



POLICY IN CHAPLAINCY SERVICES IN HEYWOOD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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1. Core Professional Purpose C.P.P./School Mission Statement:

In fulfilling its mission, the school nurtures and affirms the uniqueness and full development of each individual. It promotes the personal and emotional development of students, staff and management in a caring and respectful environment. The school ethos respects the dignity of each person by listening to their views and encouraging them to question and search for meaning. Mindful of our role in the education of young people the school endeavors to provide a learning and teaching environment that encourages students to give due importance to their studies and promotes educational excellence. The ethos seeks also to awaken spirituality in all members of the school community. It strives to establish the school as a witness to the reign of God and the gospel values and will nurture the Christian faith through RE classes, annual retreats and through providing opportunities for spiritual engagement (prayer services, prayer opportunities etc.) while at the

same time demonstrating a spirit of tolerance of the religious beliefs of others, facilitating them in whatever way possible in the practices of their own faiths.

2. Rationale for the Policy:

As a Community School under Religious Trusteeship in the Catholic tradition, we are committed to the importance of formal religious and moral education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Community School in the Salesian family. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students and to provide opportunities for them to know God. The Chaplain is interested in the holistic development of each individual student regardless of their faith background.

3. Objectives of the Policy:

- To promote the religious and overall development of the students.
- To ensure the status of the Chaplain and Religious Education in the school.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions, in particular the Salesian tradition and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions.
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for Chaplaincy and RE in the school.
- To provide a framework for the profession and work of the Chaplain.

4. Chaplaincy Vision Statement & Actions:

Vision:

The Chaplain:

- Works in harmony with the Principal and teachers of the school along with the families, communities and parishes of the students.
- Seeks to know all students within the school and endeavour to meet some students individually on a weekly basis in the context of pastoral counselling.
- Is involved in ensuring that retreats are made available for all students so that they may have the opportunity to reflect and develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery.
- Works as a member of the pastoral care team, critical incident management team and student support team.
- Is involved with students who have suffered bereavement or are experiencing personal difficulties in the context of one-to-one pastoral counselling and/or group interventions.

- Liaises with the tutors and year heads over matters relating to the formation and support of the students and provides assistance as appropriate related to their wellbeing.
- Works with all staff to create a well-balanced school community, involving themselves in the life of the school and are present at major events in the student's school life.
- Aims to encourage and foster an awareness of spirituality within the school to provide the students with an opportunity to express their own religious identity, through liturgies, retreats and other religious and non-religious occasions and experiences of spirituality.
- Aims to be available "any time, any place, anywhere" to all members of the school community – students, staff, parents and to develop an open and trusting relationship with all those with whom they come into contact as a companion on the journey of life.
- Teaches the required 4 hours each week in the assigned subject of Religious Education.

Actions:

- Being available to students, teachers, staff, parents and school authorities as someone to confide in, who listens and cares, serving as a faith companion on the journey of life.
- Working with school management and the care team to promote a positive, living and enriching school ethos.
- Following up referrals of students from the school care team, teachers or parents. In conjunction with parents and school authorities, advising on appropriate courses of action should the student need further intervention.
- Celebrating the key events in the Church's liturgical calendar and providing opportunities for staff and students to celebrate their faith and/or the faith of their friends.
- Decorating and maintaining a prayer space in the school where students and teachers can develop their spiritual selves through prayer and/or meditation.
- Teaching Religious Education and working closely with the RE team to co-ordinate the annual programme of liturgies, retreats, talks, prayer and meditation.
- Seeking opportunities, both in school and in the wider parish and local community, where students can develop socially, spiritually, creatively, morally and personally through outreach initiatives as outlined in the introduction above.

5. Role of the Chaplain:

The role of Chaplain *involves the establishment of a relationship or relationships whose purpose may encompass support in a time of trouble and personal and/or spiritual growth through deeper understanding of oneself, others and/or God.*¹

¹ Lyall, *Integrity of Pastoral Care*, p. 12.

