

Pastoral Care

Our aim as a school is to meet the individual needs, foster the aptitudes and nurture the growth of each child to enable them to become their best selves in the fullest sense.

We understand education to mean all that a child learns from the world of school. We believe that emotional and social well-being and growth, self-esteem and confidence are of prime importance in themselves and are inextricably linked with academic progress.

We believe that respect for children, faith in children and an ability to see the world through their eyes should inform our teaching and our care. Indeed, we see teaching primarily as an act of care.

The Hidden Curriculum

We remember little of what we were taught as children. We remember a great deal about how we were treated. Children absorb and learn from the values embodied within their environment as much as they learn what they are explicitly taught. Confidence, security, trust and self-esteem at school will come from the way that children are treated by teachers within and beyond the classroom. As one of our leavers, bullied at his previous school, said of his time at St John's: 'I hope I have become a respecting person because I have been given respect.' Children are taught to respect each other, to notice each other's needs and to care for each other because they grow within a community which itself, through the staff, gives them these things.

The Curriculum

We devote considerable amounts of formal curriculum time to fostering the children's development.

- Personal and Social Education is taught throughout the school in the form of Emotions for Learning lessons or PSHEE lessons.
- Daily registration periods with Tutors provide time to address issues of significance with any particular class and time is available for Year Groups to meet to discuss any pastoral issues that have arisen.
- Assemblies provide a collective moral and spiritual framework to the life of the school and can be used to address any matters of general concern or, much more often, celebration.
- The academic curriculum is itself full of opportunities for children to 'think beyond themselves', particularly in the Humanities subjects.
- The development of the children's ability to possess and express their feelings and to read and respond to others' feelings is at the heart of Drama, Art and Music, which are taught by specialists as part of the curriculum throughout the school.

The Sense of Community

When prospective parents are given tours of the school by the children, they are struck by the children's sense of 'belonging' and calm. The same sense of belonging is evident at events organised by the Parents' Association, the School's Services in Preparation for Christmas in the St John's College Chapel, which many past pupils and parents continue to attend, and at the many plays, concerts, parents' evenings and other events which fill the annual calendar. It is expressed in the children's and parents' commitment to the many planned and impromptu charitable fund-raising activities in which we engage.

Such a sense of community is of immense value to children and to families and it stems from our wish to understand and care for the whole child. Our care does not start and stop at the school gate. School is an extension of family life and we aim to know, understand and care for the families from which our children come.

Contributing to the Community

As children grow from dependence towards increasing independence, we wish them to become responsible for themselves and towards others. Children relish such opportunities from the earliest age and we make every effort to acknowledge acts of kindness and care, whether it be carrying the register to the secretary or noticing an unhappy friend in the playground.

Monitors of one sort or another abound – in the libraries, the ICT rooms, the DT rooms etc – and, as children get older, more formal opportunities for responsibility exist. In the 5th Form, the children have the opportunity to go down to Byron House to supervise (or often join in) the playtime of the youngest children. Children in the 5th Form, and also in the 2nd Form at the top of Byron House, are given different responsibilities for each term. 5th Form and 2nd Form children are offered the opportunity to run their own clubs for the younger children.

Children from each year group at Senior House and from T2 upwards at Byron House serve on the School Committees, which meet to consider matters of importance raised by the children. There is no reward or privilege system for such opportunities – making such a contribution is seen as its own reward.

Children in Form 2 act as Buddies to the Kindergarten and T1 children, sharing books or games each week and having ‘buddy lunches’ each term. They also undertake many responsibilities at Byron House such as manning the computer during assemblies, tidying the playground, looking after smaller children during playtimes, welcoming children into school at kiss and drop, helping with tours of inspection and leading clubs.

In the 5th Form, children are taught lessons in ‘compassion’ and then have to organise, plan and run their own compassionate action outreach. This has included, for example, performances or games with people from local residential homes; teaching Mindfulness lessons to another primary school; sports coaching for our younger children; and redecorating a playground area.

Opportunities for outreach with elderly dementia patients are also sought and have included ‘Dancing with Dementia’ and ‘Dementia choir’ projects.

The aim of such outreach is, as well as forming links with our community, primarily to give children a sense of agency that they can make a difference in the world beyond the School.

The Tutor System

Tutors, and senior leaders will all expect to be involved in dealing with pastoral issues and to be informed of any concerns.

In Byron House, children are in the pastoral care of their main teacher. Thereafter, pastoral care of a class may be shared, with each tutor being responsible for no more than ten tutees. All staff are expected to be part of the pastoral system and to see this as a core part of their work.

Pastoral Monitoring

Our pastoral monitoring is designed to ensure that we notice and act upon any matter of concern. To this end:

- Tutors meet weekly in Year Groups to discuss the academic progress and welfare of the children. A record of any action needed is kept internally and notes of any matter of significance, be it a playground incident or a parental query, are likewise circulated so that all concerned are fully aware of all current issues.
- Weekly meetings of staff on each site, led by the Head, provide the opportunity to bring the circumstances of any child to the attention of the staff in general.
- The Senior Leadership team meets regularly to review all current pastoral and academic issues and to ensure that appropriate action is being taken.
- At Senior House, where children have a wide range of subject specialist teachers, tutors are kept informed of pupil progress through year group academic meetings which Heads of Academic subjects attend and weekly year group meetings which all tutors attend.
- A full and extensive review of each pupil’s circumstances takes place three times each year and involves tutors and Senior Managers in producing an action plan for each child.

As children grow, they are encouraged to take a view of and take increasing responsibility for their own circumstances.

