



# WELLBEING POLICY

## Mercy secondary School Mounthawk

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***DRAFT 1** for internal circulation and discussion with the partners –  
Michaelmas term 2016*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Philosophy and context of this policy**

This policy is written in the context of the school Mission Statement and the Charter of our school Trust – CEIST.

#### ***Mercy Mounthawk Mission Statement***

*Mercy Mounthawk Catholic Voluntary Secondary School is a witnessing community which fosters:*

- *The full potential of all staff and students*
- *A positive partnership between all members of the school and wider community.*
- *The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance.*

#### ***CEIST Charter***

*The core values of CEIST are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people at the heart of our school: students, staff and parents. Its key principles focus on:*

- *Promoting spiritual and human development*
- *Achieving quality in teaching and learning*
- *Showing respect for every person*
- *Creating community*
- *Being just and responsible*

These core statements carry the philosophy of the school. Both statements allude to the development of the full potential of the individual as central to the work of this school. The project to develop the full potential of all assumes and requires the wellbeing of each student since a sense of wellbeing is essential to allow an individual to grow and indeed the end of such development must surely include a sense of wellbeing.

This commitment to wellbeing is implicit in the school's admission policy in the commitment to promoting the spiritual and human development of each individual as outlined in the CEIST charter.

In the light of these core values, the school is clear the wellbeing must include a mental, physical social and spiritual dimension. We are grounded in our reality as spiritual beings and as such the provision for the wellbeing of Human wellbeing is rooted in human community. We thrive as individuals only in community and very often it is community that sustains us through challenges. Hence the emphasis of this policy on the role of the whole school community in the programme of wellbeing. This is a whole school policy.

### **Goals of the policy**

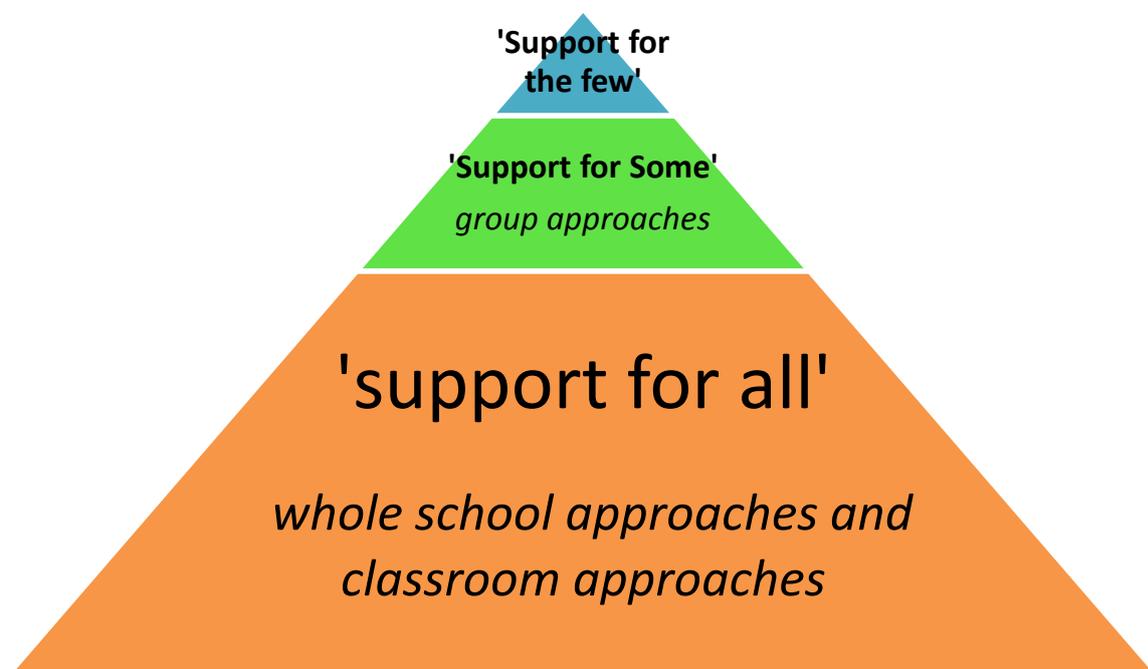
- To provide for the wellbeing of all students in the school in the light of the school Mission Statement and the charter of our school trust – CEIST
- To outline the policies, procedures, culture, ethos and the activities which serve to assist the wellbeing of students at Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk .

