




ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY



Pastoral Care Policy

Date of Review October 2021

Signature of Chairperson 

Signature of Principal 

Date 1/11/21

ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

“St Mary’s Primary School will be a welcoming, child centred school and a community of good practice, where all feel valued and inspired. Our excellent staff will collaborate to meet the aspirations of our pupils through high quality learning and teaching. We will work in partnership with our parents, parish and community to meet the needs of our children in this rapidly changing global society. Our Catholic ethos, pastoral care and family atmosphere will permeate every aspect of school life to ensure the well being and safety of every child. We will endeavour to support each child to reach their full potential”

Unicef article 29 *Education must develop every child's 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 and other cultures, and the environment.*

Unicef article 28 *Every child has the right to an education.....*

Ethos

Together We Achieve.....

Pastoral Care Policy

Through its pastoral care provision the school seeks to demonstrate a continuing commitment to the moral, intellectual, personal and social development of all pupils as secure, successful and participating members of the school and the wider community. We are committed as a community to provision of a caring, **nurturing**, friendly and safe environment in which all pupils will feel valued. All staff, parents and members of the B.O.G. will work together to promote and facilitate an atmosphere of care and respect within the school community.

Unicef article 3 *The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.*

Aims -

- *To foster the core principles and practices of nurture
- * To ensure good relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils within the school environment.
- * To create an atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and are confident about voicing concerns.

- * To foster development of self - esteem and self - confidence in pupils and the acquisition of appropriate skills to make reasoned and informed choices.
- * To encourage pupils, through working with their peers, to value and respect the opinions and contributions of others.
- * To promote effective home - school liaison, informing parents of and securing their confidence in the school's pastoral care provision.
- * To establish and maintain a good standard of behaviour through use of positive approaches and incorporation of disciplinary procedures which pupils consider to be fair and appropriate.
- * To promote good communication between school and relevant external agencies, ensuring that staff are fully informed of procedures.

Unicef article 29 *Education must develop every child's 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 and other cultures, and the environment.*

Unicef article 28 *Every child has the right to an education.....Discipline in schools must respect children's human dignity.*

Unicef article 12 *Every child must be free to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.*

Unicef article 5 *Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide and advise their child so that, as they grow, they learn to apply their rights properly.*

Unicef article 18 *Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child.*

Provision -

- * All members of staff are fully committed to creating an environment of care and trust, endeavouring to ensure the emotional and physical welfare of all pupils as well as academic success.
- * Staff will be kept informed of all relevant information and procedures in relation to pastoral care provision.
- * Staff are aware of the potential dangers to children / young people arising from issues such as child abuse, drug and substance abuse and bullying and remain guided by recommendations from CCMS, DENI AND E.A Western.
- * Key pastoral care concepts are integrated into the curriculum (RE, PDMU,

PHYSICAL EDUCATION)

- * A variety of opportunities for class / group discussions through the use of a variety of teaching strategies, like Circle Time and the use of the School and Class Councils will be provided to promote trust acceptance, tolerance and confidence in raising worries / concerns.
- * Development of personal and social skills will be encouraged, appropriate to existing challenges and in preparation for the next stage of pupils' education.
- * Teachers expect a high standard of performance and behaviour and are firm, fair and consistent in maintaining good order.
- * Effective communication between school, parents and external agencies where appropriate, enlists support in dealing with indiscipline and related problems.
- * Achievement of all pupils, within and outside the classroom is recognised, valued and celebrated, thus promoting self - esteem.

Unicef article 19 *Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.*

NB

Throughout this policy a number of related policies are cross referenced and these underpin the Pastoral Care provision for the pupils at St Mary's Primary School.

These are available on request or can be viewed on our school website. Additional information is also available to parents on our Parent Information Notice Board.

HOME-SCHOOL LINKS

It is important to remember that parents and teachers are key partners in the children's education. As partners, we must work together to create the best possible environment for the children to develop all their physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social skills.

