

# Governors and Pastoral Care

This paper has two purposes:

- to inform governors about pastoral care
- to consider governors' roles in this area and what governors can do to help.

## What is Pastoral Care?

It is part of every pupil's entitlement in their school life. The 1988 Education Act (Section 1) states:

"The whole school curriculum entitles every pupil to a broad and balanced curriculum which (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and (b) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life"

Pastoral care contributes very strongly to this entitlement. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) described how it is achieved:

"Pastoral care is concerned with promoting pupils' personal and social development and fostering positive attitudes:

- through the quality of teaching and learning
- through the nature of relationships amongst pupils, teachers and adults other than teachers
- through arrangements for monitoring pupils' overall progress, academic, personal and social
- through specific pastoral structures and support systems, and
- through extra-curricular activities and the school ethos" (HMI, 1989)

**As a governor, do you know about these areas of the school? Do you have occasions to find out more and to discuss them?**

Pastoral care, then, is about all pupils, is concerned with their achievement, and concerns all schools. Governors have powers and duties which apply to the pastoral care provided by the school. *School Governors, A Guide to the Law* (DES, 1994) includes the following duties:

- helping to establish (with the head) the aims and policies of the school, and how the standards of education can be improved;
- acting as a link between the local community and the school;
- helping to draw up (with the head and staff) the school development plan;
- appointing, promoting supporting and disciplining staff;
- helping how to spend the school's budget

Primary schools do not often have specialist pastoral posts. Most secondary schools do.

## Pastoral Goals of a School

Pastoral care is most effective when the goals are clarified and discussed. We suggest eight goals.

- to provide a point of personal contact with every pupil and an appropriate relationship to hear and understand her/his experience and her/his view of progress

The tutor or class teacher takes the major responsibility for this. While other teachers in the school are also concerned with the pupil the focus of the tutor's or class teacher's contact is with the whole person. In some secondary schools it is the policy for the tutor to remain with the same group of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11, providing a continuing point of contact and overview.

- to provide a point of personal contact with parents to hear their view of their child's progress

Parents and carers have the major impact on young people's views of themselves, of school, of learning, and of their choices in life. Schools need to work alongside parents, through contact with the tutor or class teacher, perhaps through tutor group or class meetings. Parents' evenings which are like surgeries or supermarket checkouts are unlikely to achieve this goal.

In schools, pastoral care has sometimes been described in terms of the above two goals alone - "getting to know the pupils" and "getting to know the parents" - but with little idea of the purpose of getting to know.

- to monitor each individual pupil's progress and achievement across the whole curriculum and to create an overview of his/her approach to different learning tasks

Given the fragmented curriculum, especially in the secondary school, it is important to build a picture of each learner's profile across the learning situations s/he meets to create an overview of the pupil's performance. Every pupil has a unique profile: they and their teachers can learn from it

If the above three goals are achieved adequately, then there is a strong starting point for the following central goal.

...

- *to provide support and guidance for pupil achievement*

This is the key process which relates pastoral care clearly to the aims of the school. It is a significant goal for the whole school, and is not achieved by tutors or class teachers on their own. It requires a coordinated approach to guidance in a range of settings: subject teaching, tutorial meetings, and other specialist guidance provision (e.g. careers, PSE).

- *to provide colleagues with relevant knowledge of pupils so that their teaching efforts can be adapted for greater success*

Personal tutoring has a role as a feedback system to others in the school. This sometimes means conveying relevant information about individuals and their experience of learning, and sometimes means information about groups and their experience of the curriculum and of the school.

- *to promote the development of teaching and learning and a school organisation which respond to the experiences of pupils*

Having heard pupils' experience and made efforts to feed information to appropriate colleagues, it will be necessary to respond to the needs of pupils.

- *to encourage a caring and orderly environment within which all pupils can exercise initiative and develop*

This goal is included in order to keep together the notions of care and order. One researcher found the following characteristics of pastoral care in secondary schools with a low level of disruptive behaviour:

- principal aim of pastoral care is to enhance educational progress
- class teachers not encouraged to pass problems to senior staff
- pastoral care based on tutors, from whom advice about pupils was sought
- pastoral care for teachers was in evidence (Galloway, 1983)

- *to activate and link with the wider educational, welfare, community and world of work networks to support and extend the experiences of all pupils*

The issues and actions which have been highlighted are not likely to be met effectively only inside the walls of school. Effective links are needed with a range of local networks who have further skills, experiences and resources to offer.

