

# SCHOOL PASTORAL CARE POLICY



ATHY COLLEGE

Athy

County Kildare

## Mission Statement

*'In a caring school we are dedicated to fostering educational excellence empowering all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and co-operation we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual'.*

## Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Athy College Educational Policy
3. Definition of Pastoral Care
4. Aims of Athy College Pastoral Care
5. Personnel Involved in Pastoral Care in Athy College
6. Pastoral Role: Definitions and Responsibilities
7. Department of Education and Skills Programmes that integrate Pastoral Care
8. Pastoral Care links with Social, Personal and Health Education
9. Pastoral Procedures: Information, Communication, Collaboration
10. Linking with Agencies outside of School
11. Pastoral Care Professional Development

## Introduction

Athy College is a co-educational post-primary school in Athy, County Kildare. In 2010, the school moved to a newly built school building located at Tomard, Monasterevin Road, Athy. It is one of four schools on this campus which is owned by Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board. Athy College is located in a RAPID area and is a participant in the Department of Education and Skills *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) initiative.

## Athy College Educational Policy

Education could be defined as the on-going development of each one of us so that we may realise our true and best self. It follows, therefore, that educators should be open to change and innovation, initiators of new development in this continuing, life-long process we call education. Students should feel themselves to be partners in their own education.

The school aims to prepare students for public examinations, in an age when academic qualifications are indispensable for admission to further education and entry into many forms of employment. Therefore, the school pursues examination courses leading to:-

- (a) Junior Certificate; Junior Certificate Schools Programme
- (b) Leaving Certificate; Leaving Certificate Vocational, Leaving Certificate Applied

The school recognises that its students are of varying cultural and religious backgrounds, aspirations and abilities.

More and more is being expected of education in school. It should prepare students for life at work; for relationships; for leisure and for an ever-changing world, which demands for everyone, a capacity for adaptation and adjustment. To meet these needs, the school offers a variety of leisure activities and a sports programme, as well as fostering creative abilities and implements a Pastoral Care Programme to provide genuine human and social education aimed at developing the emotional growth of each student as an individual.

The school recognises the vital role that parents play in the overall education for their children. Contact with Parents is invaluable and they should feel free to visit the school, meet teachers by appointment and generally become involved in all aspects of school life. The HSCL co-ordinator facilitates this.

The school recognises the importance of the Community in which the student lives. For this reason, every effort is made to ensure that the student is aware of life in the community and is encouraged to be involved in organisations and activities.

## Pastoral Approach in our School

### **Definition of Pastoral Care**

'School Pastoral Care is a systemic approach to education which seeks to value and develop the young person at every level.

It implies caring for the quality of relationships between the partners in the school community. It involves the engagement of all the school policies, processes and programmes in the development of the appropriate systemic structures, roles and resources to support the development of the emerging adult'

Luke Monahan's "Making School A Better Place"

### **Aims of Pastoral Care**

The aim of this Pastoral Care Programme is to contribute to the overall development of each student; to fulfil the students' academic, personal, social and vocational needs.

1. **Academic Objectives:** Pastoral Care is primarily about efficient learning which should be better facilitated by planned training in study skills.
2. **Personal Objectives:** Pastoral Care is a form of education for the personal and emotional development of students, achieved by the counselling tutorial groups and referral systems which it seeks to implement.
3. **Social Objectives:** The formation of happy, meaningful relationships is essential in life and the aim of Pastoral Care is to help students to relate within their families in school, in the work place, in communities and in society in general.
4. **Vocational Objective:** Education for living and particularly for life at work, and later, family life and the responsibilities of rearing children, are all part of the function of Pastoral Care.

## Personnel Involved in Pastoral Care in Athy College

1. Principal  
Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection  
Head of Athy College Care Team
2. Deputy Principal  
Year Head to Fifth and Sixth Year Students
3. Guidance Counsellor
4. Leaving Certificate Applied Programme Co-ordinator
5. Junior Certificate Schools Programme Co-ordinator
6. Year Heads
7. Class Tutors
8. Home School Community Co-ordinator
9. School Completion Programme Co-ordinator
10. Special Educational Needs Co-ordination Team
11. Co-ordinator for Students attending the ASD unit
12. Teachers of S.P.H.E. and Religious Education

## Pastoral Role: Definitions and Responsibilities

### Athy College Management

The Board of Management and the School Management Team of Athy College have a responsibility to ensure that the provision of pastoral care and the agreed practices in the school are of the highest possible standards.

