



# Finn Valley College

## Student Support Team

### Rationale

The purpose of the Student Support Team is to provide for students within the school community who have a greater need for a higher level of intervention. These students fall into the spectrum of students comprehended by the categories “School Support for Some” and “School Support for Few” outlined in the DES publication *Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention*.

Therefore, the rationale of the Student Support Team is to:

- Strive to support and improve the lives of students while in school.
- Support students with higher care needs so that they may have positive experiences in Finn Valley College
- Seek to ensure students presenting with particular care needs have access to the curriculum and learning.

This support system will complement the existing Pastoral Care system and Code of Behaviour which caters for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of students and which offers “School Support for All”.

### Membership of Student Support Team

The team comprises of two groups

- (i) **The extended team**
- (ii) **The core team**

**The extended team:** comprises of Guidance Counsellors: Ms Summerville and Mr White, HSCL: Ms Clarke, Principal and Deputy: Mr Thompson, Ms Boland, Secretary: Ms Doyle, Year Heads: Ms Mc Granaghan, Ms O’ Regan, SEN co-ordinator: Ms Ward and ASD co-ordinator Ms Mc Dermott. The team’s function is to meet at the beginning of each school year to screen students.

**The core team:** comprises of staff that have direct involvement in the care issues of students: The Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors, HSCL, and the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator.

## The Screening Process

1. Class lists of students are given to the extended team members.
2. Each member scores students who they feel may be in need of support on a scale of 1 – 10.

*1 – 3: The student requires a **Low** level of support (e.g. –unusual/challenging behaviour issues). This corresponds to the “School Support for Some” category of students in the DES publication “Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention.”*

*4 – 6: The student requires a **Medium** level of support (e.g. – signs of distress/anxiety, withdrawn behaviour, known disorders). This also corresponds to the “School Support for Some” category of students in the DES publication “Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention.” However, these students are at greater risk of developing more serious mental health issues.*

*7 – 10: The student requires a **High** level of support (e.g. any child protection issues, receiving clinical support, known dysfunction in family). This corresponds to the “School Support for Few” category of students in the DES publication “Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention.”*

***\*SEN students with no other difficulties apparent/reported from primary school to be left at low risk level***

3. Students are ranked in High, Medium, Low categories, according to the criteria detailed above.
4. A list of the students requiring support is drawn up from the feedback received, with a number in brackets after each student’s name to denote the number of times that the student has been flagged by the members of the extended care team.
5. Students are placed in the most appropriate support category by consensus of the Student Support Team members.
6. Each student is assigned a link person from team.
7. The finalised list (in edited form) is placed on *teachershare* for staff. Care is taken not to reveal confidential information.
8. The list is reviewed on a regular basis.

## **Core team's functions**

The Core team's function is to meet weekly in the Guidance office to:-

- Share information in a confidential setting
- Review the students on the list
- Discuss the student's needs, devise an intervention and record actions to be taken.
- Discuss any issues/ events that may have arisen over the week.

## **Confidentiality**

An essential element of the Student Support Team is maintaining clarity around the boundaries of confidentiality. The need for confidentiality is balanced at all times with the requirement to work in the best interests of the student. Confidentiality is always understood and agreed by reference to this requirement and in the context of Data Protection Legislation, Child Protection Legislation and Child Protection Guidelines and in the context of the school's Anti-bullying policy. The requirement for confidentiality is communicated clearly to all students and staff.

## **Communication**

The Student Support Team recognises that clear communication is essential. A person (including staff, individuals from external agencies linked to the school or others) who refers a student may not need to know the details of what has been discussed in relation to the student and may not be informed of any such details or subsequent developments unless to do so was acting clearly in the best interests of the student and was in accordance with the relevant legislation. The person who made the referral should (where appropriate) be assured that the student is being cared for by the Student Support Team.

## **Record-keeping**

The Student Support Team coordinates the care management strategies of the key personnel in the school. A record of the weekly meetings of the Student Support Team outlining the names of students reviewed, any new developments in their care needs and any new strategies or interventions brought to bear will be kept on a strictly confidential basis by the members of the team. Each link teacher will keep individual records as they relate to the student in their care.

## **The role of the link teacher**

- To provide on-going support and manage specific interventions as an outcome of the meetings.
- To liaise with Subject Teacher/ Class Teacher/ Year Head / SNA in relation to the student's issues.
- To ensure that Student Support Team members are kept informed of the student's current situation by feeding back to weekly meetings and providing updates for team review meetings.
- To make contact with parents/guardians when deemed necessary.

## **Referral System**

*It is in the interest of the student to have a clear referral system. Individual staff members are advised to trust their intuition regarding a student who needs referral. To avoid confusion the system already established in the school must be maintained. The system is as follows:*

- Special Needs Assistants to inform Subject Teacher / Class Teacher of a concern.
- A Subject Teacher informs the Class Teacher of a concern.
- The Class Teacher may suggest actions to be taken or may refer directly to the Year Head.
- Year Head and Class Teacher discuss what actions to be taken and make a plan for intervention.

### **Or**

- Refer at once to the guidance counsellor/ Principal.
- Concerns relating to students on the care list to be referred directly to the link teacher.
- A staff member or parent may also refer a student to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

***The nature and urgency of a matter will be determining factors in the referral route taken.***

## **Student Support Team review meetings**

Three review meetings are to be held annually with core team (ideally one per term).

This will give an opportunity to:

- Obtain a profile of the referred students
- Establish if there are identifiable patterns or issues emerging
- Review the support level necessary for the students (See template for Review meetings)
- To plan for the coming year

## **Evaluation**

Review and evaluation of all systems, structures, policy, different types of interventions and strategies employed in the support of students on Student Support Team list. The Student Support Team is also cognisant of the need to take care of themselves as well as the students. Reflection and self-evaluation are features of the system and all members of the team will engage in same.

### **Link with other policies in the school**

The Student Support Team process will link in with the following policies/ plans already in existence in the school:

**The Pastoral Care Policy** – The Student Support Team have an integral role in the pastoral care policy and the structures and supports outlined above are part of the overarching pastoral provision in the school.

**The Code of Behaviour** - links the discipline structure to the work of the Student Support Team.

**The Anti-Bullying Policy** - may also be referenced or utilised by the Student Support Team in supporting both the victim and the instigator

**The Critical Incident Policy** - This is an important policy for the Student Support Team as it outlines procedures that a school uses when faced with a trauma such as death of a student.

**The Admissions Policy** - It is important to name the Student Support Team as part of the school's commitment to caring for the student and to alert parents to the fact that those students can be referred for internal support.

**The Guidance Plan** - The Student Support Team is to complement the work of the Guidance Counsellor.

**Special Education Needs Policy** - This policy reflects the fact that students attending learning support or who have special needs may also need the support of the Student Support Team.

**SPHE Policy** - The social, personal and health education of students is an integral part of the curriculum and links in with the Student Support Team and Career Guidance Department.

**Staff Induction** - All new staff members are informed of the method of referral and to the student care list on *teachershare*.