



## **St. Mac Dara's Community College**

### **Chaplaincy Policy**

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### **1. School Mission Statement**

St. MacDaras Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school. Its positive ethos is reflected in the quality of the relationships between all its stakeholders. This collaborative approach is evident in the college's mission statement.

"We, the community of this college, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential".

### **2. Characteristic Spirit of the school**

St. Mac Dara's Community College is a designated Community College. Designated Community Colleges are established by the signing of a model agreement between an ETB and the local Catholic Bishop and/or a religious congregation. DDLETB is the patron of the school. The model agreement provides for the participation of the Archbishop of Dublin in the organisation and management of the community college on an ongoing basis.

St. Mac Dara's Community College was established in 1982 in a spirit of partnership between DDLETB and Archbishop of Dublin. St Mac Dara's Community College was established on a greenfield site. The inherited traditions, values and founding intentions of DDLETB and the Archbishop of Dublin remain enshrined in the characteristic spirit and in the life of our school.

Our school is a state, co-educational, multi-denominational school underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education;
- Care;
- Equality;
- Community and
- Respect.

All members of our school community are treated equally, regardless of their *race, gender, religion/belief, age, family status, marital status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability or socio-economic status*. In our school all students are given equal opportunity for enrolment, in line with the Education (Admissions to School) Act (2018). Once enrolled, our school strives to provide all our students with equal opportunities to engage with the curriculum and school life.

Our school, St. Mac Dara's Community College provides a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. We strive to enable every

student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity or background. Our school promotes a fully inclusive education which recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. We prepare open-minded, culturally sensitive and responsible citizens with a strong sense of shared values.

Our school is multi-denominational. We welcome, respect and support students of all religions and beliefs. The provision of religious education, religious worship and the work of the Chaplain all combine to reflect the founding intention of the school, the school's mission statement and the needs of the students within the school. The characteristic spirit of the school finds practical expression through the provision of pastoral, liturgical and social outreach activities, as appropriate, for each student.

### **3. Objectives of the Policy**

To outline the aims, role and responsibility of the Chaplain.

To provide a framework for the profession and work of a chaplain

### **4. Rationale of the Policy**

The policy will allow us to reflect upon the role of the Chaplain and how it benefits the school and wider community.

To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.

To provide a framework for the profession and work of the Chaplain

### **5. Chaplaincy Vision and Role**

The Chaplain works in harmony with the Principal and teachers of the school along with the families, communities and parishes of the students. They seek to know all students within the school and endeavour to meet some students individually when necessary. They also work as a member of the pastoral care team.

They are involved with students who have suffered bereavement or are experiencing personal difficulties in their lives. They liaise with classroom teachers, the tutors, and year heads over matters relating to the formation of the students and provides assistance as appropriate. They work with all staff to create a well-balanced school community, involving themselves in the life of the school and are present at major events in the student's school life.

They aim to encourage and foster an awareness of spirituality within the school to provide the students with opportunity to express their own religious identity, through liturgies, retreats and other religious and non-religious occasions.

The Chaplain aims to be available to all members of the school community – students, staff, parents and to develop an open and trusting relationship with all those with whom they come into contact with.

The Chaplain also teaches the required 4 hours a week in the assigned subject of religion.

Objectives:

- Being available to students, teachers, staff, parents and school authorities as someone to confide in, who listens and cares.
- Liaising with school management and the care team to promote a positive, living and enriching school ethos.
- Formulating any policies which relate to the pastoral care or holistic development of students.
- Following up referrals of students from the school care team, teachers or parents. In conjunction with parents and school authorities, advising on appropriate courses of action should the student need further intervention.
- Celebrating the key events in the Church's liturgical calendar and providing opportunities for staff and students to celebrate their faith.
- Decorating and maintaining a prayer space in the school where students and teachers can develop their spiritual selves through prayer, meditation and mindfulness.
- Teaching Religious Education and working closely with the RE team to co-ordinate the annual programme of liturgies, retreats, talks, prayer, meditation and mindfulness.
- Seeking opportunities, both in school and in the wider parish and local community, where students can develop socially, spiritually, creatively, morally and personally through outreach initiatives as outlined in the introduction above.

#### Responsibilities:

- To be responsible, in liaison with the Head of RE and the Senior Management team for the key liturgical school celebrations of Graduation Mass and November Remembrance service.
- To encourage Sacramental life of the school through events such as class services of reconciliation.
- To assist with the preparation and delivery of assemblies.
- To liaise with and encourage social groups in the school such as St. Vincent de Paul Society, Trocaire, Barnardos, John Paul II awards.
- To maintain close links with the local people of all faiths and none and encourage their visits to and involvement with the school.