### The Year Head

It is the Year Head's task to co-ordinate the Pastoral Care Programme, to manage the Pastoral Care team and to assume responsibility for students of the particular year. The Year Head's function includes:

- Co-ordination of the pastoral care programme
- Responsibility as immediate point of referral from class tutors
- Communication with other staff and parents
- Linking students and the local community
- Discipline matters

### The Class Tutor

The Class Tutor is the teacher who willingly undertakes the special care of one class unit or tutor group. He or she works as part of a Pastoral Care team under the leadership of a Year Head. The Class Tutor's role includes:

- Presentation and on-going evaluation of the pastoral care programme
- Day-to-day dealings with class group which includes academic progress, attendance register, punctuality,
- Contact with parents, local community, teachers and counsellors
- Referral to Year Head

## The Guidance Counsellor

The guidance counsellor participates in and manages the guidance service under three areas of activity (IGC, Role Document):

- Personal/Social Guidance and Counselling
- Educational Guidance and Counselling
- Career Guidance and Counselling

### **Counselling (Personal/Social and Career Guidance)**

The guidance counsellor has particular skills in this area which could support students with a wide range of issues e.g. behavioural problems, stress, conflict resolution. In this the guidance counsellor helps the student explore alternatives and develop strategies for change or consider referral if appropriate. In a person-centered, caring environment students are empowered to self-actualise. Counselling can occur on an individual or group basis.

### **Consultation Services (Personal/Social, Educational, Careers Guidance)**

The guidance counsellor consults with significant adults e.g. teachers, parents principal, year heads and tutors. This is achieved through presentations to parents, presentations to staff at staff meetings, being available at parent-teacher meetings. This is done to enable these significant adults in young people's lives to be more effective supports for them. This focus is highlighted by our inclusion in the DEIS programme and HSCL which seeks to develop interaction with parents and students who may be marginalised.

### **Preparation for Working Life (Personal/Social, Educational, Careers Guidance)**

Students need some experience and preparation for the world of work and how to manage this transition. During work experience the student learns valuable skills for work and gains insight for their own career preferences. The guidance counsellor liaises with the LCVP and LCA co-ordinators and this function is met through dedicated work preparation modules in LCVP and LCA. This experience informs students on career choices post leaving certificate.

### **Referral Services (Personal/Social)**

Students will on occasion be referred to the guidance counsellor for support or intervention. Appointment slips are issued to verify appointments and time of return to class. Athy College operates an "Open Door" policy and referrals may be as follows;

- Tutor/year head/teacher /parent referral
- Self-referral
- Counsellor referral to an outside agency for specialist help

## Leaving Certificate Applied Programme Co-ordinator

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a distinct, self-contained Leaving Certificate programme which focuses on vocational preparation, vocational education and general education. The programme is characterised by educational experiences of an active, practical and student-centred nature. The LCA programme co-ordinator in Athy College also serves as the Year Head to the Leaving Certificate Applied students (both LCA Year I and II) and manages the pastoral care of these students. The LCA Co-ordinator in Athy College is also a permanent member of the Care Team.

## Home School Community Co-ordinator

The Home School Community Co-ordinator in Athy College works to encourage the participation of parents' in their children's education, in addition to promoting parents' education, development growth and involvement. As part of this partnership approach between parents and school staff the HSCL Co-ordinator is a key link between the school and home. The HSCL Co-ordinator is also a permanent member of Athy College Care Team.

## School Completion Programme Co-ordinator

The School Completion Programme is a Department of Education & Science initiative that aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and second level schools and on the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or equivalent. The School Completion Co-ordinator in Athy College co-ordinates a range of effective supports that respond to young people's needs. They are both preventative and supportive, ranging from social and personal development to After-school and Out-of-school supports, including sport and leisure activities as well as supports that target the young person's home and community life. SCP is a collaborative programme that works in partnership with family, community, youth, and sporting organisations and with relevant national statutory and voluntary bodies. The School Completion Co-ordinator in Athy College is a permanent member of the school Care Team.



## Special Educational Needs Co-ordination Team

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordination team in Athy College liaise with a range of internal school services, Department of Educational and Skills personnel and external agencies in order to access additional supports for students with special educational needs. In particular, the team link with:

- The Special Educational Needs Organiser
- Educational Psychologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech and Language Therapists

In addition, the team liaise with the primary schools in the area in relation to students who are transferring to post-primary school.

