

# Oakwood School and Assessment Centre

## Pastoral Care Policy

### Rationale

Through its pastoral care arrangements and provision Oakwood School demonstrates its continuing concern for the personal and social development of all its pupils and staff.

In Oakwood pastoral care is viewed as a holistic and unified whole and is implicit in all aspects of the child's education and experience whilst at Oakwood. Pastoral care is in fact that element of school life that most graphically illustrates the ethos of the school.

With this belief at the forefront of our practice we aim to provide a school which links parental expectations with both realism and understanding and to provide high quality education to each and every child according to their unique ability.

We believe that pastoral care begins with the first contact that is made with the parents. At Oakwood we understand the difficulties faced by parents and try to minimise those as we guide them into 'special education'. The staff at Oakwood maintain regular contact with parents throughout the child's school career and the school operates an 'open door' policy for parents. We do, however, ask that parents make appointments if they wish to see a teacher during teaching time.

Once a child starts Oakwood they become as part of the Oakwood 'family' and each child is valued as an individual. Oakwood staff try at all times to see the positive, not the negative, in any situation and praise and reward all achievement no matter how small.

Bearing in mind the children that attend Oakwood School, it is important that child protection issues are seen to be the responsibility of all staff. With this in mind the staff receive regular child protection training and are made aware of the child protection policy. Moreover many of the children who attend Oakwood receive 'intimate care' in the form of toileting and it is important that both staff and parents are aware of what this entails. Only classroom staff (Classroom Assistants and General Assistants) who are easily identified by school polo shirt are involved in this form of care.

It is equally important that for those children who require 'lifting and handling' this is done in a safe and appropriate manner and that staff are trained in the most suitable way to handle an individual child (advice is sought from physiotherapy).

The final element of pastoral care that is deemed to be of great importance at Oakwood is care for the staff. The demands of teaching/working in an environment such as Oakwood are huge and staff cope with many difficulties on a daily basis. We believe that their health and well-being are essential for a happy and smooth-running school.

Pastoral care then is seen to be all encompassing and to incorporate many elements of school life from the parent's policy through discipline, 'lifting and handling' to child protection.

## Aims

- To create an atmosphere in which young people feel secure, valued as individuals and are encouraged in their learning, growth and social development in a healthy and safe environment.

- To inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe and caring atmosphere, characterised by good relationships and mutual respect.
- To protect pupils from physical, social, emotional and intellectual harm.
- To promote self-esteem, confidence and independence.
- To nurture understanding, sympathy and sensitivity to the needs of others.
- To develop the necessary skills to cope with the demands and challenges of daily life.

## Objectives

- Integrate pastoral care with the taught curriculum through a co-ordinated provision for PSE
- Ensure that all staff are well informed in all aspects of pastoral care.
- Pupils concerns are received sympathetically and appropriate action is taken.
- High standards of behaviour are expected.
- Staff are fair, firm, consistent and compassionate in their approach to discipline, taking full account of the school discipline policy.

- There is frequent and effective liaison with parents and appropriate external support agencies. Problems are tackled by the school in partnership with parents and representatives of these agencies.
- Achievements of all pupils, whether within or outside of school are recognised, valued and celebrated.

## Organisation

Pastoral Care is a fundamental aspect of school life which begins when pupils enter school and continues until they leave.

Pastoral care provides for all of the pupils' planned and co-ordinated guidance and teaching in all of the relevant areas.

## Roles

The co-ordinator for Pastoral Care is the Principal.

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy. The co-ordinator in consultation with teachers will ensure that the programme is delivered to each pupil at an appropriate level.

## External Support

Parents

EA Belfast Region Advisory service

School Medical Officer / School Nurse / School Dentist

Learning Disability team

Clinical Psychology Department / Educational Psychology Department

Community Affairs Team

Fire Authorities

Mencap

## Staff Development

The co-ordinator will ensure that staff are updated on all developments, legislation and documentation pertaining to Pastoral care through;

- school based inset,
- EA Belfast Region based inset,
- attendance at award bearing courses etc;

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Pastoral Care policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis through consultation with pupils, staff and parents.

The Board of Governors will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of a timetabled, on-going process.