- to recognise the interplay between and positive experience of school life, student achievement and long term wellbeing.
- to offer a coordinated structure in supporting our young people through the creation of a multiplicity of opportunities both within and without the classroom focused on the promotion of wellbeing
- to outline the ways in which the expertise of the staff and outside agencies are engaged to support and respond to needs
- To provide an umbrella policy which outlines a structure that links a series of other policies that relate to well being

### **Structure of the Policy**

The philosophy of the policy is based on the NEPS document “Wellbeing in Post-Primary schools”. Using the NEPS continuum of provision as a framework, this policy proved an overview of the provision in the school in relation to promoting and supporting the wellbeing of all the students in the school.

The NEPS document suggests a continuum of support from ‘support for all’ through ‘school support for some’ to ‘school support plus (for a few)’. This policy will be structured on this basis and will allow us to outline the links between services, procedures and processes in the school as they relate to each other in providing for the wellbeing of students in this school.



## POLICY CONTENT

### Section A. Support for all

At this level we have a series of policies and procedures that promote wellbeing for all members of the school community – a whole school approach.

Processes on this level aim at (i) the establishment of a safe environment that is conducive to wellbeing and which supports the prevention of factors that negatively impact on wellbeing, (2) promotion of an understanding of and commitment to wellbeing (3) early identification and intervention in the cases of challenge

#### Section A.1 Establishing a safe environment

##### 1.1.a Behaviour Code

Mercy secondary School is a school community of students, teachers and ancillary staff, and parents/guardians, that fosters an ethos centred on positive relationships and seeks the development of the potential of each member of the community (*behaviour code, section 2*).

All members of this community have a right to be safe and respected. This code of behaviour is our policy to support these key rights and an outline of the strategies and sanctions which serve to protect those rights. This code gives priority to the promotion of good behaviour, affirming that behaviour, and thereby creating and sustaining the environment for effective teaching and learning.

We hold the highest expectations of all members of this community. This code outlines these expectations. Central to this code is the knowledge that students' behaviour can change. The code seeks to outline strategies, goals, motivation and incentives to support a student in managing his/her behaviour.

This code also clearly outlines our response to behaviour which undermines the positive climate of our college. The code seeks to involve students, teachers and parents in the process of managing behaviour which hinders the promotion of positive teaching and learning.

##### 1.1.b Anti Bullying Policy & Procedures

In the promotion of wellbeing, we believe that each member of the community has the 'right to an education free from fear and intimidation' (*Anti-bullying policy, section 2.1*)

The Board of Management recognises the negative impact that bullying can have on the lives of individuals within the school community and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in attempting to prevent bullying behaviour and tackling it when it does occur:

- A positive school culture and climate which-
- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
- and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

- Leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that- build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.  
(*anti-bullying policy Section 2.2*)

### 1.1.c Substance Use policy

As the DES guidelines reiterate: ‘the world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is part of this reality.’

We are committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance misuse. The School recognises that substances, both legal and illegal, are available in the local community and that the School, as part of that community, has an important role in terms of education, prevention, support and the handling of drug related incidents. (*section 1.3 of the Substance Use policy*). *In 2016.17 the school is piloting the ‘Think about Alcohol’ programme with a selection of students across the year groups. This HSE sponsored programme is being run in cooperation with the ‘Kerry children and young people Services committee’ and will following the pilot be utilised in the school.*

### 1.1.d Health & Safety Policy

It is the policy of Mercy Mounthawk to do all that is reasonable and practicable to prevent injury to people, damage to property and to protect everyone (including staff, students, public, contractors and visitors) from foreseeable hazards. The Board of Management recognises its overall responsibility for Health and Safety at Mercy Mounthawk and meets this through:

