


PASTORAL CARE POLICY

2023

Ardgillan College

Date for review: November 2025



Colm Kilgallon

Chairperson

Board of Management


Date ratified by the Board of Management

INTRODUCTION

Ardgillan College facilitates learning and teaching of young people irrespective of abilities, background or gender. Through its policies and activities, Ardgillan aims to promote equality and tolerance as preparation for life and involvement in society. Ardgillan strives to provide a caring environment in which young people can enjoy, exercise and fully develop their knowledge, talents and interests in the context of their responsibilities to themselves, to others, to the school and to society. Teamwork, respect and the pursuit of excellence form the three cornerstones of the college philosophy. Ardgillan College delivers a six-year cycle from first year to sixth year. In Ardgillan each person is valued and respected for who they are. Within our school there exists a supportive, safe, friendly and collaborative environment.

WHAT IS PASTORAL CARE?

Pastoral Care in Ardgillan College is a system set in place to provide individual attention to the overall development of each student. It is a structure which helps to identify individual problems and needs. Through the Pastoral Care System we aim to create an atmosphere of respect and care which will enable the students and teachers to have a clear vision of their role in upholding the ethos of the school. Pastoral Care 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, which together aim to support the development of the emerging adult.

The young person is at the centre of the school and every aspect of school activity is important in addressing the holistic development of the young person.

AIMS OF PASTORAL CARE SYSTEM IN ARDGILLAN COLLEGE

- To foster a strong partnership between parents, teachers, students and all members of the school community
- To promote a school environment that is open, happy and inclusive
- To encourage parents to play an active role in the education of their child
- To encourage students to be proactive and help others, both in school and in society
- To help students to strive to achieve their potential in all aspects of life
- To encourage the development of individual talents
- To encourage co-operation and responsibility for one's actions
- To promote self-discipline
- To encourage mutual respect amongst all members of the school community
- To help to develop personal integrity in the students
- To encourage a spirit of service amongst all members of the school community

IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Board of Management

The board of management will ensure that the ethos and values of the founding partners are reflected in the formulation and implementation of this policy.

Principal and Deputy Principals

The Principal and Deputy Principals will work to ensure that our school is primarily a caring community. The management is committed to supporting all those involved in the pastoral care programme in Ardgillan College. The management makes time available to meet parents, staff and students in a supportive atmosphere. The management facilitates in-house staff development and encourages participation in external associations, programmes and courses particularly when those programmes/courses have a direct influence on student learning.

Tutors

In our college we use the 'tutor system' as a means of pastoral care and getting to know each individual student and their needs. Each student in each class group in every year of our school is assigned a Tutor. This is a teacher who, in a voluntary capacity, is the mentor for their particular class. The role of the tutor is one primarily concerned with the welfare of the students, their positive induction and integration into school life each year and continued well-being within our school. The tutor is responsible for monitoring attendance, academic performance and personal development. Guidelines on the role of the Tutor are issued to all teachers at the beginning of the school year.

Year Heads

Year Heads play a major role in the care and support of our students. They are responsible for holding year group assemblies and tutor team meetings. They have constant contact with parents and guardians on the progress and performance of the students. They also communicate with the Principal, Deputy Principals and teachers on issues relating to the year group.

Guidance Counsellors

The Guidance Department provides a wide range of services including Vocational/Educational Guidance, Personal Development/Counselling, Aptitude/Interest Inventory testing. The Guidance Counsellors are available to meet students in class groups and for individual consultation with students and/or parents on matters relating to career advice and possible personal difficulties.

All School Staff

Due care and respect will form the basis of all dealings the staff may have with all members of the school community and visitors to the school.

Class Teachers

Teachers conduct classes in a structured and ordered environment. The relationship fostered in the class is based on mutual respect. The classroom teacher deals with

situations that arise in class and in more serious situations she or he refers the student to a Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

Religious Education (RE) Teachers

The RE teachers deliver the RE Programme to all students. This programme increases awareness of cultural and ethnic diversity, acceptance, tolerance and morality.

Critical Incident Team

The Critical Incident Team is made up of the Principal, Nuala Ní Mhurchú and Deputy Principals, Krista Dunne, Caitriona Rooney and Robert Finnegan. The Team will meet on a regular basis. In the event of a critical incident the team will meet with relevant parties, such as the guidance counsellors in discussion of how best to support students and teachers.

Parents Association

The Parents Association contributes to policy making. Through their involvement in the association parents show their commitment to student welfare and development. The Parents Association contributes to various programmes in the school.

The Student Council

The Student Council is a representative structure for all the students in the school. It provides students with the opportunity to become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents.

