



Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey

Student Support Policy

'Our school is a caring Christian community in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.'

1. Rationale:

Loreto Abbey provides an environment of excellence and care for each member of the school community. This vision is central to the philosophy of Loreto education which gives priority to the integration of the spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical and emotional development of the individual student. In a Loreto education, relationships are characterised by respect, justice, honesty, sincerity, courage and compassion. (Kolkata Guidelines, page 2)

In Loreto Abbey, our approach to the support of students helps realise these aims. This approach to education values 'each member of the school community and promotes learning at every level of the student.' (The Year Head, Monahan, 1998 IAPCE) Such an approach seeks to respect and nurture the quality of all relationships. It promotes effective and caring leadership and partnership in the school community. It influences all aspects of the life of the school - policies, curriculum, roles and structures in order to sustain and enrich the educational experience and general wellbeing of each student. "Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community" (NCCA Guidelines for Wellbeing 2018).

This policy aims to put in place the framework necessary to underpin and support this approach. The policy will address the following areas:

- Student Support roles: definitions and responsibilities
- Student Support programmes
- Student Support procedures
- Resources and professional development
- Monitoring and evaluation

Student Support Policy

2. Student Support roles: definitions and responsibilities

Every member of staff contributes to student support in our school. Promoting the wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared responsibility and is everybody's business.' (Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, 2019). There are key roles, however, which carry significant support dimensions and responsibilities.

2.1 Student Support Team:

a) This team brings together all the support services of the school to review how the school is responding to the overall needs of the students and in particular students facing challenges. The team has particular responsibility for supporting Class Tutors and Year Heads; reviewing students with particular difficulties and advising relevant groups within the school community on pastoral issues.

b) Membership of the team may be composed of some of the following: guidance counsellors, chaplain, AEN co-ordinator, class tutor, Year Head, principal and/or deputy principal. Other members may be co-opted at any time.

c) The Support team has a timetabled meeting every week.

d) A Chairperson and Secretary are appointed from within the team.

e) A brief report is given to the Year Heads at their weekly meeting.

2.2 Year Heads:

a) Year Heads have both a pastoral and disciplinary role.

b) Year Heads have access to information on all students in their year groups. They survey reports and track academic progress.

c) The role of the Year Head in relation to behavioural matters is outlined in the Code of Behaviour.

d) They encourage good behaviour and present and record certificates of merit.

- e) Year Heads will inform tutors of major disciplinary sanctions against students in their classes.
- f) Year Heads liaise with student representatives in the year group.
- g) Year Heads promote significant participation of the year group in key ethos days of the school.
- h) They are available to meet with parents.

2.3 Class Tutors:

Class Tutors are appointed for Junior cycle and Fourth Year classes.

- a) A tutor is a teacher who, on behalf of the school community, undertakes the role of caring for a particular class group with responsibility in the pastoral and academic areas. This role is undertaken in a voluntary capacity.
- b) The tutor should be a class teacher for the class for which she/he has responsibility.
- c) The tutor is involved in induction programmes where appropriate.
- d) Tutors have a pastoral rather than a disciplinary role and are given information on the students within their group by the Year Head.
- e) They promote class spirit and cohesion.
- f) They encourage leadership qualities within a class group.
- g) They oversee the student journal.
- h) They encourage class involvement in all activities that promote the ethos of the school.
- i) It is recommended that class tutors will meet as a group with their Year Head at least twice a term in school time.
- j) Class tutors are given opportunities to engage in professional development programmes.

2.4 Academic Mentors:

- a) The Academic Mentoring Programme is a valuable initiative designed to support students in both their academic progress and overall wellbeing. It is available to all 5th and 6th year students.
- b) By providing structured, one-to-one guidance, the programme ensures that each 5th and 6th Year student has a dedicated mentor, generally a teacher who teaches them and has volunteered for the role, who offers advice on study skills, goal setting, and time management.
- c) Regular meetings, which take place at least once per term or more frequently if needed, allow mentors to monitor progress, address challenges, and provide encouragement and support to students.
- d) Beyond academic support, the programme fosters positive student-teacher relationships, enhancing students' confidence and motivation. The mentor also serves as a key point of contact, liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principals and Year Head, to ensure a holistic approach to student support and wellbeing.