- The provision of a safe place of work, including safe access and egress;
- The provision of safe plant and equipment, articles and substances;
- The provision of safe systems of work;
- The provision of welfare facilities;
- The provision of appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision;
- Determining and implementing appropriate preventative and protective measures;
- Having regard to the general principles of prevention;
- The provision of emergency plans and procedures;
- Reporting prescribed accidents and dangerous occurrences to the Health & Safety Authority;
- Obtaining, where necessary, the services of a competent person to advise on health and safety; The detailed arrangements for achieving these objectives are set out in the main body of the Safety Statement. (*see Health and safety Statement 2016*)

### 1.1.e Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy. (*see Child Protection statement 22.08.2016*)

The Board of Management has ratified the appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (The Principal) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy Principal). All concerns regarding the welfare of a child should be reported to them. There is an obligation on the school to provide students with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their wellbeing and protect them from harm. In situations where school personnel suspect that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, or is being neglected, they should ensure that such concerns are reported to the Designated Liaison Person (The Principal) or the Deputy-Principal if he is unavailable. The Designated Liaison person will deal with the Health Service Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána and other parties, in connection with allegations of and/or concerns about child abuse or neglect.

### 1.1.f Data Protection Policy

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk Data Protection Policy applies to the personal data held by Mercy Mounthawk which is protected by the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

The policy applies to all Mercy Mounthawk staff, the board of management, parents/guardians, students and others (including prospective or potential students and their parents/guardians and applicants for staff positions within Mercy Mounthawk) insofar as the measures under the policy relate to them. Data will be stored securely, so that confidential information is protected in compliance with relevant legislation. This policy sets out the manner in which personal data and sensitive personal data will be protected by Mercy Mounthawk.

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk is a *data controller* of *personal data* relating to its past, present and future staff, students, parents/guardians and other members of the Mercy Mounthawk community. As such, Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk is obliged to comply with the principles of data protection set out in the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 which can be summarised as follows:

- Obtain and process *Personal Data* fairly.
- Keep it only for one or more specified and explicit lawful purposes:
- Process it only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was given initially:
- Keep *Personal Data* safe and secure:
- Keep *Personal Data* accurate, complete and up-to-date:
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Retain it no longer than is necessary for the specified purpose or purposes for which it was given:

Provide a copy of their *personal data* to any individual, on request.

### 1.1.g Our Internet Safe Usage Policy

This Policy (printed in the students' Journals) ensures that students will benefit from learning opportunities offered by the school's internet resources in a safe and effective manner. Strategies are in place to maximise learning and reduce risks. Usage agreement from parent and student is required and every reasonable precaution is taken by the school to provide on-line safety.

### 1.1.h Pastoral Care Policy

Pastoral care is the measure of the care and attention given to student's wellbeing on being informed of needs and concerns not being met of those in our care. These needs and concerns range from students behind in their studies, emotional needs, bullying, etc. The Pastoral Care programme involves every member of staff with the Pastoral Care Team having overall responsibility for its implementation. The Students' Council is essential in notifying the Care Team of their needs or concerns. Our Mission Statement enshrines the promotion of a Christian ethos, so that our Pastoral Care Programme is predicated on being integrated into the very fabric of our schooling process, helping our students to bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood, secure in mind and body.

### 1.1.i Critical Incident Policy

The Critical Incident Policy and Plan outlines how the staff will respond to a critical incident. This is an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school.

The Critical Incident Management Plan helps school staff react quickly and efficiently in the event of an incident. It maintains a sense of order with support offered to students, staff and families. It minimises the effects on students and facilitates a return to normality as soon as possible.

### 1.1.j Dignity in the Workplace Policy

This Policy sets out the criteria upon which a positive working environment in Mercy Mounthawk is created and maintained where one's dignity at work is recognised and protected. It ensures that all complaints are taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Its purpose is to eliminate the potential for bullying, sexual harassment, victimisation or discrimination in the workplace. The Complaints procedures as agreed by the A.S.T.I., the D.E.S. and the J.M.B. are operated in this school.

## **Section A.2 Promoting wellbeing**

### **2.1 Our Commitment to quality Teaching and Learning**

The management and staff in Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk are committed to the creation of positive, engaging learning experiences for our students.