#### **Support:**

- To offer bereavement support for staff, students and families.
- To hold individual meetings with students
- To hold meetings with parents
- To go on home visits to at risk students
- To offer support for students on their spiritual journey
- To offer written support (after care) in Bereavement
- To offer after care support for former students
- To hold circle time for students who are finding it difficult to adjust to their school community

#### **Interfaith:**

- To promote diversity, interculturalism, equality and equity.
- Cultivate the many faiths connected with the school community by meeting various leaders

#### **Teaching:**

- Organise guest speakers and events
- Teach 4 hrs a week
- Assist RE teachers with specific topics

#### **Other:**

- Organise the Christmas hamper appeal
- Attend extra-curricular activities
- Promote stewardship
- Help organise SVP food drive

- Help organise the barnardos fundraiser

**Liturgist:**

- Help organise the November remembrance service
- Assistance at funerals of students who have died whilst attending the school
- Lenten services
- Meditation
- Graduation mass/service
- Maintaining sacred spaces in school
- Interfaith services

**6. Pastoral Role**

- To be available for staff and pupils around the school for informal contact.
- To take part when practical in year retreats or days of reconciliation
- To attend, when practical parent's evenings.
- Maintaining a lively interest in recreational, cultural and outreach activities.
- Communicating with and supporting parents/guardians.

**7. Confidentiality, Data and Child Protection**

As part of the code of ethics, a chaplain must store, handle, transfer and dispose of all records (including written, electronic, audio and video) securely and in a way that safeguards the student's right to privacy. Care should be taken when storing all data related to the student's particular care needs. In obtaining information from or about a client, the chaplain should deal only with what may be necessary for the client's welfare. The chaplain will use a specific notebook and G Doc (attached below) to record all data.

Confidentiality must be secured from the beginning of the relationship. This confidentiality can only be broken in certain circumstances and these apply if there is a disclosure of sexual abuse with a minor if the chaplain evaluates that the student is a danger to self or others. In the case where a chaplain deems it necessary to breach confidentiality, this will be done with the student's knowledge and is seen as an extension of care rather than a breach of confidentiality. Therefore the student is safe in the knowledge that their confidentiality is guarded unless they are perceived as a threat to themselves or others. It is understood that the chaplain cannot use any confidential information for any personal advantage. If a student is involved in legal proceedings, this releases the chaplain from confidentiality on any fact relevant to legal proceedings.

**8. Wider Community Links**

**PASTORAL CARE TEAM**

The Care Team meet once a week. Those on the team include Principal, one Deputy Principal, two Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, SEN co-ordinator, Wellbeing co-ordinator and other parties are invited to attend when deemed appropriate. Here, strategies and interventions are co-ordinated for students who are at risk.

#### YEAR HEADS

Communication with Year Heads is frequent. Students are often referred to me by the Year Head; therefore feedback on the student's progress is regular. If requested, I will provide a written update report to be retained by the Year Head in the student's file. When it is deemed helpful, I am available to meet parents together with the Year Head.

#### CLASS TUTORS/SUBJECT TEACHERS

From time to time the class tutor or subject teacher will refer a student to me. In such cases, feedback is shared with the teacher, as appropriate.

#### SPHE AND WELLBEING CO-ORDINATORS & TEACHERS

These links are mainly in relation to offering preparatory and follow-up support around RSE workshops etc. Occasionally, students' engagement with the content of SPHE class and the Wellbeing program may prompt a teacher to refer a student, who may be in need of support.

#### STUDENT COUNCIL

The Student Council students may report circumstances that benefit from Chaplaincy support.

#### NEPS

In the case of a critical incident, the support of NEPS will always be invited. If a student's behaviour indicated a need for the intervention of a NEPS psychologist, I would work in conjunction with the SE co-ordinator in order to arrange a referral.

#### TUSLA (CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY)

When a student is deemed to be at risk of abuse, a report is made to the Designated Liaison Person within the school. This, in normal circumstances, is the Principal and he follows the Child Protection Guidelines, in referring the case to Tusla – the Child & Family Agency. As Chaplain, I am available to link with social workers when they are involved with students and their families.

#### LOCAL PARISH TEAM

I will liaise with the Local Parish team and attend Deanery Meetings throughout the year.

#### LUCENA CLINIC & PIETA HOUSE

When necessary, I will make contact with these agencies to access supports for students. However, in general, such supports are accessed by parents/guardians following GP visits with the particular child in need.

#### VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS AND CHARITIES

When the need arises, I will use the following agencies to access information and advice: AA, Aware, Barnardos, Bodywhys, Childline, Cura, Enable Ireland, First Light, Grow, Headstrong, HSE – various information/support services, Jigsaw, Cura, Youth Work Ireland, Samaritans, Teen Counselling, St. Catherines – the Priory, village counselling etc.

### **8. Chaplaincy Appointments**

As Chaplain, I meet students on a one to one basis when needed with a view to helping them cope with whatever issues may be significant and relevant for them. Students can present themselves for support; by making a request to talk to me, or I will introduce myself to students when they have been referred to me by Care Team, Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Head, SEN Department, Tutor, Parent or other interested parties with a view to suggesting and arranging a one-to-one session.

### **9. Evaluation**

In line with recent educational trends and School Self-Evaluation, the Chaplain is required to provide an evaluation at the end of each term. See Appendix 1

### **10. Continuous Professional Development**

As professionals, Chaplain's should seek and avail of CPD in their area.