## Co-ordinator for Students attending the ASD unit

The co-ordinator for students attending the ASD unit plays a key role in the pastoral care of these students and works collaboratively with the class tutor and year head for each individual student.

## Teachers of S.P.H.E. and Religious Education

The practice of pastoral care is incorporated into the teaching style and classroom management of each teacher in our school. Class tutors deliver the Social, Personal and Health Education programme to First, Second and Third Years (their tutor groups). S.P.H.E. is a core area of our school life and its link to pastoral care is clear. The S.P.H.E. class provides an opportunity for class tutors to build a relationship with their tutor group of students.

Athy College is a multi-faith school. The ethos of the school is one which respects every individual in the school community, promotes an environment which enhances self-esteem and endeavours to develop the talents and aptitudes of every student.

Our school offers Religious Education as a Junior Certificate examination subject and a full Religious Education curriculum at Senior Level. The aim of religious education in Athy College is to promote the educational, moral, religious and spiritual development of our students. Religious Education is therefore an integral part of the broader pastoral care of our students.

## Department of Education and Skills Programmes that integrate Pastoral Care

Athy College delivers the following Department of Education and Skills Programmes which integrate into the school's pastoral care policy:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (First Year – Third Year)
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (First Year – Third Year)
- Junior Certificate Schools Programme
- Leaving Certificate (Established, Vocational and Applied)
- Senior Cycle Religious Education
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (Fifth and Sixth Years)
- Guidance Programme
- School Completion Programme
- Home School Community Liaison Service

## Pastoral Care links with Social, Personal and Health Education

S.P.H.E. is a three year programme delivered to First, Second and Third Year students. The aims of the S.P.H.E. programme are as follows:

- To add to the creation of a school community which promotes good relationships and mutual respect and which encourages personal development
- To focus on the development of each student's feelings of self-worth and self confidence
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To assist students in developing a critical understanding of influences in their world, from the media, their peers and people in the home, school and community
- To prepare our students for a constructive and fulfilling role in their community and society
- To promote physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being
- To develop healthy attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identities, relationships and intimacy

The S.P.H.E. programme is an integral part of the whole school pastoral care of our students.

## Pastoral Procedures: Information, Communication, Collaboration

### Athy College Care Team

In September 2011, Athy College formed a Care Team led by the Principal and Home School Co-ordinator. The role of the Care Team is to bring together all the support services of the school to review how the school community is responding to overall needs of each member of the school community but in particular the student and even more specifically those students with particular challenges.

The core members of the Care Team are:

Principal

Home School Community Co-ordinator

Guidance Counsellor

Leaving Certificate Applied Co-ordinator (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Years)

School Completion Co-ordinator

SEN Co-ordinator

The Care team works in close partnership with the Year Heads and Class Tutors.

The Care Team is there as a resource to the school community around how the school is caring for the holistic needs of its students particularly through an integration of all the support services on offer. The team is a concrete expression of the school's ethos of care for the whole development of the student. It is the coming together of key personnel who in turn have a team supporting them such as the SPHE team, Class Tutors and Year Heads.

The Care Team of Athy College provides a forum for all these personnel to share information, consider issues of common concern, provide concrete support for each other, and make proposals for action in agreed areas. In particular, the Care Team is a forum where the Guidance Counsellor, HSCL Co-ordinator, SCP Co-ordinator and SEN Co-ordinator link and co-ordinate services. This work can significantly support the school's core personnel.

## Linking with Agencies outside of School

Athy College staff link with agencies outside of school when the need arises as part of the pastoral care in the school. The Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Home School Community Co-ordinator and the Care Team may decide that a referral to an agency outside of school is in a particular student's best interest. In such a situation, parents are contacted and the proposed referral is discussed with them.

The agencies that Athy College liaise with include:

National Educational Psychological Service

National Council for Special Education

H.S.E. Social Work Department

HALO Project

Medical Professionals

Gardaí Síochána

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Kildare Youth Service

## Pastoral Care Professional Development

Athy College promotes the up-skilling of all staff. In terms of the professional development in pastoral care, school management encourages teachers to undertake in-service courses offered by the Social, Personal and Health Education Support Service at Post-Primary level. Each term the schedule of courses is given to all class tutors and displayed in the staffroom. In addition to this, all updated curricular material is disseminated to staff through the SPHE Co-ordinator and all staff are encouraged to share new course materials and best practice models of pastoral care delivery.