

Ballymacward *Primary School*



Parents Guide to Pastoral Care

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1. Pastoral Care Statement

The pastoral dimension of Ballymacward Primary School involves all the pupils and adults connected to life in the school.

The pastoral dimension is central to the ethos of our catholic school. The atmosphere the school wishes to create is ordered yet sympathetic. A caring approach to all activities is a priority.

The school as a community is seen as an extended family where everyone works for the common good and the development of good interpersonal relationships is vital.

The pastoral dimension influences the attitudes to learning and permeates all activities offered to children during their time at school.

A positive behavioural programme to enhance self-esteem has been adopted where self-discipline is encouraged. This school encourages pupils to develop a wide range of personal interests and to take responsibility for their own actions.

Implicit in the pastoral dimension is the development of a programme for Health Education throughout the school. Parents are asked to inform the school of any health problems their child might have. In the event of problems arising appropriate action will be taken as agreed by Parents, Class Teacher and Principal.

2. Child Protection

We in Ballymacward Primary School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All our staff and volunteer have been subject to appropriate background checks. Staff of our school has also adopted a Discipline Policy promoting positive behaviour towards pupils.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect if a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

We use the following terms to define child abuse: Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Emotional Abuse (including the context of domestic violence).

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the designated teacher) must be informed immediately. Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.

3. Bullying

New Anti Bullying legislation was introduced in 2021 and school policy updated to reflect the changes in legislation.

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the designated teacher for child protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, referral will be made to outside agencies for their support. Should the issue not be resolved, it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Board of Governors under the Scheme for Discipline set out by CCMS.

4. Discipline

Ballymacward operates a Positive Behaviour Policy.

This discipline policy is seen as the development of a fair, firm and caring code of conduct that is applied consistently by all staff and accepted by the children and supported by the parents.

It is school policy where there is misbehaviour to make the pupil aware that it is **the behaviour** which is not acceptable, **not him/her as a person**. Indiscipline is checked immediately. Disruptive and anti-social behaviour is shown as unacceptable from Primary 1 upwards. Pupils are expected to obey instruction immediately and they are taught that insubordinate behaviour and cheek to teaching or non-teaching staff is unacceptable behaviour.

On rare occasions when pupils continue to disrupt normal school life and do not respond to internal discipline procedures, the following action will be taken:

- Class Teacher and Parent meet to discuss the disruptive behaviour. Teachers will present a record of the pupil's behaviour in school to the parents, along with details of actions taken by the school.
- Parents are requested to co-operate with a home/school programme which is planned to remediate the pupil's behaviour.
- If unacceptable behaviour continues, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the Principal when an Action Plan will be drawn up with agreement from the parent. It may be necessary to seek guidance from the appropriate outside agency.
- Should the issue not be resolved, it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Board of Governors under the Scheme for Discipline as set out by CCMS.

A full copy of the Pastoral Care Policy is available to parents on request.