

Pastoral Care Policy

Boherbue Comprehensive School

Review Date: 2025/2026

Policy Review Context

This review of the Pastoral Care Policy has been informed by the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (Department of Education, 2018–2025). The framework supports the effective implementation of a multi-component, whole-school approach to wellbeing that reflects best international practice. It emphasises that wellbeing promotion should be integrated across all aspects of school life and contribute positively to the development of every child and young person.

In line with the *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines* (DES, NCCA, 2017) and the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (Department of Education, 2018–2025), the policy review considered four key areas of wellbeing promotion:

1. **Culture and Environment** – ensuring the school’s mission, ethos, and daily practices foster a safe, inclusive and respectful climate; promoting positive relationships; and making effective use of the school’s physical environment to enhance wellbeing.
2. **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)** – embedding wellbeing across teaching, learning, and assessment; integrating co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences that build social and emotional competence; and supporting reflective planning and monitoring of wellbeing outcomes.
3. **Policy and Planning** – ensuring all school policies and plans reflect a commitment to wellbeing promotion, are aligned with school self-evaluation processes, and support staff through ongoing professional learning and development.
4. **Relationships and Partnerships** – strengthening relationships among students and staff, supporting positive peer connections, and amplifying student voice and participation in decision-making. The school also fosters strong partnerships with parents, carers, external agencies, and the wider community to promote holistic wellbeing.

This updated Pastoral Care Policy reflects these four dimensions, ensuring that wellbeing promotion is embedded in the school’s culture, curriculum, relationships, and policies in line with national guidance and best practice.

1. School Mission Statement

Boherbue Comprehensive School by virtue of its position in the community endeavours to give the best education and service to its students and community, based on Christian values that will help all who come into contact with the school to reach their full potential.

2. Rationale

Pastoral care is the expression of our school ethos through which students learn and develop to their full potential in a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment. It supports students' social, emotional, academic, personal and spiritual growth. This policy complements the **School Mission Statement** and fulfils the legal requirements of the **1998 Education Act**. It aligns with the Department of Education and Youth *Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice*, recognising the importance of whole-school protective factors, including warm relationships, meaningful participation, student autonomy, clear boundaries, and positive expectations (Viner et al., 2012).

3. Definition

Pastoral care refers to the systems, procedures and programmes through which our school community fosters the wellbeing of all students, supports their learning and development, and promotes a culture of care, inclusion and respect.

4. Role of Pastoral Care within the Curriculum

Pastoral care permeates every aspect of school life:

- Through the quality of teaching and learning: classrooms provide democratic, inclusive, engaging, differentiated experiences which foster social and emotional competence, in line with WHO recommendations (WHO, 2005; Durlak et al., 2011).
- Through relationships: fostering positive interactions among students, staff, parents and community partners.
- Through monitoring: tracking academic, social and personal development of each student.
- Through support structures: year-heads, mentors, guidance, chaplaincy learning support and extra-curricular activities; all of which contribute to student wellbeing.

5. Aims

All members of the school community promote the aims of this pastoral care policy, which include:

1. Supporting students' academic, social, personal and emotional and spiritual wellbeing so that the whole person can flourish.
2. Fostering each student's talents and potential so they are empowered for adult and working life.
3. Encouraging staff, students and parents to view our school as a community where every individual can make a unique and valued contribution.
4. Establishing a well-ordered, structured, caring and supportive environment which treats all students equally regardless of ability or background.
5. Offering a pastoral programme which allows for open and equitable exchange of ideas in a climate of trust.
6. Implementing a *Code of Behaviour Policy* that ensures justice, fairness, positive expectations, and promotes kindness and inclusion in line with the school's *Bí Cineálta Policy*.
7. Providing opportunities for each person to succeed and be affirmed in their self-worth.
8. Establishing and maintaining links with the wider community and external agencies such as Tusla, the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), An Garda Síochána, Oide (Professional Development for Teachers Support Service) the Health Service Executive (HSE), National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and counselling services.
9. Encouraging tolerance, understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others.
10. Promoting warm and positive relationships between students, staff and parents for the mutual benefit of all.