**Have you considered these goals in your governing body? Do the staff of the school have opportunities to discuss and review how well they have been achieved?**

### **Distortions in Pastoral Work**

In our work we have met four kinds of distortions of pastoral care, each of which makes the pastoral work less effective. They are often the result of a lack of training in pastoral aspects of a teacher's role, and may reflect something more fundamental

about the school and its view of education or its organisation.

- The Pastoral/Curricular "split"

In this distortion tutors' and subject teachers' roles are seen as separate and unconnected, rather than contributing to an overall goal. It is often more talked about than real, but typically occurs when there is no opportunity for teachers to communicate about pupils' progress and their overall achievements.

- The discipline fixation - "fire fighting"

In this distortion the pastoral staff are over-engaged in responding to discipline problems, which have been referred by other teachers. There is little emphasis on developing positive control or looking at the patterns of indiscipline and how they relate to curriculum, classroom climate, and relationships in the school. In 1989 a major report by the Elton Committee on *Discipline in Schools* recommended that all schools should develop whole school behaviour policies, based on clear principles or values, worked out by all staff and involving governors and consistently applied by all staff (DES, 1989).

- Watered-down welfare

In this distortion teachers exceed their roles, trying to solve the complex problems of a small number of pupils and families. This approach ignores the development needs of *all* pupils.

- Administrative overload

Here the school over-uses the pastoral system for administration: collecting the dinner money, giving information to pupils, to the exclusion of other important work. This can be linked to poor behaviour as the Elton report concluded:

"Schools in which form tutors carry out mainly administrative functions, such as taking registers and reading notices, tend to suffer from more disruptive behaviour than schools in which they are actively involved in disciplinary, counselling and guidance activities, monitoring academic progress and other pastoral work." (DES, 1989)

**Do you recognise any of these distortions in the school?**

### **Achieving the goals:**

There are a wide range of tasks identified with pastoral care so it is helpful to use the following headings to explore them:

*Pastoral Care and the individual*, where the main focus is an individual pupil, her/his progress, achievement and development. This may focus on their learning, for example by helping them learn about and plan their learning, or be concerned with helping resolve difficulties such as bullying.

*Pastoral Care and the group*, where the focus is on the pupils and the personal-social skills and knowledge they need at school, for study, elsewhere and in later life. The school will work on this through:

- subject lessons,

- a tutoring or PSE (personal-social education) programme, covering such themes as:
  - \* overall achievement
  - \* decisions and choices in school
  - careers guidance
  - approaches to learning and study strategies
  - relations in a group
  - contributing to and getting the most out of school
  - other aspects of development: e.g. health
- and other aspects of school life, such as the ethos, the relationships between members of the school, pupils' contribution to school decisions, which are sometimes called the 'hidden curriculum', (although it is rarely hidden from the pupils).

*Pastoral management*, where the focus is on the school organisation, its staff and its relation to others outside the school, especially parents.

These three levels of activity need to be integrated in a balanced way if a school is to avoid the distortions referred to above.

**To inform themselves about the practice of pastoral care in a school, governors could:**

- **ask staff about their work with individual pupils;**
- **talk with pupils about how they get support and guidance;**
- **look at the plans for PSE and tutoring** (see for example *The School Curriculum*; DES, 1991)
- **visit subject lessons, with a focus on the personal-social skills which pupils are learning;**
- **find out more about what the job of a team-leader in pastoral care is like;**
- **ask parents about their contact with the class teacher or tutor.**

### **What Parents and Pupils say about Pastoral Care:**

Parents value pastoral care, and want more time for it in primary and secondary school according to a survey by the National Confederation of Parent Teachers Associations (NCPTA 1991).

64% of parent-teacher associations in primary and secondary schools do not consider that staff have adequate time to develop pastoral contact with pupils, and that this is one of the most important problems facing schools. 55% do not consider that staff have adequate time to talk to parents.

There is not a comparable survey of pupils' views, but in-school surveys often show that pupils value talking with teachers about achievements, experiences, needs and future targets.

**Has your school gathered the views of parents and pupils?**

### **What does a school need to be effective in its pastoral tasks?**

A clear *statement of goals* and of the principles of good practice and how these link with overall school aims and with other policies of the school.