2.5 Guidance Counsellors:

(Please refer to the Whole School Guidance Plan) (The role definition is taken from the work of the NCGE.)

a) The Guidance Counsellors participate in and co-ordinate the school guidance and counselling service. This participation can be categorised under three integrated areas of activity:

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

b) This service is central to our pastoral care provision and involves a range of activities which include:

- Counselling
- Psychometric Assessment
- Information
- Educational Development
- Personal and Social Development
- Referral (where deemed appropriate)
- Guidance activities to help pupils make transitions
- Consultation with parents, teachers and pupils
- Feedback to staff and school management on the needs of Pupils

An explanation of these activities is contained in the Whole School Guidance Plan.

c) The Guidance Counsellors are members of the Student Support team and the Critical Incident Management team

2.6 Additional Education Needs Teachers (Please refer to the Whole School Inclusion Policy)

The AEN Department offers support to students with a diagnosed additional education need or through school referral. The department is composed of a core team of additional education teachers who work with a large cohort of students in small groups and on a one-to-one basis. The AEN coordinator is also a member of the Student Support

Team. They are best placed to offer advice and guidance as to how to help students who may be referred to the group.

2.7 Religious Education Department (Please refer to the Religious Education Policy)

Religious Education in a Loreto school promotes hospitality, generosity, compassion, justice, respect and peace. The R.E. team work on some of the pastoral initiatives which help students experience an affinity with the school. In the Cara programme, a sixth year volunteers to assist a first year student as she makes the transition from primary to secondary school. They preempt many difficulties that can arise in this period and build relationships between senior and junior students. The R.E. team co-ordinate the programme and arrange formal meetings throughout the year to develop the programme. Liturgies are celebrated throughout the year which again gives students a sense of identity.

Opportunities for days of reflection are provided for students, they not only give valuable time for reflection but also help bond groups and deepen friendships. The R.E. curriculum, particularly in the senior classes, helps students become aware of their own identity and worth and aims to provide them with coping skills for the many challenges of life.

The school Chaplain is a member of the Student Support Team and the Critical Incident Management Team. The job specification is available in the R.E. policy.

2.9 Parents' Association

The Parents' Association meets on a monthly basis and acts in an advisory capacity in promoting the educational and Christian ethos of the school and the general welfare and wellbeing of its pupils. The Association hosts occasional seminars for parents on adolescent wellbeing.

2.10 Student Council

The Student Council plays a vital role in representing the student body and ensuring that student voice is central to school life. Operating in accordance with the Student Council Constitution, the council provides a structured platform for students to express their views, raise concerns, and contribute to decision-making processes that impact their education and wellbeing.

The key functions of the Student Council include:

- Acting as a liaison between students and school management.

- Identifying and articulating issues affecting students and proposing constructive solutions.
- Promoting student support by fostering an inclusive and respectful school environment.
- Assisting in the organisation of school events, charitable initiatives, and awareness campaigns.
- Encouraging a culture of leadership, teamwork, and active citizenship among students.
- Collaborating with staff, parents, each other to enhance student support structures.

Through these functions, the Student Council strengthens the democratic process within the school, ensures students feel heard and valued, and contributes to a positive and supportive school community.

3. Student Support Programmes

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core area of school life and its link to pastoral care is clear. This school has a commitment to SPHE and demonstrates this in its provision on the curriculum which adheres to the official Department guidelines. In addition, we recognise SPHE as a whole school concern and therefore ensure that there are opportunities for (1) whole staff consideration of SPHE in the school, (2) review with parents and management regarding the effectiveness of the programme and (3) on-going professional development for staff. Life skills and topics linked with wellbeing are also dealt with in the Religious Education and Guidance programmes. An SPHE advisory group composed of Senior students meets regularly with the SPHE team to advise on the programme and to contribute to peer education initiatives.

4. Student Support Procedures

This school has a number of policies which outline procedures to support students. Please refer to Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy, Child Protection policy, Acceptable Usage Policy, Whole School Guidance Plan, Substance Use Policy, SPHE Policy, Critical Incident Management Policy, and Wellbeing policy

5. Outside Support

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 may be necessary to call on the expertise of outside agencies such as NEPS, Neart, Tusla and others.

6. Resources and professional development (Please refer to the Professional Development policy)

The school is committed to providing all of the necessary resources to underpin this Student Support policy.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy

At the end of every academic year, the Student Support team will:

- Initiate a review of the Student Support Team meeting procedures to ensure it is best meeting the needs of students.
- Lead an evaluation of the policy by surveying staff, students as to its effectiveness. The results will influence future phases of the policy.

Signed: *Elis Humphreys*

Date: 31st March 2025

(Chairperson of Board of Management)