

Gaelscoil Neachtain



Pólasaí don Tréadchúram

Pastoral Care Policy

Rationale

At Gaelscoil Neachtain we promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation which will contribute to the learning process and generate a positive and supportive atmosphere within the school community where every individual feels valued and cared for.

Pastoral Care concerns the child's total well-being. Pastoral Care is composed of different policies and procedures which encourage each individual child to develop their full potential by catering for their spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, physical and social needs, in a safe and secure environment. Each child will be encouraged to develop personal, social and academic skills to prepare them for the "outside world".

We recognise that parents and other services outside the school also have a central role. We strive to work in co-operation with each of these in order to fulfil our pastoral care ethos.

This Pastoral Care Policy applies equally during periods of exceptional closure and / or lockdown.

Aims

- To ensure that each child feels valued and that he/she feels a part of the Gaelscoil community
- We aim to build positive relationships with the children in our care with the aim of raising pupils' social awareness, promoting positive attitudes and building their self-esteem.
- We aim to promote confidence and pride in our pupils as members of an Irish language community.
- To nurture an appreciation, respect and love for the Irish language and culture
- We aim to enable the children to initiate and develop good relations with other children, teachers and other adults
- At Gaelscoil Neachtain we are aware of the need to help our children manage their present lives, as well as to help them prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. We aim, therefore, to provide for the development of the pupil as a person as well as a learner.
- We aim to develop our pupils' 'life skills' – critical thinking, decision making, effective communication, learning from mistakes, which are necessary for their safety and health in today's society.
- We aim to guide our pupils on both personal and educational matters and we seek to build up a community of children who care about each other and show respect for themselves and others.

- We aim to promote a partnership and close working relationship with parents/guardians whose views and wishes as first carers will be heard and respected to enable us to support their children's learning.
- We aim to offer a framework of values and positive behaviour enabling our children to be self-reliant, motivated, self-disciplined and to make good choices in a moral context.

Values

Every opportunity will be taken to praise our pupils for their contributions to the life of the Gaelscoil. Through positive daily experiences, in addition to curricular activities, we aim to communicate the following positive values and beliefs -

- Self-respect
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Tolerance
- Ownership of the Irish language
- Respect for others and their property
- Independence
- Co-operation
- Positive behaviour
- Reconciliation

SELF-ESTEEM

Gaelscoil Neachtain recognises that the most important aspect of education is the wholeness of the child. As a school we will encourage children to think positively about themselves and accept their own individuality. We believe that when a child's self-esteem will be boosted then they feel valued in all aspects of Gaelscoil life.

The school will aim to promote positive self-esteem and confidence as these promote learning.

An Comhairle Scoile / The School Council

The Pupil Council was established to give pupils a voice. It includes two representatives- one boy and one girl - from each of the classes from Ranganna 4-7 and meets once a month. The Council operates like any other committee and reports back the issues discussed to their class. The Council involves the children in decision-making within the school and allows children to express opinions and make staff aware of issues important to them in a forum where they are listened to and taken seriously.

The Council encourages:

- pupil involvement in improving school life for everyone
- pupils to work as partners with staff in developing a safe, caring and inclusive school community
- the involvement of the children in solving problems and resolving conflict
- pupils to respect school property and its upkeep

Liaison with Parents

We feel that we are in partnership with parents with regard to the education of their child. Mutual support and co-operation are essential elements in the fulfilment of our aims. Among the continuous activities we undertake to ensure responsiveness and input from parents are:

- Regular correspondence
- regular meetings (parents/teachers)
- workshops
- newsletters
- Gaelscoil website
- parental consultation
- annual reports
- charity events
- after-school activities
- Gaelscoil shows
- Spiritual activities
- Social activities, e.g. Christmas céilí

The School in the Community

Our aim will be to foster in our children an awareness of the wider community

- We will involve children in the support of charities and care for others
- We will encourage participation in community activities

For example:

- Cultural activities such as Feis Charn Tóchair;
- Sporting activities such as bliotzanna;
- Parish activities.

Professional Development and Training

Pastoral Care is a central element of Gaelscoil Neachtain's development plan and, as a result of this, the need to train and develop the staff is recognised. This development plan helps the staff focus on attitudes, values, skills and knowledge and this enables the school to fulfil its Pastoral Care role.

Continuous training is provided in interpersonal and teaching skills that help us help the child to learn. Training is organised in various ways, e.g. In-service courses or EA courses.

Liaison with services outside the school

We believe that good relations should be developed with external agencies that are in a position to help us protect the academic, emotional, personal, social and physical development of each child.

Formal Curriculum

Circle time, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and the presentation of assemblies are included in each class timetable in order to gradually develop the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that are required for positive living.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is a continuous element of Pastoral Care. Pastoral Care is on the agenda of every staff meeting. Lines of communication are open between the Principal and every member of staff in the Gaelscoil and it is understood that it is the responsibility of each member of staff to use such lines of communication when required. Each member of staff has responsibility for this issue. Feedback is an important element of this responsibility.

