the RACE needs of Junior Cert and Leaving Cert students in Mock and State examinations and assists in the preparation of applications for same.
- Notifies Resource and Learning support teachers about training courses available.
- Maintains the resources for Resource and Learning support teachers

Role of Year Head

The Year Head, on behalf of the school community, oversees the welfare of a year group. He/She helps to implement the Code of Behaviour so that teaching and learning is supported. They monitor

behaviour, punctuality, uniform, attendance and progress of students in their year with the help of the tutors and subject teachers.

The Year Head will:

- Carry out their pastoral role in conjunction with students, parents/ guardians, subject teachers, tutors, pastoral care core team, senior management, holding formal and informal meetings with them if necessary.
- Be aware of supports available for students and ensure that students get the necessary supports in conjunction with the core pastoral team.
- Communicate with parents in regard to student welfare, progress and will meet with and provide support for parents if necessary.
- Support the class tutor and consult with them when a major sanction is to be imposed.
- Share information on students with senior management and collaborate with them in dealing with issues that arise.
- Support subject teachers in their work. Offer extra support to staff members experiencing difficulty with classroom management.

Role of Class Tutor

The class tutor is the teacher who takes particular care of one class unit in the school. She/he will have particular concern for each child in the group. She/he will act as a point of contact for subject teachers and deal with issues that may arise within the class. The class tutor will:

- Get to know the students in their group and monitor their progress in all areas of school life.
- Clarify the School Code of Behaviour for their group and monitor their school journals.
- Communicate with the year head and pastoral care team to find the best solution for difficulties that arise.
- Implement a positive discipline system for the group.
- Be aware of each pupil's general ability and monitor academic progress.
- Be aware of special medical or educational needs of the students in the group and inform other teachers if necessary.
- Have access to information on child's family situation, ensure confidentiality but inform other staff members if appropriate.
- Meet with other tutors and the pastoral care co-ordinator to plan and monitor the class tutor programme.
- Point of contact
- Inform students about school fire drills and take charge of the group at the assembly point during a fire drill.

- The school management will endeavour whenever possible to allow a class tutor stay with their class group throughout their time at the school.

When a tutorial class is announced a class will go to their tutor's classroom instead of to the timetabled class. This will occur at least once a term.

Role of Subject Teachers, Substitute Teachers, Student Teachers

- To follow the school's mission statement.
- To regularly evaluate students and report the results of evaluation to students and parents.
- To implement the school's Code of Behaviour, inside and outside of their classroom, fairly and consistently in collaboration with tutors, year heads, senior management and parents.
- To communicate with the class tutor regarding concerns they may have about students in their class.

Role of Student Councillors

- Represent their class group at student council meetings to discuss issues of concern to the student body.
- Liaise with Student Support Coordinator, senior management and staff when necessary.
- Assist in the running of the school's extra-curricular, environmental and charity programmes
- Mentoring of First Year students
- 6th Year councillors chair the student council meetings.

Role of Parent/Guardian

- Ensure their child's attendance at school.
- Oversee homework, encourage and support their children.
- Co-operate with the journal system.
- Attend parent/teacher meetings.
- Get involved in school activities in as far as time and energy allows.

Role of Chaplain

In so far as parish commitments allow the chaplain(s) undertake, to contribute to the spiritual life of the whole school community through masses and services at various times of the year.

Student Support (other commitments)

The policies and procedures outlined above deal with pastoral care provision for the majority of students. In a small minority of cases circumstances require further intervention.e.g.

- Students whose attendance pattern and general performance points to them as probable early leavers.
- Young people whose home situation is severely disadvantaged from an early education perspective.
- Victims of abuse or bullying.

The aims here are to increase retention within the system and to improve attendance through:

- The establishment of supportive links with home.
- The provision of opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential.
- Raising young peoples' expectation of themselves.
- The promotion of positive identification with the school.

The support of the wider community is accessed through the services of other agencies.