#### 2.1 (a) Use of a variety of learning & teaching methodologies and strategies

Mindful of the mixed ability settings in the majority of classes staff utilise a variety of teaching approaches and methodologies to maintain student engagement and maximise learning and achievement. In recent years staff has attended in service or undertaken projects in - Assessment for Learning (AFL) methodology, team teaching, differentiation, sharing success criteria and the organising group work and active learning methodologies. Emphasis has also been placed in recent years on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in the school. These skills are of benefit in creating an engaged learning and teaching environment. Team teaching for SEN support is also now a significant strategy in the provision of Sen Support in the school.

### 2.1 (b) Mixed ability class grouping

Mercy Mounthawk operates a mixed ability class grouping policy in first year, TY, and Senior Cycle apart from the banding of core subject; English, Irish and Maths to allow for uptake at differentiated levels. There is a loose banding of students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year. This serves to promote a sense of democracy and a sense of community in all classes. In keeping with best practice staff sees this structure as central to the promotion of student self-esteem.

### 2.1 (c) The promotion of a culture of high expectations in all elements of school life

Explicit in our Behaviour Code and in our Mission Statement is the strong encouragement to create a culture of high expectation in our students. Whether in relation to academic achievement, social engagement or behaviour management, students are consistently reminded of the value the school places on their wholehearted engagement in school work and its hope and expectation for them as individuals and members of a community. There is an active policy in the core subjects of English and maths (*literacy and numeracy*) to promote uptake of higher level papers and this is a strategy of our literacy and numeracy SIPs.

### 2.1 (d) Positive relationships

Our promotion of positive relationships is based on the recognition of the dignity of each individual and the importance of respectful relationships between teachers, students & parents. Building an emphasis on positivity and on rewarding positive behaviour underpins all the relationships at Mercy Mounthawk.

## **2.2 Broad provision of programmes and a comprehensive curriculum**

Central to the ethos of the school is a belief in the importance of providing a broad spectrum of curricular programmes and subjects. Subject choice at second and fifth year is based on student choice. Option bands are built based on students' choice (once timetabling flexibility allows). This helps to meet the educational needs of a broad spectrum of our student cohort whilst also offering staff the opportunity for a diverse teaching experience. This supports a positive student experience of their learning choices.

### 2.2 (a) Junior cycle

In first year students get the opportunity to experience a full range of subjects available at Junior cycle level at the school. This process allows students to make an informed choice at the end of first year in dropping a subject. Students may adapt their choices - with guidance and parental involvement during the first month of second year. With an informed experience of each subject, delivered in a mixed ability environment in first year, we believe that our first years are less likely to find themselves struggling in a subject area in which they are not engaged.

### 2.2 (b) Transition Year

Transition year is an optional extra year following Junior cycle. It involves engagement in a wide and varied programme of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular experiences. Student growth, maturity and self-awareness are central to the programme. Peer teaching, student work placement, third level and college tasters & career explorations all develop opportunities for student learning.

Academically, students receive opportunities in all the subjects available at senior cycle at Mercy Mounthawk. The programme is chosen by approximately 65% of our third years. *(In response to the growth in demand the Board of Management has sanctioned an increase from 80 students in 2011 to 160 students in 2016).* This programme allows the staff the opportunity to teach in a creative manner, explore the vocational aspects of each subject and offer subject extension and enrichment opportunities.

#### 2.2 (c) Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

L.C.V.P. offers a practical application of the linked subjects and is popular with students taking 4/5 subjects at higher level. It facilitates those students with a particular vocational interest and is supported by the careers work experienced in transition year. Approximately 10% of the year group take this optional extra.

#### 2.2 (d) Leaving Certificate Applied

L.C.A. is a key programme at Mercy Mounthawk. It provides an accessible and positive experience of senior cycle for students whose focus is on the P.L.C. or apprenticeship route to employment or to continuation in 3<sup>rd</sup> level education. It helps build student self-esteem and through programmes such as Social Education overtly supports student wellbeing. *Many elements of the course such as the development of interview skills, the presentation of projects and work, engagement in work experience etc... enhance the confidence and wellbeing of students. These skills are enhanced through the guidance programme in senior cycle.*

#### 2.2 (e) Leaving Certificate

Mercy Mounthawk offers 22 subjects at L.C. level. This comprehensive approach to subject provision increases the opportunity for student subject contentment, which in turn maximises student engagement in the context of the content-laden curricula to be studied.