The New Intake Programme, operating in Nursery and Primary One, establishes a vital link between home and school. The aim of the programme is to make the child's entry into school as smooth and as happy as possible. Over a series of meetings, parents of

children starting school have the opportunity to benefit from the experience and expertise of the class teacher, classroom assistant, the school nurse, Speech and Language Therapist and the Educational Welfare Officer. Parents have the opportunity to meet together and listen to talks presented by the Principal and co-ordinators of different learning areas. An induction booklet 'Preparing for School' is given to all Nursery and Year 1 parents which suggests activities which new parents will find useful in preparing their child for starting school. During the summer term, prior to entry, parents and new pupils are invited to the Nursery and Primary One classrooms to meet the class teacher and to spend some time in the classroom. Each entrant then receives the booklet. Similarly, any child transferring to St. Mary's P.S from another school receives a copy of the school prospectus along with a data capture form and medical record form requesting information on the child. (See Appendices 1 and 2)

Indeed throughout the whole range of classes, the parent/teacher partnership is actively encouraged. Parent/teacher meetings take place once a year and parents are invited to the school to discuss their child's progress to date. At the end of the year a written report on the child's progress is sent home. Teachers are available by appointment to speak to parents at other times during the year, should the need arise. Appointments can be made through the Principal/Vice Principal.

If a parent wishes to get a child out early he/she should come first to the office and fill in the 'signing out' book.

Good attendance is given high priority in school. **The Department of Education's initiative 'Miss School, Miss Out' highlights the importance of regular school attendance for the holistic development of every child and the responsibility of parents to ensure good attendance.**

In the event of a child's absence from school, the parent/guardian is asked to complete an absence note, stating clearly the reason for the absence. All absences are monitored by the Education Welfare Officer in partnership with the school. See Pupil Attendance Policy

Parents have a vital role to play in the parent/teacher partnership where homework and discipline are concerned. Children should be encouraged to do their own homework which should be monitored and signed by the parents-see Homework Policy.

Similarly, the implementation of the school's discipline policy depends on the co-operation and support of the parents- see Positive Discipline Policy

LINKS WITH THE PARISH COMMUNITY

We are fortunate at St. Mary's P.S in that our links with the church are very strong. Our Parish Priest, Fr Michael Doherty is very supportive and attentive to the staff and pupils. Staff, parents and clergy work in close collaboration in the sacramental preparation of the children for First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation. There are many opportunities during the school year for staff, pupils, parents and the Parish Community to come together for liturgical celebrations. These include Masses at the beginning and

end of the school year, the Christmas Pageant and Carol Service, the children's Mass on Holy Thursday and the various meetings and services leading up to the reception of the Sacraments.

The school has also established links with charities both inside and outside the parish. Some of these charities include St. Vincent De Paul, N.S.P.C.C., **Foyle Search and Rescue**, Foyle Hospice, H.U.R.T, Down Syndrome Society, Cancer Focus and Trocaire.

The children are encouraged to support these charities by responding generously. Representatives from the different charities are invited to the school regularly to talk about their work and to receive the pupils' contributions.

The children are also encouraged to participate in local community events organised by local businesses and Derry and Strabane District Council.

THE LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The school has a Special Needs policy for children who have a range of additional needs. Under the 1996 Education Order Act, children with additional needs are catered for according to the Code of Practice for special needs. This is a 5- Stage approach, stages 1- 3 being school based and stages 4 and 5 the responsibility of the Education Authority. These stages are outlined in Appendix 3. **Mrs O' Hara**, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises with class teachers to assist in drawing up support programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and a register of all children with additional needs is regularly updated. This register includes children with physical disabilities, speech and language problems, emotional and behavioural problems and those with medical problems such as severe allergic reaction and epilepsy. (See Appendix 4 for Management of Epilepsy)

In Primaries One and Two, children with additional needs are identified and supported by class teachers and classroom assistants through differentiated class work. In some cases there may be pupils who, on admission, have already been assessed at the Pre-school stage. These pupils are included on the Special Needs Register at the appropriate stage. More formal screening takes place from Primary Three to Primary Seven unless the needs of the child are such that they require formal assessment prior to this. **Children with learning difficulties are identified using teachers' observations and on children's performance in standardised tests. These children are supported in the classroom by the class teacher, where appropriate, Individual Education Plans are drawn up in consultation**

with the child and shared with the parent . More able children are also identified and are provided with activities to stimulate, challenge and extend their capabilities within the classroom setting.

The staff of St. Mary's Primary School are committed to supporting children who have been bereaved or who have suffered major trauma in their lives. The staff have received TESSA Training, ACES Awareness Training and key staff have undertaken Trauma Informed School Training. In dealing with these children, staff will act in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the D.E.N.I and seek the services of E.A. and more specifically advisors with Pupils Participation Services as well as Parenting ni, New Life Counselling, Action for Children, CRUISE and the Strabane Hub.

