

**ST COLUMBA'S
PRIMARY SCHOOL
STRAW
PASTORAL CARE POLICY**



PASTORAL CARE POLICY AND PRACTICE

St Columba's Primary School is situated in a pleasant rural setting in the small rural village of Straw. In our school we work together as a community to provide a happy, secure and successful school. We believe that every child in our school is an important person created by God, entrusted to us by their parents and we endeavour by word and example to help our children experience the Christian way of life.

Our children are valued highly by everyone within our school community and encouraged to fulfill their potential. The entire staff treats the children in our school as individuals, encouraging them, disciplining them, valuing their individuality and thereby creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and sensitivity leading to a positive working environment.

We maintain a clean, attractive, stimulating and welcoming school. Children will be encouraged to help maintain an organized school, learning to respect themselves, others, their own property and the property of others. They are provided with relevant and practical opportunities to appreciate and care for the local and wider environments.

In St Columba's we are committed to providing our children with a broad and balanced education in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum that promotes the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, physical cultural and aesthetic development of the individual child. This prepares them for their future.

Our teachers are very aware of pupils' needs, not only academically but also the need to develop the children's self-esteem, tolerance, independence and self-discipline. Children are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning. They are set, or set themselves, realistic but challenging goals. Our teachers insist firmly but fairly on hard work and commitment from all our pupils and on high standards of behaviour. As a staff we work conscientiously in a pleasant, friendly co-operative atmosphere. We have high standards and treat each other courteously. We hope that these same attitudes will flourish readily among our pupils.

All children are treated fairly and equally in our school. We seek to meet the additional education and other needs of pupils and to help them overcome barriers to learning by:

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE:

In St Columba's attendance of children at school is excellent. Many children have 100% attendance each year. We pride ourselves on our excellent attendance figures. Parents are informed of closures for the whole academic year and are encouraged not to take children on holidays during term-time.

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Very seldom do major issues arise in our school in terms of behaviour and discipline. We believe that this is the case because:

- ❖ positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded
- ❖ children are involved in the preparation of classroom, dining-room and playground routines
- ❖ respect and mutual understanding are promoted
- ❖ children's self-esteem is raised by giving praise appropriately and using positive language
- ❖ good behaviour is encouraged and praised. Any inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a firm but sensitive manner and sanctions as listed in our Positive Behaviour Policy are implemented as and when necessary.

SEN PROVISION

In St Columba's we are committed to meeting the needs of all our pupils. As a staff we aim to ensure that those pupils with Special Educational Needs are supported appropriately. We believe that special needs may be emotional, physical, behavioural, social or of an educational nature. We aim to make relevant provision for the individual needs of the pupils during their education in St Columba's.

Our SENCO has a very good understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice. In keeping with the Code of Practice for SEN the class teachers and SENCO work together to provide a suitable planned programme designed to meet a child's identified, specific need. IEPs are effective in that each pupil can be seen to be progressing against prior performance. Records are kept and are readily available to those who contribute to the education of the SEN pupils. Regular reviews take place to ensure that pupils are benefiting and progressing from their educational experiences. Where appropriate these reviews involve the pupils themselves. SEN pupils benefit from high standards of teaching both in class and in withdrawal situations and parents are encouraged to discuss their children's progress in both formal and informal situations.

In St Columba's strategies are employed to support children with learning difficulties:

- Early identification of learning difficulty
- Differentiated programme
- Setting attainable individual targets with IEPs where necessary
- Regular meetings with relevant personnel to monitor progress and make further plans
- Effective use of classroom assistants
- Effective use of outside agencies such as MAST Services and School Psychologist.
- Close communication with parents
- Raising self-esteem of the child by praising effort, celebrating success and encouraging perseverance

CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL LIFE

In St Columba's PS we believe that all children learn at different rates and have different learning styles and require a variety of opportunities to develop their intelligences. We believe that children learn best when they are:

- in a safe and secure environment
- motivated, enthusiastic, confident and happy
- involved and engaged in their learning
- alert and receptive to learning
- given clear guidance of what is expected of them and how they can achieve it
- valued for their contribution
- encouraged to work at a level which is appropriate for their age and ability
- praised for effort and given positive feedback

In addition, we believe that children should:

- be given opportunities to explain their work.
- be encouraged to contribute effectively to group work.
- be encouraged to ask and answer effective questions.
- be encouraged to set their own learning targets and review their progress regularly.
- participate in collaborative learning as and when appropriate.
- develop independent thinking and the use of thinking skills.

Children's views are sought when classroom, playground and canteen routines are established. During activities such as Circle Time, children are encouraged to share their feelings and views. All children are encouraged to participate in plenary sessions and in providing feedback to teachers about their learning.

CHILD PROTECTION

Child Protection is very important in the life of our school. Through posters, photographs and class discussions children are aware who the designated teacher is and that all members of staff are there to help and support them. Parents' and children's views are sought and considered when drawing up our Anti-Bullying Policy and School Development Plan. Our Child Protection Policy is reviewed regularly and parents are provided with a summary of it every 2 years. Full details of vetting arrangements in our school are contained in our Child Protection Policy.

We support children in making healthy choices and through the provision of a healthy environment.

Our new school building offers our children a pleasant, safe and stimulating environment in which to learn. All classrooms have a sensor that detects the air quality in the room; these sensors activate certain windows to open automatically if they detect an unhealthy air environment.

Children in our school enjoy healthy breaks as part of our healthy eating programme that has been well supported by children and parents alike. The school canteen offers healthy, balanced meals and a variety of nutritious snacks. Milk, water or fruit juice are the only drinks available in the canteen. This healthy eating programme is supported by the Governors.

All children have regular PE lessons, including swimming lessons in Key Stage 2.