6. Components, Programmes & Procedures

To realise the aims of our Pastoral Care Policy, Boherbue Comprehensive School implements a comprehensive range of programmes, supports, and initiatives, including:

A Student Support Team

The Student Support Team has a centralised, dedicated group within the school that ensures the wellbeing and holistic development of every student. The Student Support Team plays a central role in the school by addressing the academic, emotional, social, behavioural and pastoral care needs of students through proactive and responsive

interventions. It develops, coordinates, and promotes whole-school wellbeing initiatives that are integrated into the curriculum, pastoral care structures, and extra-curricular activities. The team ensures equity and inclusion by making certain that the holistic development of each student is catered for; and that support is accessible and tailored to individual needs, fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment. It facilitates a coordinated approach by promoting communication and collaboration among teachers, parents, and external agencies to provide seamless and joined-up support. Additionally, the team monitors and reviews the effectiveness of wellbeing interventions and support structures to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with school policies and national guidelines.

Parent/Guardian and School Partnership

The School works in partnership with parents. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to contact the school at any time. Parent Teacher/Guardian Meetings are held for all year groups and there are also Subject Choice Information Evenings as appropriate. Parents are invited to contribute to the life of the School through the Parent's Council and by their representation on the Board of Management. Parents are encouraged to engage actively through information evenings, news bulletins, the Parent Council, Parent Teacher/Guardian meetings, and wellbeing initiatives. Collaboration with the wider community ensures comprehensive support for students' development. An Open Night is facilitated for incoming parents / students and an Induction Pack for First Year students is followed by Induction Night. Information meetings are held for First, Second, Third, Transition, Fourth and Fifth Years.

Range of Curricular Programmes

The school offers a range of curricular programmes which is a key component in achieving the aims of the Pastoral Care Policy. Through programmes such as the Junior Cycle Framework, the Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme, the Transition Year Programme, the Senior Cycle Established Programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, and the Senior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme, the school ensures an inclusive education that provides equality of access and opportunity for all students. By offering a diverse and tailored curriculum, the school meets the varied needs of its learners, supports their personal, social, and academic development, and enables each student to reach their full potential and to flourish.

Wellbeing Curricular Programmes

Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) is a core area of school life and its link to pastoral care is clear. The Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) and Relationships and Sexuality (R.S.E) programmes are designed to promote personal and social development in keeping with the aims of the Pastoral Care Policy, as does Careers Education and Guidance, and the Civic, Social and Political Education (C.S.P.E.) programme. The school is committed to the implementation of each of the

aforementioned programmes; all of which are central to wellbeing promotion and the Pastoral Care Policy. This commitment is demonstrated in the schools curriculum provision as set out in the Department of Education and Youth (DEY) circulars and guidelines. SPHE, CSPE, RSE, and Careers Education and Guidance explicitly teach personal, social, and emotional development, and responsible citizenship. These programmes ultimately serve to help students develop resilience, empathy, social competence, and a sense of moral responsibility.

Bí Cineálta Policy (Be Kind Initiative)

As part of our whole-school wellbeing framework, the *Bí Cineálta policy* promotes kindness, inclusion, and respect. It adopts a proactive approach to preventing, identifying, and addressing bullying behaviour, fostering a safe and caring school culture. Students learn about respectful communication and empathy through SPHE, Wellbeing lessons, and school-wide campaigns. The whole school community models kindness in daily interactions; and the school recognises positive behaviour through regular acknowledgment and celebration. The Pastoral Care and Student Support Team and all school personnel monitor and support anti-bullying interventions in line with the *2024 Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Year-Head System and Subject Teachers

Each year group has a designated Year Head responsible for students' academic, social, and personal development. Subject Teachers in collaboration with the Pastoral Care Team and the Year Head foster self-esteem, motivation, and explore values that promote the holistic development of all students within supportive classroom environments.