Care will be taken to prepare the way for the return of the bereaved child to school by informing the significant adults about the child's loss. The class teacher will speak to the other children in the class and encourage them to show compassion and sensitivity. Teachers will take their lead from the child and watch out for any signs of distress when a child returns to school after a traumatic event. In the event of a bereaved child needing support, staff will inform Mrs O'Hara (SENCO) , Mrs Flanagan (Pastoral Care co-ordinator of Senior School) or Mrs Roarty (Pastoral Care co-ordinator of the Junior School and Nursery) and they will arrange to have the child withdrawn from class and accommodated in the Nurture Room- Rainbow Room for as long as is necessary.

NURTURE PROVISION

The increased need to provide children with the learning experience to develop social, emotional and behavioural skills and encourage success at school and with peers has led to the establishment of a Nurture Room - named the Rainbow Room- as well as Sensory Rooms both located on both school Sites.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING

PUPILS' PROGRESS

Assessment is an essential part of all teaching and learning. Informal assessment is part of the on-going activity of the classroom in all subject areas and takes a variety of forms. Teachers evaluate their half termly planners on a continuous basis. Knowing how children are progressing helps teachers to plan what the children should be taught next. See Teaching and Learning Policy and Assessment Policy.

HOMework

The main purpose of homework is to re-reinforce the work that is being done in school. Homework should always be relevant and reflect the work that is being covered in school. While homework is set by the teacher, and it is expected that the pupil will do the homework, parents have a very important role to play. The onset of the Covid 19 pandemic inaugurated a Blended Learning approach to Teaching and Learning. Homework moved to an online platform. The use of 'Seesaw' as a communication tool with both children and parents and has played an integral part in supporting children's work at home as well as consolidating a working partnership with parents in supporting their child/children's education.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents show their interest by being supportive, always being ready to encourage, challenge and praise. As far as possible children should be encouraged to do their own homework which should be monitored and signed by the parents, but not done for them. The exception to this situation is reading preparation homework. Reading homework always needs the participation of the parent, not just in Primary 1, but also throughout the school. Parents may advise the child as to where an answer may be found, e.g. in a dictionary, in an atlas, on the computer. Many homes now have a PC and where one is available, it would be helpful if children were allowed access under parental supervision. It is important that children have a suitable place for doing their homework, where possible in a quiet area without the distraction of television or younger children. A homework diary for P.3- P.7 pupils has been introduced to help pupils in the organisation and planning of their work. This diary outlines for pupils a number of helpful homework hints. Parents are asked to sign the child's homework diary at the end of each week and to encourage their child to write down their achievements for each week. Achievements may include out of school activities.

[See Homework Policy and Blended Learning Policy](#)

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers will try to instil in the pupils a sense of self-discipline and motivation to encourage them to study independently. The amount of homework given should always be realistic and suited to the child's level of ability. In setting homework, teachers will try to be sensitive to home circumstances and to the resources and time available within the home.

HOME/SCHOOL LIAISON

If a child does not do her homework, a record of the homework set and the date(s) will be recorded by the teacher. **The use of 'Seesaw' may also be used to communicate with parents.** The teacher may also use the space for Home/Teacher comments in the child's homework diary to inform the parent of any homework not done. Similarly, the parent may also use this space to inform the teacher about difficulties arising from the homework. **Where a child consistently does not do her homework, the class teacher will inform the Principal/Vice Principals and the child's parents will be contacted.** A homework record may be shown to parents at the parent/teacher meetings, or in the event of any question arising concerning the child's attitude and progress.

See Homework Policy

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Formal Religious Education homework may be given in preparation for the sacraments - First Communion and First Confession (P4) and Confirmation (P7). Occasionally children may bring home their religion books to complete class work at home and to give parents an opportunity to see their work and discuss aspects of our faith with them. It is expected that parents will reinforce the learning of prayers through family prayer.

Weekly Assembly is held every Friday where the children gather collectively in each of the respective school sites participate in prayer and song and it is also an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our pupils through Pupil of the Week and recognition given to those children celebrating a birthday.