The Student Council has responsibility for:

- Working with the staff, Board of Management and Parents' Association in the school
- Communicating and consulting with all of the students in the school
- Involving as many students as possible in the activities of the Council
- Planning and managing the Council's programme of activities for the year
- Organising fundraising activities for the school and the community
- Building a link between the school and the community of Balbriggan

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Teachers

The class tutor in Junior Cycle delivers the SPHE Programme (one-two class period/s per week) to their individual tutor groups.

The aims of the SPHE programme are:

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

In the SPHE programme a wide range of issues are addressed in ten modules. The ten modules are:

1. Belonging and Integrating
2. Self-management: A sense of purpose
3. Communication Skills
4. Physical Health
5. Friendships
6. Relationships and Sexuality
7. Emotional Health
8. Influences and Decisions
9. Substances Use
10. Personal Safety

Learning Support/Resource Teachers

The learning support teachers support students academically as well as socially and personally to facilitate their holistic education. The work is carried out in conjunction with the mainstream teachers and in collaboration with home and external agencies.

Special Needs Assistants

Special Needs Assistants provide care and assistance to the students allocated to their care.

Students

Relationships in the school will be based on respect and courtesy. Students should at all times be supportive to all in the school community. Students should respect school property and the environment and take responsibility for keeping it in good order.

PASTORAL CARE PROGRAMMES

The following policies/programmes will contribute to the Pastoral Care Programme in a positive and caring manner:

Anti-Bullying Policy

The purpose of the Anti-Bullying Policy is to:

- To raise the awareness of bullying and
- To have procedures in place to deal with incidents of bullying.

Care of New Students Who Join During the School Year

The relevant Year Head and Tutor will provide advice and assistance to new students who join Ardgillan College during the academic year. The Year Head and Tutor will monitor the performance and integration of the new students by consulting with the student's teachers. The Year Head and/or Tutor will meet with the relevant students and enquire as to how they are settling in to Ardgillan College and offer support as required.

Code of Positive Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour is in place to facilitate learning and teaching in a positive, safe and secure atmosphere. The Code has been developed in partnership with the staff, students, parents and management. Refer to Code of Positive Behaviour.

Critical Incident Policy

Refer to the policy.

Extra-Curricular Activities

A wide range of activities including sporting, cultural, dramatic and artistic events facilitate the personal development of students, assists the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Induction Programme for First Year Students

An induction programme for incoming first year students is held at the beginning of the academic year. The Year Head and Tutors inform the first year students of the code of positive behaviour in Ardgillan College. Timetables are distributed to the new students and the Tutors conduct an orientation session with their individual classes and informs them of all aspects of school life.

Positive Behaviour Programme

A positive behaviour programme is in place for all students. The focus of positive behaviour is to use incentives such as motivation, encouragement, praise and reward to improve behaviour and performance. The aim of the programme is to foster team spirit in a class group and to improve class-work, homework and behaviour. The positive behaviour programme entails collaboration among Year Heads, Class Tutors, class teachers, students and parents.

We employ a system of merits, whereby teachers award students merits on a daily basis for instances of good behaviour and performance. Each week a merit leaderboard is displayed on the notice boards. At the end of each term the top two students on the leaderboard, from each tutor group receives a prize and a merit award badge.

An Awards Ceremony is held at the end of each academic year. Awards are given for the 'student of the year' in each year group and perfect attendance awards. The selection of the 'student of the year' is based on performance, participation, co-operation and effort made during the year.

Substance Abuse Policy

Refer to the policy.

Supervised Study

A supervised study facility is available in the school on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening after school for those undertaking state examinations. Students study in a quiet supervised atmosphere. Homework club is run for first and second year students.

Mentoring Programme

A Mentor (senior subject department members/Subject Co-Ordinator) is assigned to each new staff member when they begin teaching in Ardgillan. The aims of the mentoring programme are to promote:

- The care and well-being of new teachers
- The development and acquisition of new teaching skills
- A collaborative teaching culture in our school.

PASTORAL PROCEDURES

- Daily Year Group Assembly
- SPHE for one-two period/s a week with class tutor in Junior Cycle and one tutor period per week in Senior Cycle
- Care Team Meetings – Relevant Year Head and Tutors (Learning Support invited if necessary)
- Care Team Meetings – Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads and all other AP1 teachers, along with the Guidance Counsellor meet once a month.
- Critical Incident Procedure
- Special Circumstances – bereavement, allegations of violence, bullying, abuse, suspicion of violence, bullying, abuse, pregnancy, suicide tendencies, self-harm, cult involvement, occult involvement
- Disclosure – where mandatory and when appropriate