Access to a Trusted Adult (One Good Adult)

A key component of the school's Pastoral Care framework is ensuring that every student has access to at least one trusted adult within the school community. Within the school, teachers, tutors, year heads, and support staff actively promote trusting relationships where students feel listened to, supported, and safe. This connection provides students with a consistent source of guidance and reassurance, helping them to navigate challenges both inside and outside the classroom. The promotion of access to a trusted adult is embedded across the school's pastoral structures, including year head systems, the guidance, counselling and chaplaincy service, and all wellbeing initiatives. It underpins the school's commitment to fostering a caring, inclusive environment in which every student feels valued, connected, and supported to reach their full potential – academically, socially, and emotionally.

In-Class Support

Within the classroom, the subject teacher seeks to foster self esteem in students, to

promote a sense of self-motivation and achievement and to allow students to explore their own attitudes and values within a supportive, non-judgemental atmosphere.

Extra-Curricular, Co-Curricular & Enrichment Activities

Beyond the classroom, the aims of the Pastoral Care Policy are realised in the provision of extra-curricular activities, both sporting and non-sporting, and in a variety of field trips and school visits. A wide range of opportunities such as sports, clubs, creative arts, field trips, and visiting speakers are utilised by the school to (e.g., substance use, anti-bullying, study skills, digital wellbeing, mental health, sexual health - These may be in the form of a talk or a workshop) to promote wellbeing, inclusion, belonging, leadership, and the development of life skills. Year Heads frequently hold assemblies to discuss issues of importance to relevant year groups. Examples of facilities within the school include supervised study, and access to resources such as the library, internet, gym, and sports facilities. Other activities which cater to the holistic development and pastoral care needs of students include but are not limited to - Leaving Certificate Graduation Ceremony, Mass/service for deceased staff members and students, Masses/services during Lent and Advent, Retreats.

Support Services (Internal and External)

Learning Support, Guidance Counselling, Chaplaincy, the SEN Team, the School Attendance Team, The Teaching and Learning Team in addition to the school's use of specialist external agencies such as Oide, NEPS, the NCSE, Tusla, TESS, the HSE, NEWB and counselling services ensure that all students' academic, social, emotional and wellbeing needs are addressed.

Student Leadership

Student voice, autonomy, and responsibility are promoted through the Student Council, mentoring programmes, and peer-support initiatives, forming part of a whole-school approach to facilitating meaningful student participation. Student voice is actively fostered in the classroom through a range of teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting activities, such as collaborative projects, group discussions, self- and peer-assessment, and opportunities for reflective feedback. The school draws on *Lundy's Model of Student Participation* to ensure students are genuinely involved in decision-making processes that affect them, emphasising the importance of *space* (providing safe and inclusive forums), *voice* (ensuring students can express their views), *audience* (ensuring that students are listened to), and *influence* (ensuring students' contributions have an impact). This framework encourages students to take ownership of their learning, develop leadership skills, and actively contribute to shaping the school environment and policies.

Continuum of Support Framework

The school follows the *Continuum of Support* model in catering for the pastoral care needs of students and wellbeing promotion. The framework is as follows:

- **Support for All:** Whole-school and classroom-level initiatives promoting wellbeing and social-emotional development.
- **Support for Some:** Targeted prevention and early intervention for students at risk.
- **Support for Few:** Individualised, intensive support for students with complex or enduring needs.

7. Wellbeing, Learning & School Environment

Consistent with the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2025)* and *Looking at Our Schools (LAOS, 2022)*, Boherbue Comprehensive School adopts a whole-school approach to promoting wellbeing as integral to the *Pastoral Care Policy*, preventing risk factors, and fostering protective factors. The school's approach integrates pastoral care, teaching and learning, and extra-curricular activities and wellbeing promotion to support the holistic development of students.