CHILD PROTECTION

The N.I. Children's Order 1995 states "The child's welfare must always be paramount". Thus the school's policy for Child Protection must start from this principle. The staff of St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery will do everything in their power to protect the children in their care. To support this, our approach to Child Protection is based on CCMS/EA guidelines '*Protecting Children- a duty to care*'. All teaching and ancillary staff have had in-service training on identifying signs of possible abuse. If an incident of child abuse is suspected or if a child makes a disclosure, staff will follow the CCMS guidelines '*Procedure for Reporting an Incident of Child Abuse in Catholic Maintained Schools*'. **See Child Protection Policy**

Personnel from outside agencies who work with pupils in our school will be vetted.

In addition to this, the school accepts that there is a further pastoral responsibility to put in place a personal safety programme for the children. The approach in Nursery and Primary 1 classes is informal and non- threatening. *Issues such as bullying and abuse are dealt with through stories and activities planned during Anti- Bullying Week. Keeping Safe and free from online abuse is an integral part of teaching and learning and is given a platform through Internet Safety Day/ Week and via external agencies, who facilitate workshops and talks in relation to internet use and safety- See E-Safety Policy*

The Designated teachers for Child Protection are Mrs Roarty- Nursery and Junior School and Mrs Flanagan- Senior School. Deputy Designated Teachers are Mrs Lafferty Melmount Nursery and Mrs O'Doherty-Principal of St Mary's Primary School respectively.

Clear guidelines are provided for parents through correspondence and displayed on the Parent Notice board in each of the respective schools.

The Child Protection Policy and a Pastoral Care Leaflet are distributed alternatively, year on year, striving to keep parents well informed of procedures and practices employed at St Mary's Primary.

In every classroom children are made aware of the personnel to contact if worried or concerned. Details are clearly displayed.

A more detailed record for safe guarding children at St Mary's Primary School can be found in the Child Protection Policy. **The safety of each pupil at St Mary's Primary School is our first priority.**

BULLYING

The staff of our school are agreed that bullying is unacceptable behaviour both inside and out of school. **The staff promote an anti-bullying policy and are currently implementing the Addressing Bullying Act of 2016.** We are committed to establishing procedures and developing teaching approaches and programmes to deal with bullying. An ***Anti-Bullying Week*** is an integral part of our school calendar. We acknowledge that in this school, as in all schools, there is the possibility and probability that bullying may exist.

Bullying is defined as *'deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him- or herself'*.

The staff of St. Mary's Primary School see it as a priority to:

- ◆ raise an awareness among staff of the nature of bullying
- ◆ know the signs to look for which may indicate stress due to bullying
- ◆ develop a whole-school approach to the issue which will involve pupils, teachers, ancillary and supervisory staff, parents and appropriate agencies
- ◆ develop teaching programmes that give a clear message that bullying is unacceptable behaviour both inside and out of school.

See Anti bullying Policy

DRUGS EDUCATION POLICY

The staff of St. Mary's Primary School is committed to the development of a high quality response to the issue of Drugs Education.

A draft policy has been drawn up in consultation with the staff of St. Mary's Primary School, Strabane and in accordance with the D.E.N.I. 1996 Document, ***'Guidance for Primary Schools - Misuse of Drugs'***.

The purpose of this drug education policy is -

- ◆ to provide clear guidelines and procedure for staff, governors and parents for the management of drug incidents.
- ◆ to support pupils and staff who experience drug related problems or concerns.

The main objective of the policy is that pupils should develop their knowledge and understanding of the use, misuses, risks and effects of drugs and other potentially harmful substances and that they should develop a critical awareness of the relevant personal, social and economic implications.

MANAGEMENT OF PRESCRIBED DRUGS IN SCHOOLS

All prescribed medicines brought into school must be accompanied by parental letter, indicating how often the child has to take the medicine and how much she has to take. **Parents are made aware that teachers will on no account be responsible for administering medicines.** The only exception to this will be in the case of an anaphylactic attack. Relevant adults in daily contact with this particular child have been trained to deal with such an emergency. School medical records are regularly updated and all children with a medical problem are listed on a register kept by the Principal, SENCO and the Vice-Principals.