- Health Service Executive (North Western Health Board)
- Gardaí Síochana – drugs, crime, alcohol abuse etc.
- Counsellors
- NEWB
- NBSS

The team also arrange seminars and programmes for the personal development of both pupils and staff.

The school maintains a broad based curriculum along with extra curricular activities in order to cater for a wide range of individual needs. These activities and curricula, these include Leaving Certificate, Transition Year and Junior Certificate programmes. All programmes are monitored by the Student Support team to further a supportive and positive experience for all students.

Many of the proposals and recommendations of student support are already in place and have shown to be successful in promoting a good atmosphere and positivity within the school. These proposals encompass the vast majority of student support issues within the school. Annual evaluation of the student support programme is required to deal with changing circumstances within the school.

First Year Induction

Primary school visits

In the third term the student support coordinator accompanied by past pupils of the four feeder primary schools, visit the incoming

students in their primary school. This is to give the incoming students a perspective on our school from the students' points of view. Coláiste na Carraige students will discuss issues such as new subjects, school rules, sports, and canteen etc to dispel any fears the incoming students may have about moving to our school.

Enrolment forms

Enrolment and transport forms are then distributed to the primary schools to be filled and returned to the school by parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are encouraged to advise of any physical, emotional or intellectual difficulties their child has.

SEN

Meetings are arranged between parents/guardians of incoming SEN students and the SEN coordinator and the Deputy Principal so resources can be applied for and put in place in preparation for September.

Open Day

An open day is held in May for the parents/guardians and incoming students.

The students sit an aptitude test to help identify students with special learning needs.

The parents are welcomed by the principal and have talks from members of staff on topic such as pastoral care, subject choices, study and homework, code of behaviour, etc, followed by a question and answer session.

Parents/guardians and students are then taken on a tour of the school.

First Day

On the first day of the new school year the First Years are the only students who attend, so they can become acclimatized. They are introduced to their class tutor, who gives them their school journal and timetable and explains the school journal system and Code of Behaviour.

Subject Sampling

During the first month the first year students get a chance to sample all the first year subjects and then make their subject choices.

Parent/Guardian Information Evenings

As well as an annual Parent/Guardian Teacher meeting held at the beginning of the second term and the open day for Parents/Guardians of incoming first years in May, there are at least two other parent/Guardian information evenings held in the school.

The first is held in September/October, for parents/guardians of fourth and fifth year students, focusing on study, state examinations and career choices. The other is held in March for parents of third year and TY students. The focus here is on choosing between TY and 5th yr and on making subject choices in 5th yr. The school management team, guidance counsellor and available subject teachers are present at these evenings.

Sport and Cultural Activities

All students are encouraged to participate in school based extra curricular activities.

Presentation Night

In conjunction with the student support co-ordinator, the student support team, staff, parents committee and the student council organize an end of year prize giving ceremony. Members of the board of management, with invited guests are present and all aspects of student achievement are rewarded. Areas include academic, and merit awards, sporting, public speaking, special achievements and student of the year awards. The awards are highlighted in the local press.

Student Council

The student council is an integral part of our school life and system. Each class is represented by two students (boy and girl). An opportunity is given to students who wish to be considered, to present their case for election.

The staff decide upon the selection of the first year student councilors after the completion of subject tasters.

The chairperson and secretary roles are rotated among the Head Boy/Girl and the Pastoral Care Coordinator plays the role of facilitator. The students are briefed thoroughly on their roles and responsibilities. The first task of each new Council is to appoint a Vice Chair, Vice Secretary, establish ground rules for meetings, carry out a review of the constitution and set aims for the forthcoming year.

At the meetings all class representatives are given an opportunity to air and discuss relevant issue/problems arising within their class situation. Being on the council is a form of education for the students, giving them more confidence allowing them to develop new skills and a sense of responsibility.