A significant role of the Chaplain will always be to ensure that the characteristic spirit of the school, as expressed in the school's mission statement, finds practical expression in faith formation alongside pastoral, liturgical, para-liturgical and outreach activities. According to the white paper on Education; "Pastoral Care is proactive and seeks to address the totality of the human person."² Therefore, the role is holistic in nature. The Chaplain is called to act collaboratively with all school community members, particularly with those who hold designated pastoral responsibilities relating to students, staff and members of the wider community connected with the school. To this end, the Chaplain seeks to involve him/herself in whatever promotes "an integrated development of the pupils, particularly with those at risk or those who struggle with life."³

Chaplaincy as a pastoral role is exercised by:

- Personal contact and pastoral counselling with individual students.
- Access to classes and small groups.
- Maintaining a lively interest in recreational, cultural and outreach activities.
- Liaising with, supporting and being available/present to staff.
- Communicating with and supporting parents/guardians.
- To be available for staff and pupils around the school for informal contact.
- To take part when practical in year retreats or days of recollection.
- To attend when practical parents and open evenings.
- To be responsible, in liaison with the Head of RE and the Senior Management team for the key liturgical events such as holy days of obligation and major school celebrations including liturgies.
- To encourage the sacramental life of the school through events like class/school masses and reconciliation services, etc.
- To assist with the preparation and delivery of a prayer element at assemblies.
- To liaise with and encourage Christian social groups in the school such as Meitheal, Pope John Paul II Award, St Vincent de Paul Society, Justice and Peace, Amber Flag etc.
- To maintain close links with the local people of all faiths and encourage their visits to and involvement with the school.
- One-to-one pastoral counselling sessions are undertaken by the Chaplain with students as previously outlined (Personal contact with students). It is important to highlight that this is a combined effort with the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, SEN Department and other relevant staff. The Student Support Team meets on a weekly basis to raise and discuss students deemed to be in need/at risk.

² White paper on education, *Charting Our Educational Future* (1995) p.10

³ James Norman: *Pastoral Care in Second Level Schools: The Chaplain* (CRRE, 2002) p.11

- Pastoral Counselling helps students in crisis by exploring and developing a range of coping strategies and interventions, in a thoughtful and caring way, deemed appropriate to the student's individual needs.
- The Chaplain's office is purposely decorated to create a warm welcoming space where students can relax and feel at ease. Pastoral Counselling takes place in an accepting, non-judgmental atmosphere where the young person feels secure enough to explore new ways of dealing with difficult situations. In some instances, students may be referred to outside bodies or agencies deemed for the best interest of the student as arranged by the Chaplain and/or the Student Support Team.
- When issues of Child Protection arise, the Chaplain maintains regular communication with the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person.

6. Wider Community Links:

PASTORAL CARE/ STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

The Student Support Team meets every week. Those on the team include the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor(s), SEN Department representative(s), Senior Management, sometimes Year Heads and other parties are invited to attend when deemed appropriate. Here, strategies and interventions are coordinated for students who are at risk.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION /YEAR HEADS

Communication with Year Heads is frequent. Students are often referred to the Chaplain by the Year Head; therefore, feedback on the student's journey is regular. If requested, the Chaplain will provide a written update report to be retained by the Year Head or Senior Management in the student's file. When it is deemed helpful, the Chaplain is available to meet students and parents together with the Year Head and/or management.

CLASS TUTORS/SUBJECT TEACHERS/ SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS

Sometimes, the class tutor or subject teacher will refer a student to the Chaplain. In such cases, feedback is shared with the teacher, as appropriate.

SPHE CO-ORDINATOR & TEACHERS

These links are mainly about offering preparatory and follow-up support around RSE workshops, etc. Occasionally, students' engagement with the content of SPHE class may prompt a teacher to refer a student who may need support.

STUDENT COUNCIL & MEITHEAL TEAM

The Student Council link teacher may report circumstances that would benefit from Chaplaincy support. The Chaplain engages with the diocesan advisor and acts as a teacher leader for the Meitheal team here in Heywood Community School. Meitheal is a faith-based leadership and peer mentoring programme where a group of specially selected students engage in activities pertaining to creating a positive atmosphere at school and relate directly to our school ethos and the Heywood tradition of faith and education.

TUSLA (CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY)/ CHILD PROTECTION

When a student is deemed at risk of abuse, a report is made to the Designated Liaison Person within the school. This, in normal circumstances, is the Principal and he follows the Child Protection Guidelines, in referring the case to Tusla – the Child & Family Agency. The Chaplain is available to link with social workers when they are involved with students and their families. The Chaplain is trained in Child Protection and as a mandated person is up to date and will continue to be aware of and familiar with the role as a mandated person.