### 2.3 Study Skills, homework and assessment policies

In the pursuit of academic excellence it is our belief that appropriate study and revision practices must be in place for all students. It is essential that students, through self-discipline, develop a habit of study. The appropriate amount of time spent on homework, study and revision is outlined in the Student Journal. As a 3<sup>rd</sup> SIP in our school SSE programme, the staff have chosen to focus on the development and review of the homework policy which a view to improving the experience for students of engagement n homework.

An initial survey of the experience of parents regarding homework has been conducted and a survey of the experience of students will follow in 2016/17 as a basis for this work.

The school promotes an engagement in evening study for students who desire a supportive structure for study.

Mercy Mounthawk undertakes, in conjunction with the Guidance Department in the school, a comprehensive study skills programme with all students. Talks are provided on a yearly basis to students and to parents on the structuring of study and on learning strategies. *Study skills are delivered in SPHE classes in the first term of each year to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years students.*

## **2.4 Support Structures**

### **2.4.(a) Pastoral Structures**

Mercy Mounthawk has a full suite of pastoral support structures which provide support all students as part of their general education in the school.

### **2.4 (b) Recognition systems**

Hand in hand with the culture of high expectation is our culture of recognition. Staff members are strongly encouraged to “catch students doing good” and to use the practical reward mechanisms to celebrate this positivity. This policy has had a very positive impact on student behaviour at Mercy Mounthawk. While many of the more overt methods (Merit Cards, Improvement Cards), are most suited to the Junior school, their impact resonates throughout the school.

### **2.4 (c) Leadership role of Year heads/ Assistant Year Heads**

Our five year heads work in a committed manner to manage the wellbeing of each year group. Year heads lead the whole group, offer mentoring guidance to the students who need extra support and work 1:1 with the few. Year heads also work closely with the Deputy Principals and Guidance counsellors in the provision of student support.

The Attendance strategy in the school is implemented and monitored by the Assistant year head in each year. (see the Attendance policy )

### **2.4(d) Use of intercom, school website & local media to celebrate student & staff achievement**

In order to promote an awareness of the many accomplishments and positive events undertaken by our students (with the support of our staff) we use the local print and electronic media to celebrate the whole life of the school and offer reward and recognition for the diverse achievements at the school. Students are congratulated over the intercom on achievements and students are acknowledged to the Staff and the student body in the GP area at break times.

### **2.4(e) Use of Assemblies and the Tutor system**

Each half term begins with a formal year group assembly which reinforces the core aspects of the school Mission statement and the key elements of the Code of Behaviour couched in the terminology of the positive reinforcement.

The school operates a 10 minute assembly each morning with a specified class tutor who is the main contact point for students in the school. the class tutor knows the students in the group and connect with them regarding work and attendance.

### **2.4(f) Student Council Engagement and activities**

The Student Council at Mercy Mounthawk is task and activity centred. The student council has the opportunity to present student plans and concerns to management in a coordinated fashion. The three sub committees have an identified goal/project each year which they focus on implementing along with the lead teachers. This structure promotes a sense of involvement in the development of the school and a sense of partnership between students and teachers.

### **2.4(g) Parents’ Council engagement & activities**

The Parents' Council in the school meets once a month. Furthermore, at least one parent education event is organised each term- on diet and nutrition & on internet safety. The Parent Executive prior to main meeting. Working with parents to plan for student wellbeing is central to its function. Each year parents assist with the organisation of wellbeing events for students- delivering workshops or helping with walks. Parents are also engaged in developing policy and procedure.