Children have the opportunity to participate in various programmes such as Heartstart and Cycling Proficiency. Children participate in various sporting events including football, hurling, camogie, and cross-country running. Pupils are offered the opportunity to attend After School Clubs which further develop their skills and enjoyment of various sports and enrichment activities.

SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Positive, healthy relationships exist between teachers and their pupils and with other school-based staff. All the staff members are very dedicated, keen and enthusiastic about their work. The adults working in the school are courteous, friendly, respectful and kind towards each other and this we believe gives a good example to the children. The Chair and Vice Chair of the governors visit the school regularly and take an interest in the welfare of pupils, teachers and ancillaries. In this way sense of worth is enhanced and community spirit strengthened.

Positive behaviour and good working relationships are promoted in each class throughout our school. Teachers adopt a positive attitude. They show concern and respect for all pupils and value their opinions. They try to resolve grievances fairly. They criticise the wrong- doing, not the person. They suggest ways to improve behaviour. They make a genuine effort to listen to all 'stories' and resolve conflict. They seek to create a supportive environment within the classroom. They create opportunities to enable pupils to improve peer group relationships. The class teacher has a central role to play in the pastoral dimension. All concerns regarding pupil welfare will be brought to the attention of the Principal and/or the Designated Teacher.

Our P6 and P7 children enjoy supporting Foundation Stage children acting as Buddies for them in the school playground. Further details on how positive behavior is promoted in our school are detailed in our Positive Behaviour Policy. All of our staff are aware of the Staff Code of Conduct which is within our Child Protection Policy.

Our school has good relationships with local pre school facilities and local secondary schools; we collaborate and communicate effectively to ensure transitions for children are as smooth as possible.

PDMU

We aim to:

- enable pupils to adapt a positive attitude to life and to encourage children to feel good about themselves
- To develop in our pupils the ability to think and act responsibly
- To create and maintain a healthy environment that is safe and clean.
- To recognise individual strengths and weaknesses and to draw on strengths.

In our school children will be:

- Encouraged to develop a positive self image and self confidence
- Encouraged to develop attitudes of honesty, tolerance, consideration, commitment, co-operation, reliability and integrity.
- Helped to understand the stages and factors involved in physical and. emotional growth
- Enabled to make a positive contribution to school and family life
- Helped to manage relationships with peers in a variety of situations and to cope with relationships with others
- Enabled to maintain a healthy, safe environment and to improve it where possible.

LINKS WTH LOCAL COMMUNITY

Our school enjoys excellent links with the parents or guardians of our children. Parents are always very welcome in the school and may make an appointment to meet any member of the teaching staff if they so desire. Attendance at the Annual Parent -Teacher meetings is usually 99%- 100%. Our parents are kept well informed about life and events in our school as relevant news and letters are sent home very frequently. Parents are eager to support any initiatives in our school. We are so proud of our parents who willingly help at our major fund raising activity day 'Straw Sports' which is held on a Sunday in June and attended by members of the community from the local area and

beyond. Many parents give willingly of their time and talents to help in enhancing our school environment for the good of our children. A local farmer supplies us with seeds and advice for our school garden. The local Fire Service visit the P5 class annually. We make relevant and appropriate use of many different agencies and community members which enrich and broaden the children's learning experiences.

Each year we host a Grandparents' Day. All family members are welcome to this event in which our children participate and at which relevant work is displayed. We welcome our families and members of the wider community to all our school Masses and to our Annual Christmas Concert.

Local businesses also support our school and recently we were awarded a grant by a local supermarket, this was used to purchase playground equipment. Our children also benefit from strong community links with our local GAA Club and Library.

Our school has enjoyed a positive connection with Kilross PS for many years. This link has resulted in many worthwhile joint educational visits and joint workshops. Children from both schools also participate in some sporting events together and positive links have also been developed between the members of staff in both schools.

Our children are very sensitive and aware of the plight of those less fortunate than themselves. Each year they give over 100 Christmas boxes to the Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal. Our children have been actively involved in collecting money for Trócaire and a representative from this organization visits our school annually. We also support Ndi Moyo, a charity that provides palliative care for people in Malawi. A grandmother, of some of our children, is on the Board of this charity. Parental involvement is given high priority in the life of the school. We actively seek to work in partnership with parents. Parents are a valuable resource and who contribute greatly to the life of our school.

EXTERNAL AGENCIES

We have good links with the many relevant statutory and voluntary agencies that support pupils' health and wellbeing, learning and achievement. Some of these are listed below:

- School Psychology Services - Our SENCO and Principal communicate regularly with the school psychologist and seek and use his/her advice appropriately.
- MAST - MAST staff actively supports our children and staff from P1 - P4 through the provision of speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and behaviour therapists as necessary.
- School Nurse and Medical staff - Advice and support from the School Nurse and School Doctor are sought as and when necessary. The nurse also visits our school to present puberty talks separately to the P7 boys and girls. Staff attend training provided by the school nurse on the use of epi-pens.
- Autism NI Society / Behaviour Support / EWO - Support and advice is sought from such external agencies as and when necessary. Representatives from various relevant external agencies are welcome in our school and they liaise with Principal / SENCO / class teacher as and when necessary.
- Child Protection / Social Services- Our Principal and Designated Teacher seek advice as and when necessary from NEELB Child Protection Support Staff. If we have a child on the CP Register the Designated Teacher or Principal attends necessary meetings and liaises with external agencies involved.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Class teachers will monitor the progress both academically and pastorally, of pupils in their classes, they will also monitor the effectiveness of our Pastoral Care Policy through observation, discussion with pupils and with each other.

Our policy will be reviewed regularly.

Signed: _____ (Chairman of Board of Governors)

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: 4th March 2015