

Shimna Integrated College

Pastoral Policy

The pastoral policy of Shimna is encapsulated in our integrated status, and in the college motto “Learning from Each Other”. Within a diverse community, our pastoral care is for each other: students; staff; governors; parents. Beyond pastoral care lie our community connections, local and global, and our mission to reflect the processes of Integration in all our learning and action.

We share our integrated ethos with as many as possible of our feeder primary schools through our Sharing Languages, Sharing Cultures programme. Our admissions procedures include the opportunity for families to provide their personal information themselves in relation to our admissions criteria. Our admissions criteria prioritise the opportunity for every member of a family to attend the school. The first contact our new year 8s have with the school is the family barbecue organised by our Parents’ Council.

Pastoral care comprises our pastoral frameworks, policies and practices and also our inclusive ethos within which we all lead our daily lives in school.

At the centre of the pastoral framework is the principal, who operates an open door policy to all students. Kevin also teaches within the KS3 LLW programme so that he knows the students in a learning context. Kevin leads the programme of assemblies.

The relationship between the form teacher and the form class is key. The form teacher remains with the form class throughout key stages 3 and 4. The form teacher has responsibility for the pastoral and academic wellbeing of each student in the class. S/he is aware of all records received from a student’s previous school(s), keeps abreast of any concerns which arise, encourages and enthuses students, meets students every morning and sets the tone for a day’s learning, deals with attendance, uniform, learning to live with each other etc. The form teacher alerts parents to any pattern of concerns, and also to patterns of achievement. The form teacher works closely with Roberta, our attendance manager, in ensuring every student is in school learning 100% of the time, and is fully supported in managing any absence. The pink diary is the form teacher’s record of interactions and interventions.

Each Key Stage has a member of staff who facilitates the work of the form teacher and ensures that processes work with continuity. The coordinator role includes: at KS3, employability; at KS4, progress file; at 6th form, the work experience process.

Documents which support the pastoral process are: the homework diary; the KS3 form book; emails to and from teaching staff and form staff; the pink diary; the SchoolComms system; the monthly newsletter including the diary of the month ahead; the website, including ParentUpdate; Shimna Facebook; Shimna Twitter.

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For each student there is a Consultation Evening each year, and all parents are made aware and reminded that they may contact the school and arrange to speak to staff at any time by arrangement.

Our pastoral framework rests upon the pastoral ethos which includes every member of the college community. Every student is encouraged to remember that, should they be in any difficulty, they can go straight to their form teacher as the first port of call. However, within a diverse community, students also know that they can go to anyone with whom they feel comfortable. Teaching and non-teaching staff are supported in this role through training opportunities: Listening Ear; ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training); SafeTALK training, Self Harm Awareness training, Hidden Harm Awareness training and Relationships and Sexuality Education Training (RSE). Lists of trained staff are displayed throughout the school. The principal operates an open door policy; all teaching staff are available to students; all support staff are available to students. We have a counsellor from Counselling4Youth funded by DE, whom we employ for additional hours. We avail of the support of our Ardmore House outreach teacher to work with individual KS3 students. We have a close working relationship with our careers officer and our Educational Welfare Officers, both of whom work particularly successfully within our ethos.

Danella, our office manager is also our pastoral manager and designated child protection staff member. She manages communications with external agencies, in particular local suicide prevention services, social services, PSNI, the EWO, Ardmore Outreach, SEELB child protection officers, our counsellors, Listening Ears and EAOTAS. Danella also manages all confidential files associated with the child protection register and case conferences for children on the register and/or looked after children.

Aine is our child protection training manager. She trains staff, students and governors and is a CEOP Ambassador. She also trains our Listening Ear team of staff and students. She is our deputy designated staff member.

We have a dynamic Students' Council, run by students supported by Pat Lenny and Jo Rodgers. The Students' Council consults with students and liaises with the principal, and also organises autonomous events, for example, anti-bullying week, the non-competitive element of Sports' Day, Shimna's Got Talent, our summer term walk in the woods. The Council operates an ongoing fundraising project to invest in an environmental project.

We have an alternative chaplaincy, run by our volunteer chaplain. She supports in particular our GayStraightAlliance, and also runs, for example, meditation sessions to ward off examination stress. We plan to develop the chaplain's role further.

Our ExtraCurricular programme is a particularly important part of our pastoral ethos, bringing together staff and students in activities beyond the classroom.

We have important links with community groups which use our premises: Newcastle Football Club; Newcastle Junior Athletics Club; Shimna Stars Basketball Club; Shimna meditation group.

Integration means that we each bring our stuff with us, we celebrate and challenge our own stuff and celebrate and challenge the stuff of our friends.

Pastoral Policy and Staff

As well as supporting our staff in supporting our students, supporting our staff is central to our pastoral policy. We aim to provide working conditions, accommodation and timetabling arrangements wherever possible which support staff. We aim to be family friendly, within the Department of Education's regulations for paid and unpaid leave and also avoiding causing additional cover responsibilities to colleagues.

The principal operates the same open door policy to staff as to students and parents, and any staff concern can be raised directly with him.

We operate an annual consultation with staff, and also consult all departments about timetabling arrangements.

The college pays a subscription to Carecall 0808 800 0002, an independent counselling service.

In organising Consultation Evenings, we balance the needs of staff, particularly those living at a distance, with the needs of parents to come to school outside working hours. We provide a sandwich meal for staff on Consultation Evenings, and the Parents' Council provides tea and biscuits for staff, parents and students.

We provide Fairly Traded tea, coffee and sugar to the staffroom, and biscuits on training days.

The Staff Council is kept abreast of issues, for example those appearing in the press relating to Area Based Planning, school budgets etc. The Staff Council also organises social events for staff and celebrations. The Staff Council is governed by an ethos set out in a policy document and available to all staff on the intranet.

The Board of Governors takes very seriously the welfare of staff. The Board of Governors takes an active interest in the work of staff, and frequently invites a staff member to address a committee of the Board about an aspect of their work.