IMPLEMENTATION

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for Pastoral Care in Gaelscoil Neachtain.
- The Principal has overall responsibility for promoting Pastoral Care and fostering positive relationships. In addition, she, alongside the Pastoral Care Sub-Committee, will review and update the policy, inform and liaise with parents and initiate and ensure Pastoral Care is forefront in the School's Development Plan.
- Teachers have responsibility for promoting Pastoral Care by:
 - ✓ Helping children to make informed decisions
 - ✓ Celebrating success
 - ✓ Building up children's self-esteem
 - ✓ Encouraging assertiveness
 - ✓ Encouraging sensitivity to others
 - ✓ Developing effective communication
 - ✓ Teachers build up a knowledge of pupils as individuals and take an interest in their special needs and all round development.
 - ✓ Support staff will contribute to the promotion of Pastoral Care consistent with our policy.

Covid 19

There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak of Covid-19.

Despite the changes, the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: **children always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DT in line with our established safeguarding procedures.**

The current national health concerns relating to Covid-19 creates uncertainty in the lives of children. Daily routines, family life, friendship groups and the safe space that schools provide have been disrupted. For many children, spending increased time at home will have been an additional challenge, and for some, an additional safeguarding risk factor. It is important that the adults responsible for safeguarding children are sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs in these most unusual circumstances. It is critically important that children who are or may be at risk are identified so that that a proportionate, compassionate and sensitive response can be taken.

We continue to adhere to government guidelines and keep abreast of any updated advice from the Education Authority Child Protection Support Service.

Procedures

The school arrangements continue in line with our Child Protection Policy. A copy of which is on our school website.

The Designated Teacher is: **Róisín Mhic Thaidhg**

The Deputy Designated Teacher is: **Fionnuala Ní Dhufaigh**

Staff will continue to follow Child Protection procedures and advise the safeguarding team immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

Should a child, in the school's view be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the school will take advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service.

Staff will continue to follow the procedures outlined in our school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is available on our school website.

Blended Learning

In addition, the following arrangements have been put in place to support families and monitor pupil safety in the event of **pupils spending part of the week at home**:

- The school email address, Class Teacher email addresses and school phone number have been made available to all parents.
- Teachers will provide online learning via Google Classroom.
- Teachers will contact parents by telephone once fortnightly, and weekly with parents with whom there might be concerns. These calls are to provide encouragement and support if necessary. Staff log phone calls and will alert the Safeguarding Team if there are any pastoral, educational or safeguarding issues which can then be followed up. When members of staff are using their personal telephone their number will be withheld to ensure the protection of private information of staff. Any concerns will be conveyed to Principal and/or DT/DDT or SENCO, as appropriate.
- The DT/DDT will still liaise regularly with Social Services and Education Welfare and attend case conferences and LAC reviews via Zoom and Conference Calls, if required.

Online Safety

We will use Google Classroom to engage with our children and parents. We will use Google Meets for online teaching/communication using video conferencing, as recommended by and available via C2K.

- Teachers and pupils need to be fully dressed and should not wear pyjamas / sleep wear during the session.
- Pupils cannot participate from a bedroom.
- The teacher arranges the session and password/PIN and shares this only with pupils and their parents/guardians.
- Pupils must agree not to share the password/PIN with anyone else.
- Parents /Guardians will be informed of their child's expected participation in a live video conferencing platform prior to first use. Pupils and parents/guardians will also be reminded of acceptable use at this point.
- Online sessions should be time limited for the benefit of both children and teachers.

How a Parent can raise an issue or express a concern

We would welcome parents asking for advice and help if they have concerns about their child's well-being or safety. Asking for help is a protective factor and parental concerns and requests for help will always be taken seriously.

Any member of staff will listen carefully to parental concerns and ensure that the request for help, if necessary, is brought to the attention of a member of the safeguarding team. In this case a decision can be made as to how best to provide help.

School open during COVID-19 closures for vulnerable children and children of Key Workers

How a child can raise a concern

We know that while many children may have enjoyed their time at home during a Covid-19 closure and remain almost unaffected by this unusual situation, there will be others who feel scared, lonely and even those who miss school. Our safeguarding responsibility to all our children continues and we will seek to maintain contact with our children and young people as well as signpost them to other agencies. Whilst it is contrary to all our wishes, should our children, once again, find themselves unable to attend school due to e.g. having to self-isolate, we will continue our contact with them through direct interaction on Google Classroom. In addition; we will –

- Respond to any concerning comments (that we become aware of) our children post on social media
- Children will be made aware of the Childline phone number

Children may be signposted to the following agencies.

- CEOP/Thinkuknow
- Childnet
- Safer Schools App

SOME USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS: –

Gateway 028 70352221 (ask for the Duty Social Worker)

- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/coronavirus>
- <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/worries-about-the-world/coronavirus/>
- <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/helpline/report-harmful-content>
- <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

Links with other Policies

- This policy is linked to the Gaelscoil's Child Protection Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, SEN Policy, Assessment Policy, Acceptable Use of Internet Policy and Mobile Phone Policy.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Safeguarding team will review and amend these arrangements regularly in line with Departmental guidance and advice.

February, 2021.