LOCAL PARISH TEAM

The Chaplain liaises with the Local Parish team regularly and may attend the local deanery meetings when invited. School liturgies that may take place are coordinated with the local church community. Frequent contact is made with Parish Priest to lend mutual support and spiritual companionship.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

When necessary, the Chaplain will contact these agencies to access student support. However, in general, such supports are accessed by parents/guardians following GP visits with the child/ward in need, the weekly student support meeting is the context in which these links are made on behalf of students of concern in collaboration with other relevant members of the care team in the school.

VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS AND CHARITIES

When the need arises, the Chaplain will engage with following agencies to access information and advice: Saint Vincent de Paul, AA, Aware, Barnardos, Bodywhys, Childline, First Light, Headstrong, HSE – various information/support services, Jigsaw, Samaritans and others.

7. Evaluation:

In line with recent educational trends and School Self-Evaluation, the Chaplain will provide where necessary an evaluation at the end of each year. This involves collaborative work with the Religious Education Department and other teams in the school.

8. Chaplaincy Programme & Curriculum Content for Each Year Group:

The Chaplain will work on a viable programme for each year and will adjust it accordingly.

9. Confidentiality, Data and Child Protection:

As part of the code of ethics, the Chaplain must store, handle, transfer and dispose of all records (including written, electronic, audio and video) securely and in a way that safeguards the student's right to privacy. Care should be taken when storing all data related to the student's particular care needs. In obtaining information from or about a client, the Chaplain should deal only with what may be necessary for the client's welfare. The Chaplain will use a specific sheet(s) to record all data.

Confidentiality must be secured from the beginning of the relationship but is not guaranteed. In the case where the Chaplain deems it necessary to breach confidentiality and make a report to the designated liaison person in the school, this will be done with the student's knowledge and is seen as an extension of care rather than a breach of confidentiality. The health and safety of others is of the utmost importance. It is understood that the Chaplain cannot use any confidential information for any personal advantage. If a student is involved in legal proceedings, this releases the Chaplain from confidentiality in any matter relevant to legal proceedings.

10. Social Outreach and Justice:

The Chaplain promotes a spirit of concern for others within and beyond the school community. The Chaplain may help the students take part in fundraising work for charities to help those in need. Helping those in our own community through community service programmes is also an area that the Chaplain may help students become involved in. For example, raising awareness of social justice problems and moral issues in our locality and worldwide, such as, poverty, child labour, war, human rights etc. This is at the heart of our school ethos and Salesian heritage.

11. Spiritual Guidance:

The Chaplain animates the spiritual life of the school community and offers opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with God. The Chaplain organizes various activities designed to meet the spiritual needs of the students.

12. Retreats:

The Chaplain organizes retreats for different 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 into their daily lives. The Chaplain coordinates a full retreat programme for students in the school.

The yearly plan for retreats for each year group is revised annually in accordance with the needs of the students and the financial provision for retreats varies from year to year. This review of the plan for retreats happens because of collaboration between the Chaplain, the RE Department and school management.

13. Religious Education in the Whole School Community/Life/Day:

Every student has a personal responsibility to behave in a manner that allows them and others to be educated. It is grounded in an ethos which promotes good relationships with all stakeholders. Important liturgical events are acknowledged and celebrated. Prayer is acceptable at times at assembly of staff and students. Students are of various faiths and of none and this is acknowledged in the set up and use of the oratory and other sacred spaces in the school including RE classrooms.

14. Sacred Space:

- It is to be acknowledged that all efforts should be made to provide a sacred space for the spiritual development of staff and students and as a necessity for the Chaplain to carry out necessary work.
- An area set aside for the sacred in the main part of the school is of great importance and necessary in order to make visible our ethos.
- Class groups are offered prayer experiences in the oratory, which help to develop their relationship with God. Classes take part in Eucharistic celebrations, prayer services, and meditation thus making prayer a part of the ordinary life of the school.

15. Policy Review & Update:

The Chaplain will work with management and the Board of Management to review and update the policy, if necessary, annually.