Our school environment is characterised by:

- **Positive relationships and school connectedness:** Relationships are grounded in empathy, kindness, and mutual respect, actively supported by the *Bí Cineálta Policy*. Warm, inclusive interactions between students and staff, clear boundaries, and consistent expectations underpin a safe and supportive school culture.
- **Active participation and inclusion for wellbeing:** All students are encouraged to feel connected, valued, and heard. Student voice, autonomy, and responsibility are promoted through Student Council, mentoring programmes, and peer-support initiatives. In the classroom, student voice is facilitated through collaborative learning, group discussion, self- and peer-assessment, and reflective feedback. Drawing on *Lundy's Model of Student Participation*, students are provided with *space* to express their views, a clear *voice*, an attentive *audience*, and opportunities for meaningful influence on decisions that directly affect them.
- **Teaching and learning that promotes wellbeing:** Classroom practices are inclusive, engaging, and differentiated, fostering social-emotional competence, resilience, and self-efficacy. Wellbeing promotion is embedded in teaching and learning, ensuring that students experience success, develop competence, and build confidence in a supportive environment.
- **Autonomy and ownership of learning:** Students are supported to take responsibility for their learning, behaviour, and relationships. This aligns with the school's *Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy*, promoting student agency, digital literacy, collaborative learning, and reading for enjoyment.

- **Digital literacy and responsibility:** Students are encouraged to interact respectfully online and use digital resources responsibly, enhancing both wellbeing and learning outcomes.
- **Integration across the school:** Wellbeing is embedded throughout the curriculum, pastoral care structures, and extra-curricular life of the school. Initiatives such as the *Bí Cineálta Policy*, student leadership programmes, and extra-curricular activities collectively create a culture of care, connection, and kindness in every classroom and interaction.

Through this whole-school approach, Boherbue Comprehensive School actively fosters a positive, inclusive, and empowering environment in which every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

8. Policy Links with Junior Cycle Wellbeing Indicators, Junior Cycle Key Skills, and Senior Cycle Competencies

The *Pastoral Care Policy* implements a whole-school approach that integrates wellbeing, academic, social, and emotional support. Through curricula, pastoral care structures, extra-curricular programmes, and leadership initiatives, the policy actively develops the *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Indicators*, *the Junior Cycle Key Skills*, and *the Senior Cycle Competencies*, ensuring students leave the school equipped with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and dispositions necessary for life-long learning, personal wellbeing, and active citizenship.

8. 1. How the Policy Serves to Activate the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Indicators

Being Active

- The policy promotes physical wellbeing through sports, extra-curricular clubs, gym access, and outdoor activities.
- Encourages participation in physical activities and a healthy lifestyle, including field trips and structured physical programmes.

Being Responsible

- Students are guided to take ownership of their learning, behaviour, and relationships through the Year-Head system, mentoring, in-class support and peer-support initiatives.
- Leadership opportunities via the Student Council, mentoring programmes, and peer-buddy systems foster accountability for themselves and others.

Connected

- Positive relationships are cultivated through Bí Cineálta, classroom culture, and pastoral care support.
- Students engage in teamwork, peer mentoring, and collaborative learning, promoting strong social connections with peers, teachers, and the wider community.

Resilient

- Programs like SPHE, wellbeing lessons, counselling, study skills workshops and assessment for learning feedback equip students with strategies to cope with challenges.
- Extra support for students at risk is provided through the Continuum of Support, ensuring students develop skills to manage setbacks.

Respected

- Policies such as the Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta ensure all students feel valued, included, and recognized.
- The school promotes equity, positive reinforcement, and recognition of achievements in academics, leadership, and extra-curricular participation.

Aware

- Students develop emotional and social awareness through SPHE, RSE, CSPE, and other curricular areas such as English, Religious Education, History, geography and pastoral care guidance.
- Reflection on thoughts, behaviours, and influences is encouraged through mentorship, pastoral discussions, and wellbeing initiatives.

8. 2. How this Policy Serves to Facilitate the Development of the Junior Cycle Key Skills

Being Creative

- Opportunities are provided for problem-solving, creative arts, drama, and project work in both curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Managing Information and Thinking

- Students engage in activities requiring analysis, evaluation, and decision-making, supported by guidance, research tasks, and reflective learning.