*Skilled staff:* Pastoral care is rarely a major focus of initial training, and newly qualified teachers are often expected to take pastoral responsibilities with little understanding or experience. *Staff induction programmes* for all new teachers need to include an introduction to pastoral care in the school and an assessment of the teacher's professional development needs in this area. *Staff development planning* also needs to take account of changing responsibilities, especially those who lead pastoral teams (such as Heads of Years). In addition, individuals may want or need to develop particular skills (e.g. helping pupils with action planning, counselling).

*Resources:* Pastoral care needs resources, as all school activities do: for equipment, for curriculum materials, for post holders' salaries (if appropriate), for clerical support, for staff development. The budget for pastoral care in your school and how it was calculated should be published. These elements should be clearly identified in the school budget.

*Structure:* Schools need clear job descriptions and communication channels, clarity about how roles relate to each other and clarity about responsibilities. When these are in place teachers are more able to carry out their responsibilities.

In some schools all these are brought together in a written policy, which includes how the work will be monitored and reviewed.

**Does your school:**

- **have an effective policy for pastoral care?**
- **provide suitable training opportunities?**
- **allocate an appropriate budget?**
- **support the necessary communication between staff?**

### **What will Ofsted inspectors look for?**

Ofsted does not use the phrase "pastoral care" as its framework applies to primary, secondary and special schools. In all schools Inspectors must evaluate and report on "strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision for the educational and personal support and guidance of pupils and its contribution to educational standards achieved" and will base their judgement, in part, on the extent to which the school "provides effective support and advice for all its pupils, informed by monitoring of their academic progress, personal development, behaviour and attendance" (OFSTED, 1995) (Section 5.4 p20)

## What can the Governors do?

Governors have three main roles:

- \* to provide a strategic overview, by keeping the focus on raising pupil achievement
- \* to act as critical friend, by "asking challenging questions, and pressing for improvement ... to promote the interests of the school and its pupils".
- \* to ensure accountability by being informed about the school's performance, and by discussing, questioning and refining proposals.

(Barber et al, 1995)

You can realise these roles through the following:

### Ask about:

- pupils' experience of tutoring, the pastoral curriculum, guidance, action planning. Are pupils' views, hopes, opinions being sought by staff?
- parents' views of the quality of contact with the school. Remember some governors are parents at the school and will have first-hand experience to contribute. Are parents' views, hopes, opinions being sought by staff?
- teachers' vision, hopes and difficulties for pastoral work.
- support staff 's views about how their work integrates with teachers' work in this area.

It is important that governors hear and make heard the voices of parents and children by talking with them when they visit the school and by inviting them to meetings. Some governing bodies have organised special conferences for parents and pupils.

### Look for:

- evidence of planned guidance for pupils on the themes listed earlier.
- explanations about the purpose, structure and activity of the pastoral care in the school for parents, pupils and staff (staff handbook).
- the communications with parents: the quality of letters home, newsletter for example.
- opportunities for parents to meet teachers, especially the tutor or class teacher.
- evidence of support and guidance when things go wrong - e.g. permanent exclusions.
- how well pastoral care is managed.

### In your governing responsibilities remember

- when reviewing the *curriculum*, look at tutoring and PSE, as part of the whole curriculum.
- when making *staff appointments* include the pastoral aspect of any post in the advert, job descriptions, candidate briefings, and interviews.
- when working on *the school's development planning* consider the pastoral work of the school,

and how it can contribute to pupils' achievements. Will pastoral aspects be a focus of the school's development plan?

- when *preparing the school brochure and Annual Report to Parents*, remember that parents will want to know about pastoral care.
- when working on the *budget*, ensure that pastoral care is resourced.

### Further Information:

Best R, Lang P, Lodge C, & Watkins C (Eds), (1995), *Pastoral Care and Personal-Social Education: Entitlement and Provision*. London: Cassell

Watkins, C (1993), *The Value of Pastoral Care and Personal-Social Education*, NAPCE.

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The leading professional Association for pastoral care, providing training, materials and support for its members. We produce materials on: PSE, pastoral INSET, links with parents, children and bereavement, refugee children in school.

The journal *Pastoral Care in Education* is produced four times a year and circulated to all member schools - two copies per school member. Have you seen it in the staff-room or staff library?

### Is your school a member of NAPCE?

### References:

- Barber M, Stoll L, Mortimore P, & Hillman J (1995), *Governing Bodies and Effective Schools*, DFE
- DES (1989), *Discipline in Schools: report of the Committee of Enquiry chaired by Lord Elton*, HMSO
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- Ofsted (1995), *Framework for the Inspection of Nursery, Primary, Middle, Secondary and Special Schools*. HMSO

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