2.4(h) Transition programme from primary to secondary

The school has worked to develop a systematic approach for the transition of students from primary. This involves a close working relationship with the primary principals, teachers, and SNA's and the SEN department. *Student profiling forms developed by the DES are received from the students Primary schools and are used in conjunction with our own school developed form to create a profile of incoming students. The Junior Cycle Deputy Principal and 1<sup>st</sup> year Year Head co-ordinate the use of these forms in supporting the transition of students into the school.* The transition programme also involves a series of events (the Open day and the Admissions Day) which allows each student become familiar with the geography of the school, the key personnel, their hopes and anxieties, the expectations the school will have of them and the additional supports and activities they may avail of.

2.4(i) Our partnership with Kerry Life Skills

Our S.P.H.E. programme is supported by twice yearly workshops with Kerry Life Skills for each junior Cycle class. Each workshop is planned with the student group and the class SPHE teacher attends each workshop. Kerry Life Skills also work with the staff both as a whole group and in small teams on specific issues as the need arises.

2.4(j) Staff with both a professional and personal commitment to the wellbeing of our students

Our staff sees its role as supporting and leading forth the whole person. In keeping with the Mission Statement, staff at the school aspires to develop the whole person, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural and physical. All relationships at our school are built on the central tenet of respect. The learning & teaching environment is a place of great endeavour at the school while the number and diversity of co-curricular activities and the extracurricular provision is a testament to staff commitment to our students. The extra activities, talks, tours, trips and events organised in parallel to the curriculum is central to the positive relationships at the heart of school life at Mercy Mounthawk. Other than a number of specialist teams, all of our initiatives are led by staff. This commitment greatly enhances the relationships at the school.

### **2.5.(a) Pastoral Programmes and curricula**

Mercy Mounthawk has a full suite of pastoral support programmes which provide support to all students as part of their general education in the school.

- Our SPHE programme
- Our RE programme
- Our Guidance programme
- Our RSE programme

*Friends for life programme: The school utilises the 'Friends for Life' programme in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year in RE and SPHE classes. This programme focuses on the acquisition of skills of resilience in anxiety prevention and management.*

*Retreats: It is the belief of school management and a core element of the ethos of the school that a grounding in spirituality and faith is an essential basis for wellbeing and happiness in this world. As such, the school provided opportunities, as part of the faith formation programme of the school, for students to engage meaningfully in the development of their faith and in exploring their spirituality. Retreats and reflection days are organised for senior cycle students in Ty and 5<sup>th</sup> year.*

### **2.5 (b).Our co-curricular programme**

Through the goodwill and hard work of our staff our students are offered a wide and varied programme of co-curricular activities which serve to involve the students in extension activities and stimulates a positive staff-student relationship- these include involvement in Art projects and competitions, poetry aloud, Choir, essay and creative writing opportunities, Traditional and contemporary music projects, debating, subject and general quizzes, Science club, (BT & Scifest) Musicals.

School teachers also organise co-curricular trips and visits- theatre and drama, history, science related -as well as foreign tours to Germany and Spain.

### **2.5 (c) Our Extracurricular programme**

Through the hard work and commitment, the staff also provides a broad programme of extra activities. These include Gaelic football, Basketball, Hurling, Soccer, Athletics- both cross country and track, Rugby, as well as outdoor pursuits activities. Again these events serve to broaden the educational engagement and sense of belonging central to a sense of wellbeing at school. This programme is complimented by our Lunchtime programme which offers students a broad array of activities including - table tennis, word & maths challenges and chess/draughts club, Science club, choir and a varied sports training programme.

### **2.5(d) Wellbeing, Dignity, Respect themed Weeks**

Three weeks of each year are given over to a focused examination of an aspect of wellbeing. Speakers and workshops on anti-bullying, drug and alcohol awareness, mindfulness, nutrition, mental health, sexual health, spirituality. Wellbeing in a Christian sense is developed around the concept of being aware of the dignity of every human and the entitlement to respect in that context and the right of all to pursue happiness though the achievement of such happiness can never be guaranteed. These weeks are drawn from staff, local and national expertise and involve student engagement in the planning and evaluation process. Throughout the year students are

invited to hear the insights of an array of motivational speakers on a broad range of topics.