### **11. Personal/Professional Support**

As Chaplain's, we are aware of the need for support. When possible, Chaplain's will meet with their cluster group for support, information and collaboration. When necessary, Chaplain's will avail of supervision and counselling to ensure self-care.

### **12. Social Outreach and Justice**

The Chaplain promotes a spirit of concern for others within and beyond the school community. The Chaplain may help the students take part in fundraising work for charities to help those in need. For example, fundraising for St. Vincent de Paul, hampers for those in need in our local area, homeless organisations etc... Helping those in our own community through community service programs is also an area that the chaplain may help students become involved in. Raising awareness of social justice problems and moral issues in our locality and worldwide, for example, poverty, child labour, war, human rights etc.

### **13. Spiritual Guidance**

The Chaplain animates the spiritual life of the school community and offers opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with God. The Chaplain cares for the young people's spiritual needs also. While many young people have difficulty with organised religion, they recognise their need for God/gods, higher being. They have spirituality – they just need to find ways to express it. The chaplain is in the privileged position to guide students and to explore various prayer methods which bring peace and fulfilment. Working alongside the Religion Department with the school, the Chaplain ensures the school community has time to celebrate its identity in religious worship.

### **14. Retreats**

The Chaplain organises retreats for different year groups. The retreat provides the students with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives, the issues they may face every day and where God fits into it.

## **15. Sacred Space**

We have an oratory which offers a sacred space for the spiritual development of all staff and students.

## **16. Policy Review & Update**

The Chaplain will work with their BOM and Chaplain's Cluster Group to review and update the policy.

## **17. Resource Sharing**

The Chaplain will work with the Cluster group to share resources for the good of the students, for collegiality and to be up to date with current educational trends.

## **18. The Admissions of School Act 2018**

The Admissions to School Act 2018 put a legal onus on schools to have an admissions policy implemented by September 2020.

Section 2 of The Admission Policy defines the characteristic spirit of the school as laid down by DDLETB as follows:

Designated community Colleges are established by the signing of a model agreement between an ETB and the local Catholic Bishop and/or congregation. DDLETB is the patron of the school. The model agreement provides for the participation of the Archbishop of Dublin in the organisation and management of the community college on an ongoing basis.

Our school is *multi-denominational*. We welcome, respect and support students of all religions and beliefs. The provision of religious education, religious worship and the work of the Chaplain all combine to reflect the founding intention of the school, the school's mission statement and the needs of the students within the school. The characteristic spirit of the school finds practical expression through the provision of pastoral, liturgical and social outreach activities, as appropriate, for each student.

Section 3 of The Admissions Policy defines the role of Religious Education in the school as follows:

'...Our school does not provide religious instruction and therefore the legal requirement to advise of the option to opt-out of religious instruction does not arise in this school. There is an important distinction between 'religious instruction' and 'religious education':

- Religious instruction is a term used in Ireland to indicate instruction in accordance with the rites, practices and teachings of a particular religion or denomination for the pupils of that religious tradition.
- Religious education is open to all pupils regardless of their commitment to any particular religion or worldview. It seeks to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of all students equally.

As ETB schools are 'multi-denominational, St. Mac Dara's Community College Supports the provision of religious education that caters for all students regardless of their religious or non religious beliefs.



### **Appendix 1:**

1. In general, how was the last term?
2. What were the highlights of the term?
3. What areas could be improved?
4. Who are the students I am currently working with?
5. Who are the parents/ guardians I am currently working with?
6. Comment on work with staff members.
7. What difficult areas need to be addressed?

### **Appendix 2**

Each month the Chaplain should:

- Offer Student Support
- Weekly meetings with mentors
- Pastoral care meetings
- Chaplain's meeting
- Home school visits
- Link with parish
- Sacred space
- Mindfulness
- Cluster meetings
- Deanary meetings

Individual months will then have their own activities:

- September: Welcoming service for First years  
Meet with all first years  
Back to School Interfaith service for the whole school
- October: Retreat for 6th years  
Interfaith service for 2nd years  
John paul II Awards/ Ember Awards  
Stewardship awareness/ Climate Action
- November: Remembrance mass/Service

Remembrance Tree/ Planting tulips

Stand Up Awareness week

Diwali Sacred space

Fundraising for St. Vincent de Paul

Hamper appeal

December: Hanukkah Sacred Space

Advent Sacred Space

Advent Calendar of Kindness

Christmas Carol service

Hampers and fundraising continued from Nov.

Barnardos Fundraiser

January: Mindfulness Month

February: St. Bridgid's Day/ Spring sacred space

Feast of St. Blaise

Stewardship programme(Hens/ bees?)

March: St. Patrick's Day

Mother's Day(with us, past, those offering the support of a mother)

Mental Health Week

Lenten services/ Ashes

April: Retreat walk for TY Students

May: Prayer service for exam years

Graduation

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Pamela Keus*

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Derik Ward*

(Principal)

Date: 23/3/2021

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