See Administration of Medicines Policy

SUPPORT SYSTEMS PROVIDED BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES

St. Mary's Primary School has established important links with many outside agencies, some of which have already been mentioned. These include the E.A. Child Protection team, the school nurse, dental hygienist, Speech Therapist, **Sure Start**, **Strabane Hub** Action for Children, Social Services, Educational Psychologist, S.E.B.W Team A.S.A.S Educational Welfare Officer and Outreach teacher (Learning/Behaviour support.) and the E.A. Music Service.

In addition to these, the support, advice and expertise of the following may be sought from time to time to deal with specific issues - CCMS, the Educational Psychologist, Health and Social Services, the E.A. Behaviour Support Team and the Diocesan Religious Advisory Service.

New members of the teaching staff of the school are given the opportunity to participate in a useful three year **Beginning Teachers and EPD** programme organised by EA. There is also in-school support. New staff will be assigned a teacher tutor – Mrs Flanagan in the Senior School and Mrs Roarty in the Junior School

LINKS WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

As a Catholic school, one of our main concerns is the development of caring relationships in the family, the school community, the Church and the wider society. Education for Mutual Understanding enables the pupils at St. Mary's Primary School to appreciate their catholic tradition and identity as well as the tradition and identity of other Christians and members of other religions. It enables the pupils to value both their own cultural traditions and the cultural traditions of pupils at other schools. It includes the bonds of friendship and co-operation which our school develops with other schools through e.g. Cross-Community Project work at the Consensus Programme, participation in the Primary Schools sporting activities, in the Choir Competitions and in the local Feis.

PRIMARY/SECONDARY TRANSFER

Our links with the local secondary schools, Holy Cross College and Strabane Academy and **St Columb's College ,Derry** enable us to undertake a transition programme for our pupils. This programme takes place in the third term and aims at familiarising our pupils with their new school and the routines of a secondary school. Holy Cross College and **Strabane Academy** also facilitate a transition programme for children with SEN. In addition visits are planned and presentations given to our Year 7 pupils by local secondary schools. Before the end of the summer term the pupils are invited to spend a morning at their respective schools.

There are strong links with Holy Cross College who meet and consult with our Year 7 teachers prior to our pupils transferring.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The staff of St. Mary's Primary School follow the Health and Safety Policy and Manual issued by CCMS/E.A. This Policy is readily available to parents and staff at the office. A Health Education Policy and Schemes are already in place.

See Relationships and Sexual Education Policy
Educational Visits Policy

In Physical Education staff use the guidance contained in N I Revised Curriculum In so far as possible, staff will do everything in their power to minimise the risk factor in P.E. by checking the hall/playground for potential hazards before the activity begins. Before the P.E. lesson the pupils change into P.E. clothes and all jewellery is collected. Indoor slippers/trainers are worn for P.E. and teachers stress the importance of tying shoelaces before an activity commences. The fixed apparatus is overhauled periodically by a firm recommended by the WELB.

See Physical Education Policy

This Policy will reviewed bi-annually

FIRE DRILL

The school's fire drill plan, showing assembly points, is prominently displayed in every classroom.(See Appendix 5) At least once a term during the school year there is a planned practice drill for staff and pupils. In the event of a fire or practice drill, teachers will lead their classes to the playground where roll call will be taken using either the class list or roll sheet.

See Fire Safety and Procedures Policy

FIRST AID

Minor ailments are dealt with by the class teacher/lunch supervisor who is a trained First Aid practitioner. On no account will medicines be administered to children by school staff.(See Drugs Education Policy) The only exception to this is the emergency procedure to be followed by the relevant adults in daily contact with the child who suffers from anaphylaxis.(See Appendix 6) for procedure to be followed and named personnel) All accidents are reported immediately to the Principal and an accident report form is filled out. A report is then forwarded to E.A. and a copy is retained by the school. In the event of a child feeling ill or requiring emergency treatment, the child's parent/guardian will be contacted by telephone and asked to take the child home or to the Health Centre. If, in an emergency, the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, a decision will be made based on the gravity of the situation and a member of staff accompanied by a work colleague may take the child to the Health Centre. In such circumstances staff will do their best to keep trying to locate the parent/guardian.

APPENDICES

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| Appendix 2 | Medical Record Form |
| Appendix 3 | Code of Practice |
| Appendix 4 | Management for Schools of Epilepsy |
| Appendix 5 | Fire Assembly Points |
| Appendix 6
attack | Procedure to follow in the event of an anaphylactic |