Staying Well

- Wellbeing promotion is integrated into all aspects of the school experience: classroom practices, extracurricular activities, counselling, and mentoring programmes.

Communicating

- Oral presentations, debates, collaborative tasks, and student leadership opportunities enhance verbal and non-verbal communication.

Working with Others

- Peer support, mentoring, Student Council, group projects and a range of active teaching, learning and assessment methodologies cultivate teamwork, collaboration, and social responsibility.

Managing Myself

- The policy encourages self-regulation, goal-setting, time management, and ownership of learning especially through a range of in-class teaching, learning and assessment activities; all of which are facilitated through evidence based pedagogical strategies.

Being Numerate

- Support for academic development in mathematics and other numeracy-linked subjects is embedded via classroom differentiation and learning support structures.

Literacy

- Students are guided in the development of literacy skills across the curriculum including responsible, safe, and effective use of technology in line with the school's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy.

8.3. How this Policy Serves to Support the Development of Senior Cycle Key Competencies

Thinking and Problem Solving

- The pastoral approach encourages critical reflection, problem-solving in social situations, and decision-making in leadership roles.

Being Creative

- Creativity is nurtured through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, artistic initiatives, and project-based learning.

Communicating

- Opportunities in mentorship, student voice initiatives, and collaborative classroom tasks are employed to strengthen communication skills.

Working with Others

- Peer-buddy systems, Student Council, mentoring, in-class teaching, learning and assessment strategies coupled with team-based extracurricular activities foster collaboration and social engagement.

Participating in Society

- Engagement in community partnerships, social projects, and school-led campaigns develops active citizenship.

Cultivating Wellbeing

- Wellbeing is embedded across curriculum, pastoral care, extracurricular life, and classroom culture, promoting resilience, self-efficacy, and social-emotional competence.

Managing Learning and Self

- Students are encouraged to set goals, reflect on progress, take responsibility for learning, and balance commitments effectively, supported by mentoring, Year-Head guidance, and the school's pastoral care structures.

9. Implementation & Monitoring

- This policy will be implemented in collaboration with all stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, ancillary staff, subject departments, the pastoral care and student support team, and the school's senior leadership team.
- Each year group will follow a coordinated pastoral timetable, including induction, mentoring, wellbeing check-ins, and peer-buddy systems.
- Progress will be monitored via attendance, behaviour, student surveys, teacher feedback, and wellbeing indicators aligned with Junior Cycle.
- Progress will be monitored using the [Wellbeing-Policy-Framework.pdf](#), ensuring alignment with the Department's Indicators of Success across *culture and*

environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships. These indicators focus on fostering a safe and inclusive school climate, high-quality teaching and learning, effective policy implementation, and strong engagement with students, parents, and external partners. For full details, see Appendix One.

- The policy will be reviewed every two years (or sooner as required) and in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

10. Policies linked to the pastoral care policy

Pastoral Policies:

This policy is one of a number of policies; all of which are interlinked and interdependent. The aims of the Pastoral Care Policy underpin all other school policies. It should therefore be read in conjunction with our Mission Statement and other school policies:

- The Whole School Guidance Plan
- Admissions Policy
- Bi Cinealta Policy
- SPHE and RSE Policy
- Critical Incidents Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Homework Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Substance Abuse Policy
- Internet Use Policy
- Extra-Curricular.

11. Pastoral Care Team: Ms Leader, Mr McSweeney, Ms Fitzgerald, Ms O' Donoghue, Ms O' Sullivan Loughran, Mr Corbett.

12. Approval & Review

This Pastoral Care Policy was approved and ratified by the Board of Management on 12th February 2026

The next scheduled review is February 2028.

Appendix 1

Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice - The Indicators of Success outlined in Appendix 1 are the broad outcomes to which the school aspires.

Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success

Key Areas	Indicators of Success
Culture & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. • Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.
Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all. • Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.
Policy & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion. • Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.
Relationships & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community. • All adults in schools and centres for education have an increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.