2.5(e) Our involvement in the Health Promoting Schools programme

In order to structure wellbeing activities the staff have this year engaged with the Health Promoting Schools Programme as a means of structuring school involvement with a number of social, wellbeing and community initiatives such as healthy eating, Green Flag, Active school flag and the Yellow Flag.

2.5(f) Social justice engagement

Through the RE Dept students are engaged in a number of social justice and fund raising events throughout the year. These include raising student awareness on men's health through involvement in fund raising for St Vincent de Paul through *Carol singing*, engagement in the *SVdP Christmas Food appeal* and the *Shoebox Appeal*. Engaging students in community development and support for the more vulnerable in society assist the development of awareness in our boys. There is a very strong commitment to Social Justice promoted through the YSI initiatives in Transition Year.

2.5(h) Exploring explicit teaching of wellbeing principles

At the present time a number of staff are working on a project to develop the explicit teaching elements of wellbeing. This programme is currently focused in TY and 5<sup>th</sup> year SPHE.

## Section B. Support for some

As part of the whole school approach outlined in the introduction of this policy there is a more focused approach adopted with a number of identifiable groups of young people who are at risk of developing unhealthy patterns of behaviour, or who show signs of mental health challenges or who are in specified at risk categories. These structures seek to provide a more targeted support structure to promote and scaffold wellbeing for these identified groups.

3.1 *In relation to the discipline code and ant bullying policy*

*Each policy has a set of procedures in relation to engaging with some students who have not lived up to the expectations in the codes.*

*Use of restorative reflection processes*

*Year heads and teachers utilise the restorative reflective practice process to support the engagement with behaviour issues in a calm and structured fashion. Restorative practices facilitate an increase in understanding of consequence and aids the rebuilding of relationships following a serious incident or situation. It also offers a framework in which staff can work with sensitivity and with progression with students who require support and structure in moderating their behaviour and in learning good interpersonal skills.*

3.2 Proactive pastoral care team and engaging interventions

Our pastoral care team meet once per week. It includes representatives from the SEN department, the RE dept, SPHE department, the guidance counsellors, and is co-

ordinated by both deputy principals. The team reviews its current caseload and students indicated to them by members of staff, by parents or by student peers. It monitors ongoing concerns, agrees plans of action, forwards students to external agencies and indicates where staff may need training or skill set. The groups also works on policy such as Critical Incident reviews, of relevance to the provision of pastoral care and wellbeing.

### 3.3 SEN team work

The qualified resource teachers meet with the Deputy Principal each week to oversee student progress in Learning Support, ensure that student support files are being created, to plan for testing and target achievement, to examine resource allocation in the context of newly identified needs and requests for support from teachers and parents for students.

*The Resource team manages the creation* of the learning groups at the beginning of the year. Planning for SEN delivery takes into account High and low incident needs students through withdrawal, team teaching, small class groups, year head EBD & ASD support and the provision of LCA. In keeping with the ethos of the school we also support those students whose need has been more locally identified by mainstream teaching staff in consultation with parents. Adjusting the level of academic stress and reorganising support is a key element to managing student wellbeing. This work is governed by the SEN policy (Ref: XXXX ) which details the practice in the school in relation to the creation of IEPs for individual students.

### 3.4 Guidance counselling and mentoring

Targeted guidance is delivered by our full time guidance counsellor. This supports students with study, anxiety, passivity, relationship, peer, social or addiction issues in an in-school support environment.

### 3.5 Year head -tracking-report & reward systems

Year heads offer targeted support to students with behaviour management, organisation issues, time management, study skills difficulties, school/life balance issues in a supportive, mentoring fashion. Where a report system might assist this is monitored by the year heads who also use reward systems to support improvements.

### 3.6 Health Alert information

Under the procedures outlined in the medical policy of the school a list of students with health related issues is maintained by management and circulated as needed to all members of staff. Students with a chronic or life threatening serious illness are placed here with key actions and contacts listed.

### 3.7 Staff Wellbeing

Staff at Mercy Mounthawk work in a supported environment. Undoubtedly, the nature of the role – in seeking to develop the whole person – is hugely demanding.

