Pastoral Care Policy

1. Purpose and ethos

Pastoral care is part of everyday life at Portavogie Primary School. We want every child to feel safe, included and ready to learn. Our school motto, “Nurturing Each Child’s Unique Potential”, reflects our belief that children achieve their best when they are known, listened to and supported.

This policy applies to children in the Nursery Unit and P1–P7. It sets out how we promote pupils’ wellbeing, recognise when a child may need additional help and work with families and other services. It should be read alongside our Child Protection Policy, Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy and Pupil Attendance Policy. The detailed procedures in those policies continue to apply.

Our CREED values are part of this approach. We place particular emphasis on Community, Respect and Resilience, while encouraging every child to show care for others and take part in school life.

2. Our approach to pastoral care

All members of staff have a part to play in creating a calm, caring school where children feel that they belong. We aim to:

- build positive relationships between pupils, staff and families;
- help children recognise and express feelings, develop friendships and resolve difficulties;
- encourage pupils to speak to a trusted adult when something is worrying them;
- notice changes in a child’s behaviour, attendance, learning or wellbeing and respond early;
- provide reasonable, individual support for children with additional needs or difficult circumstances; and
- give children opportunities to share their views and contribute to decisions that affect them.

This is supported through PDMU, assemblies, play, outdoor learning, class routines and opportunities such as the School Council and P7 buddies. Our participation in the EA Being Well Doing Well programme also helps us promote emotional health and wellbeing across the school.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Governors has oversight of pastoral care and considers the information provided by the Principal about pupil wellbeing, safeguarding and relevant school policies.

The Principal leads pastoral care across the school, supports staff, works with parents and ensures that concerns are followed up. The Principal will involve the SENCO, the safeguarding team or external services when appropriate.

Class teachers are usually the first point of contact for a child or parent. They are expected to know their pupils well, build positive relationships, share concerns promptly and keep a suitable record of significant pastoral discussions or support agreed.

Classroom assistants, supervisory assistants, Nursery staff, office staff and other adults working in school contribute to pupils’ safety and wellbeing. They report concerns promptly through the school’s agreed procedures. The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teachers lead on child protection matters as set out in the Child Protection Policy. The SENCO advises on support for pupils with additional needs.

Parents and carers are encouraged to keep the school informed of circumstances that may affect their child and to contact the class teacher or Principal at an early stage. Children are encouraged, in an age-appropriate way, to seek help and treat others with care and respect.

4. Recognising concerns and providing support

Children do not always tell us directly when something is wrong. Staff will be alert to changes in mood, friendships, presentation, attendance, participation or behaviour. We will listen to the child and, where appropriate, speak with parents to understand what may be happening.

Support will depend on the child's needs and may include check-ins with a trusted adult, help with friendships, adjustments to classroom routines, use of a quieter or sensory space, a short support plan or advice from the SENCO. Our school counsellor provides individual support for pupils where appropriate, through agreed referral and consent arrangements. We may also seek advice from the Education Authority, school nursing service, Educational Psychology or other relevant services.

Staff will consider the circumstances of pupils who are care-experienced, bereaved, young carers or affected by family difficulties, illness or trauma. Support will be planned sensitively and without making assumptions about the child or family. We will review what is helping and make changes where needed.

5. Positive relationships, behaviour and bullying concerns

We encourage respectful relationships and deal with disagreements fairly. Staff use calm, consistent and restorative approaches where appropriate, helping children understand the impact of their actions and rebuild relationships. We also recognise that some behaviour may be linked to unmet needs or emotional distress.

Concerns about socially unacceptable behaviour and bullying type behaviour will be dealt with under the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and the Addressing Bullying Type Behaviour Policy (June 2026). Allegations of bullying type behaviour will be assessed, responded to and recorded using the procedures set out in that policy, including the Bullying Concern Assessment Form where required. Children who experience or display bullying type behaviour will be supported. Significant safeguarding concerns will be referred under the Child Protection Policy without delay.

6. Attendance, inclusion and transitions

Regular attendance helps pupils feel part of school life. Where a child is struggling to attend, staff will seek to understand the reasons and work with the child and family at an early stage. This includes pupils experiencing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). The arrangements for monitoring attendance, support plans, attendance coding and contact with the link Education Welfare Officer are set out in our Pupil Attendance Policy.

We aim to make transitions manageable, including entry to Nursery or P1, moving between classes and transfer to post-primary school. Staff share relevant information sensitively to help provide continuity of support. The school will make appropriate arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or medical needs so they can participate as fully as possible in school life.

7. Listening to children and safeguarding

A pupil may choose to speak to a teacher, classroom assistant, supervisor or another trusted adult. Staff will listen calmly, take the concern seriously and explain in child-friendly language what will happen next. No member of staff should promise to keep a safeguarding concern secret.

Where there is a child protection concern, staff must follow the school's Child Protection Policy and current Department of Education guidance. Concerns must be passed promptly to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher, with factual recording using the school's agreed procedure. Staff must not investigate allegations themselves. Information will only be shared with those who need it to support or protect the child.

The school will teach and reinforce personal safety, children's rights, online safety and knowing whom to ask for help through the curriculum and wider school activities.

8. Everyday care and supervision

Children are supervised during the school day in line with school rotas and risk assessments. We take care with arrival and home-time arrangements, and pupils are only released to an authorised adult in accordance with agreed procedures. Visitors follow the school's security arrangements. Staff and volunteers are recruited, checked and supervised in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and current guidance.

Illness, injury, medication and intimate care are managed under the school's First Aid and Administration of Medicines, Health and Safety, and Intimate Care policies. Parents are asked to keep contact details and relevant medical information up to date. Where a child has a significant medical need, appropriate individual arrangements are agreed with parents and relevant professionals.

Educational visits and activities away from school are planned using the school's Educational Visits Policy and EA guidance. Supervision levels are determined through the risk assessment for each visit, taking account of the pupils, location and activities. Fixed adult-to-pupil ratios are not assumed to be suitable for every visit.

9. Working with parents and other services

We value open, respectful communication with parents and carers. Most day-to-day matters can be discussed with the class teacher. More complex concerns may be discussed with the Principal, SENCO or safeguarding team. Parents can contact school through the office or the usual school communication channels, including Just2Easy. Sensitive information will be handled privately.

When additional support is needed, the school may work with the Education Welfare Service, relevant EA support teams, health professionals, social care or other appropriate agencies. Families will be involved wherever appropriate, while safeguarding responsibilities will always take priority.

10. Monitoring and review

The Principal will review the effectiveness of pastoral arrangements through discussion with staff, pupil and parent feedback, attendance and wellbeing information, and matters arising through the school's normal monitoring procedures. The Board of Governors will consider this policy following consultation and review it at least every three years, or sooner if school practice or Department of Education/EA guidance changes.