Role and Responsibility

The primary function of the class representatives on the council is to ensure everyone in their class will have a voice. Decisions are not made by the representatives without first consulting with their class, during a class tutor meeting. Matters arising are brought to the attention of school management at their weekly meeting via the facilitator.

- One of the great successes of the Student Council over the last number of years was their active role in helping to organize the end of year presentation night i.e. showing parents to their seats, helping the parents committee with refreshments, helping on stage.
- The Head Boy/Girl councilors give an end of year speech (English and Irish) at presentation night.
- All student councilors are given certificates as recognition for their help throughout the year.
- Other tasks include preparing the gym for the school musical (normally held every two years – and helping in all aspects of it).
- They help with fund raising ventures.
- They form the back bone of the Green Schools Committee and provide the impetus required to drive the project.
- The 1st year councilors decorate the Christmas tree.
- Student councils have had a positive input into all aspects of the school environment and play a helpful role in the fire drills as part of our health and safety policy.
- School trips; Student councilors are available to aid teachers in the organization of extra curricular trips. (Field trips, musicals, drama etc). Their help and support is greatly appreciated by the staff.

Peer Mentoring

- One of their most important roles is helping to keep a keen eye on vulnerable junior students and reporting to the liaison teacher accordingly (intimidation, bullying etc). There have been many occasions where such indiscretions have been reported by junior and senior councilors in the past and the staff is very grateful for this help. The student councilors realise that from the staff point of view everything is in confidence. As the first year students are not appointed at the first meetings of the student council, it is during this time where selected Senior Cycle and Transition Year Students are appointed a first year student to keep an eye out for, and ensure they are settling in to secondary school life.

When possible students are appointed to people they are familiar with in some way or if they are from the same area. This is further facilitated using a class period where the mentors and mentees are formally introduced and the function of the mentor is further explained for the benefit of the mentee.

- Mentors encourage mentees to take part in school activities to help them settle in. The mentor will take an active interest in their mentee and help to make the mentees transition as positive an experience as possible.

Policy Development

- The council has contributed to the development of mobile phone, anti-bullying and Code of Behaviour policies at the drafting stage and again before final submission to the board of management. This has been in the form of completing questionnaires and general discussion in relation to issues that arise in the policies. The Head Boy and Girl meet with the board of management at least once a year. They may be requested to attend a board of management meeting when the need arises.

Promoting good communication within the school

- The student council endeavours to continually improve communication within the school community. It does this through reporting back to class members at tutor meetings, and through the use of the dedicated student council notice board.

Critical Incident

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

A response plan will be put into action by the Critical Incident Management Team. The support of external community agencies may be sought – i.e. local GP's, an Garda Síochána, HSE, Department of Education and Skills.

Particular issues will necessitate the intervention and support of external community agencies. Good communication by informing the staff first, then informing the students in an appropriate way, by assembly or class groups. Acknowledging the loss followed by a short prayer. Reactions or shock to the tragedy may vary from person to person, requiring keeping vigilance and providing immediate and ongoing support.

Timetable changes and availability of rooms may be required, providing a focus for grief where symbols and flowers can be placed. After an appropriate time a mass or prayer service may be held to bring closure.

Curriculum Links

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Religious Education are integrally linked to our student support programme. This creates a context for discussion of issues, an availability of support, and an ability for students to approach other teachers. Students are also provided with an experiential side to the religious education programme through, prayer services, retreats, sacramental celebrations, and charitable activities.

Student Support Programmes include

- Social Personal and Health Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- Religious Education
- Open nights
- Subject Tasters
- Induction/ orienteering days for 1st years
- Counselling for students and parents
 - Drop in
 - By appointment
- Personal development/ life skills
- Study skills / computer skills
- Evening study / Homework club
- Breakfast / lunch club
- Suspension intervention programmes / restorative justice
- Student Council
- Monitoring absenteeism
- Lunch time leagues

Ratified

This Student Support Policy has been approved and ratified by the Board of Management of Coláiste na Carraige.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Principal

Date _____

Date _____

Review Date _____