3.7.1 The Board of Management sees its role as supporting and affirming the work of its staff. At each board meeting the Principal's report keeps the Board informed of the work of staff. This is formally affirmed at staff gatherings, through the agreed report and through contact from the Board Chair and the principal with individual members of staff.

3.7.2 As a small gesture of gratitude, the Board invites members of staff to a dinner at Christmas of each school year. The Board has also recently upgraded staff facilities in the staff workrooms. The move to teacher based classrooms in 2016/17 school year has, it is hoped, improved working conditions for staff.

3.7.3 School Management work collaboratively with the whole staff. Particular requirements are listened for and responded to. Management respect the professional commitment of each staff member and regard them as colleagues and friends. Management is understanding of the complex pressures which may come to bear on all members of staff from time to time and respond with compassion. *At morning meetings and at staff meetings teacher/staff achievement is recognised, staff is kept informed through ease of access to management at all times. As a consequence of staff commitment, student behaviour and engagement with school is of a high level at this time. While the principal and Deputies meet regularly with staff members in working groups and on an informal individual basis, it is the policy of the principal to meet with staff members individually each year to allow time to discuss professional issues.*

3.7.4 Over recent years staff CPD has been organised in Mindfulness, in first aid training, and in voice management. Each year the staff Social Committee organise a number of social gatherings to mark the end of each term or special events. Staff members are regularly reminded of the support available through the Employee Assistance Scheme.

## Section C. Support for the few

This support focuses on putting in place interventions for young people with more complex and enduring needs. *Work with this group of students is structured under the development of an IEP (individual Education Plan) and IBP (individual Behaviour Plan). The details of the development of these plans is outlined in the Behaviour Code and the SEN policy of the school. (Ref: XXXX)*

### 4.1 Close relationship with external agencies and services

The Pastoral Care, guidance teacher and management avail of all the supports or agencies appropriate to the identified needs of “the few” students.

The school has worked to establish close supportive relationship with a broad spectrum of services in order to have the capacity to call on the expert assistance available National Education Psychological Services, Special Education Needs Organiser, Education Welfare Officer and TUSLA, HSE Social services, Kerry Intervention Disability Services, Child Adolescent Mental Health Services , Juvenile Liaison Officer service, Garda Youth Diversion Programme workers, Pieta house and South west Counselling centre, Kerry |Diocesan Youth Service & HSE Children’s Services Committee While many of these agencies engage in a reactive role, the work of NEPS & KDYS in particular supports the proactive.

### 4.2 SNA Team work

Our team of SNA’s work to support those students with access to the expert skills required to assist students navigate the school day. Members of the SNA team also

help to support students with organisational or behavioural difficulties to support the wellbeing of these students. The SNA team at Mercy Mounthawk successfully supports a number of extremely complex cases - facilitating their capacity to integrate into the school community with great hard work and sensitivity. [This work is governed by the principles in the SNA deployment policy: XXXXXXref](#)

4.3 Use of the Volunteer community mentoring programme

In conjunction with KDYS Mercy Mounthawk offers the VCM programme to a small number of students. The support mentoring happens for 1 period each week and can be delivered at 2 levels dependent on identified need. This support is financed by the Board of Management in conjunction with KDYS.

4.4 Year Head mentoring

Year Heads work closely to monitor, support and guide the few students who struggle with behaviour management in the school context

4.5 Pastoral Support and Counselling

Our Guidance counsellors work closely to support and guide the few students who struggle with mental wellbeing issues. These students are identified through the Pastoral Care support system in the school and support for them is monitored by the team.

*Outside referrals are made when deemed necessary and the approach in relation to any form of supportive pastoral care interventions. Where the guidance counsellor or pastoral care team, in agreement with the student and his parents, believe that counselling may be of benefit, the student may avail of support during the school day and this support is always of a non-therapeutic nature. Such interventions are governed by the Pasoral Care Policy in the school. (reference XXX)*

## **Section D. Policy protocol**

All elements of this policy are reviewed periodically, through informal student feedback on the speakers, programmes and activities, by Questionnaires and small group discussions.

The policy document will be formally reviewed every 24 months from the time of ratification

Ratified by the Board of Management \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: \_\_\_\_\_