

WHOLE SCHOOL PASTORAL CARE POLICY

The Hamilton High School aims to participate in the development of each pupil into a mature, responsible and caring citizen, equipped with life skills and qualifications that will enable him to live a fulfilling and happy life. Students are encouraged to become lifelong, independent learners.

Our pastoral care system extends through:

- Subject teachers Learning Support/Resource
- Year Heads Deputy Principal
- Principal Board of Management
- Guidance Counsellor Parents
- Students' Council Ancillary Staff
- Local Gardaí/JLO Support agencies – NEPS, S.E.S.S, S.L.S.S. etc....
- Local S.E.N.O. Local Clergy

A major source of support for pastoral care in Hamilton High School is the **AMBER FLAG initiative**.

The Amber Flag aims to encourage Schools/Colleges/Clubs/Societies/Organisations to promote and actively bring about a culture change in the promotion of positive mental health within the educational system and other organisations. It is to enhance the already good work that is going on where mental health is concerned by offering an award. There is wonderful work going on in school and clubs etc. on an individual basis.

The Amber Flag acknowledges these efforts and unites all schools/clubs/societies/community groups in the promotion of "Positive Mental Health." It becomes a daily topic of conversation leading to a cultural shift where mental health becomes "the norm" leading to the breaking down of "stigma" that is associated with mental health resulting in individuals seeking help sooner, when mental health issues arise.

Positive Mental Health aims to:

- Promote mental health and well-being for all.
- Prevent mental health problems through increasing awareness, social support, reducing risk factors such as racism, bullying and isolation.
- Improving quality of life for students/people with mental health problems by promoting recovery through awareness and education.
- The culture shift in Mental Health can only become the norm when challenges like achieving the Amber Flag become recognised as a central programme of activity in the schools/clubs and associations.

TO AID PASTORAL CARE IN OUR SCHOOL:

1. At least once a term, each student in the Junior Cycle is asked to complete, in confidence, a questionnaire. The questionnaire deals with problems, if any, and in particular bullying, which the student or a classmate or a student from another class may have.
2. A designated 'nurture team' for JC and LC has been established.
3. The Students' Council meets with the designated teacher and management on a regular basis.
4. Each Year Head meets regularly with their year group.
5. SPHE is timetabled and is taught to all junior cycle classes. RSE is taught to all year groups.

6. A life skills programme is timetabled for fourth year students.
7. A qualified Guidance Counsellor is available to all students.
8. Career Guidance is available to all pupils, especially at senior cycle.
9. We encourage parents to communicate with us on a regular basis.
10. Notes concerning absences inform us of problems that may exist.
11. We observe students who may regularly isolate themselves and investigate if there is a problem.
12. We try to be aware and consider domestic and social problems that may impinge on students' education and development.
13. The Deputy Principal phones the parent when a student wishes to leave the school early. The Deputy Principal also phones home if a student is absent a number of days or if there is a concern about a student.
14. The Principal is in regular contact with parents.
15. Basic medical attention is provided by a qualified staff member and in emergency situations referrals are made to the school doctor/A&E with the consent of parent(s).
16. Students have the use of personal lockers.
17. Reports on academic progress and behaviour are sent home twice yearly and on a regular basis if deemed necessary by the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Guidance Counsellor.
18. Students have homework journals. Parents are encouraged to keep up to date with their progress. Teachers may write notes in students' journals or after consulting with the Year Head/Deputy Principal, arrange to meet with Parents/Guardians.
19. Teachers, the Guidance Counsellor, the Deputy Principal and the Principal meet with parents at parent/teacher meetings and are available to meet with students and/or their parents/guardians at other suitable times.
20. In Transition Year, students can sample every subject on offer for the senior cycle. This enables them to make an enlightened choice of subjects for their Leaving Certificate.
21. We have strong links with the local community:
 - We invite guest speakers to talk to the students about such things as Alcohol/Substance Abuse, Road Safety, Environmental Awareness etc.
 - Transition Year students do work experience in the community.
 - We regularly help charitable organisations in fund raising.
 - With sponsorship from local advertisers we produce an annual school magazine and sell it in the community.

Pastoral Care and Bullying

The school has a pastoral care system in place, and reports of all incidents will be filtered through the year head, who is the primary person for pastoral care of the student in his/her year group.

Pastoral Care Team Chain of Support: Student/Class Representative/Student Council/Year Head/ Guidance Counsellor/Senior Management Team/Deputy Principal/Principal/Board of Management.

Reporting Incidents of Bullying

- Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or their Year Head; this is responsible behaviour rather than "telling tales".
- Parents/guardians should contact the year head regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.
- Incidents of alleged bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in accordance with the school's anti bullying policy.