- In Forms 3-6, individual tutor:pupil meetings are timetabled to allow for discussion of any relevant matters and these are much valued by children and staff alike.
- A group tutor session is also timetabled each term to allow group discussion on matters relevant to the children.
- When children arrive at their final two years, they are invited to attend parents' evenings to discuss their progress directly with their teachers.

Pastoral Action

If pastoral monitoring ensures that we notice any concern, it is essential that this should be translated into action to benefit a child.

- Sometimes, a concern is vague – Is a child making sufficient effort? Is a child unhappy in the playground? In such circumstances, ‘blind’ monitoring of a child may be used, whereby staff record their observations of a child, within and/or beyond the classroom, to gather further information with regard to any difficulty.
- Sometimes, if the concern is clear, it will be beneficial for the child to be involved in such monitoring, getting direct feedback from each teacher at the end of a lesson with regard to behaviour or progress.
- Sometimes, the concern is academic and will lead to further investigation, the tutor and/or others collating the views of all teachers or involving the Individual Needs specialists.
- Sometimes, the concern is with a child’s workload. In such cases, a child’s workload, extra-curricular involvement and other organisational issues are reviewed. Adjustments can be made and organisational support is given.
- Sometimes, the concern is with a child’s self-esteem or happiness. The cause is sought and addressed and the tutor, or another ‘mentor’, often one of the senior managers, is found to give particular attention to the child.
- Sometimes, the concern is with a child’s social understanding and friendships. The cause is sought and addressed, such as through ‘Block Play’ interventions, supported playtimes or working with parents on suggesting playdates.

Tutors and Home

Tutors should be well known to parents and will usually be the first point of contact, although the Senior Managers are equally available.

- All tutors will be available to meet with parents at mutually convenient times
- Any significant pastoral concern which arises at School will be shared with parents and the school wishes to know as soon as possible of any concern arising at home, whether or not it relates directly to school life.
- As children grow, so we try to give them increased responsibility to resolve minor concerns under our guidance. In such circumstances, it is good if children are able to reach a happy resolution themselves and it may therefore be that we do not inform parents of the older children if they have had and resolved a minor worry. In general, though, parents should expect to be informed of any significant incident involving their child.

Accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative

Children wish to belong, to contribute, to please, to care and to do well. If given the opportunity to do so, they will take it. If it is important to discover and acknowledge how positively children contribute to the community, it is even more important to continue to have faith in them when things go awry. Things do go wrong, for all of us, at some time. Unhappiness is a normal part of our lives and mistakes in the way we treat each other are important to our learning.

Our approach to unhappinesses, minor or major, is to ask (and to help children themselves to consider) why someone who would naturally wish to care and to do well should have failed to do so. In addressing the negative, we retain our faith in the children.

Kindness is generally an act of imagination – understanding what it would be like to be in the other person’s place – and very often it is a lack of thought and a lack of imagination that has given rise to unhappiness. Often an unkind comment or act occurs impulsively. Often, a child will be unaware that he or she has caused unhappiness.

Such circumstances provide opportunities to educate the children, individually, in small groups or collectively. The views of all parties are heard, including those of any ‘independent’ witnesses to an incident. A resolution will be reached, with clear guidance about future behaviour and, in most circumstances, a meeting will take place at an agreed future date to ensure that all is well. All those involved should feel clear that they have been heard,

have been valued, have been guided, have been forgiven, if necessary, and can be trusted. Above all, they should feel secure in the care of the staff concerned.

As outlined above, parents would generally be informed of the issue and of the action taken.

Major Unhappinesses

It is inevitably the case, in a school of the size of St John's and in the world in which we live, that some of our children will, at some time, experience major trauma. The serious illness of a parent, a family bereavement, the separation or divorce of parents are all part of the life of our community. In such circumstances, special care is taken of the children.

We can refer parents to bereavement counsellors, child and family therapists and divorce counsellors who will work in close co-operation with us to ensure the best outcome for the child. Often, children will 'bury' an unhappiness until they are ready to deal with it. With bereavement, for instance, difficulties can often arise about two years after the event, and we keep a careful note of all vulnerable children to ensure that their circumstances remain fresh in our minds. It is a privilege to us to be of use to families facing difficult circumstances and it is one of the great strengths of our community that staff and parents alike have provided the most wonderful support to families in need in the past. The Head is available to parents to discuss, in confidence if necessary, any matters of serious difficulty which may affect the life of their child.

Support for parents

In an increasingly complex world, it can be hard to know how to navigate the different pressures that children face as they grow up. Understanding how to support and guide children is a work that School and home do together. To help understanding, discussion and communication, the School runs various parent support groups and presentations throughout the year. These include:

- Emotions for Learning presentation: this is an opportunity to understand the language and tools we use in school to help children problem solve, understand their own and others' internal worlds and regulate.
- Relationships based parenting group: led by a trained practitioner, this six-week workshop gives an opportunity to explore how relationship and play can be used with children up to 10 years old as a way of supporting their development and navigating common parenting difficulties that we all experience.
- Mindfulness for parents: children at St John's are taught the theory of Mindfulness and Mindfulness practice is embedded in our day. Parents also have the opportunity to learn about the practice of Mindfulness in an eight-week course led by a trained practitioner.
- There are also a wide range of parenting support groups, courses, webinars and articles available to parents in Cambridgeshire on a wide range of topics. The School is happy to signpost and recommend where there are particular questions, challenges or areas of interest.

Bullying

Please see our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) and [Cyberbullying Policy](#)

Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Deputy Head.