



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Pastoral Care</b>
<b>Summary:</b>	<b>Policy and procedures relating to the pastoral care of students at TAS</b>
<b>Intended Audience:</b>	<b>Staff, Parents, Students</b>
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# Pastoral Care Policy and Procedures

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## **Preamble**

The aim of the pastoral care program of the Armidale School ('the School') is to foster the emotional, physical, social and spiritual well being of each student, including boarding and day, in the school. The aim is for every student to be known and feel connected to the School and to particular staff members who may be their Head of House, Director of Pastoral Care, Advisor, School Counsellor, the School Chaplain or simply their classroom teacher.

This policy applies to all students of The Armidale School, including both Boarders and Day Students.

## **The objects of this policy are to encourage students to:**

- Be guided by their rights and responsibilities – the number one right being to feel safe and the number one responsibility to make others feel safe
- Be encouraged by positive affirmation and rewards
- Become involved in a range of activities within the school
- Reduce poor behaviour with fair and firm penalties and if poor behaviour persists
- Gain assistance from the school's welfare and counselling resources, in cooperation with parents
- Enjoy a cooperative learning environment

Assisting students and working within the framework of the school safety net as well as working with parents is the foundation for the School's pastoral care program. The school safety net consists of Head of Houses, Advisors, sport coaching and residential staff, the Deputy Headmaster and students themselves, all of which come under the guidance of the TAS Wellbeing Team, comprising the Director of Pastoral Care, the School Nurse, Chaplain, Counsellor, the Director of Boarding and the Girls' Education Director. This Team meets weekly to discuss both policies and practices as well as dealing with incidents and individual student needs as they arise.

## **Students at Risk of Harm**

Individual students are monitored by a variety of people (see below) and concerns directed principally to advisors and Heads of House. Each Heads of House meeting deals with any students at particular risk or with particular needs, and at weekly Wellbeing Team meetings, particular students at risk are monitored again and, at times, a Student Welfare Action Plan is put in place. Prior to significant off-campus trips (such as overseas, Annual Camp or Excursion Week), students with special requirements are identified, medication needs are considered and relevant are people notified. Where required, this forms part of a trip's risk assessment.

Pastoral care responsibilities mean showing a willingness to be an adult on whom students may depend for support, someone who will listen, advise, encourage and help.

Students with special academic needs are ideally identified at enrolment and are monitored by our Head of Learning Support, and, where required, Individual Programs (IPs) are developed. In relation to academic needs, classroom teachers monitor the ability of a student to manage homework demands, and capacity to meet these in their home, and concerns are relayed to advisors.

### **Structure**

The welfare of students is the responsibility of no one person. All staff members are part of the welfare network and students should feel free to talk to any staff member with whom they enjoy a good rapport. All staff share responsibility for the pastoral care of students but some have specific responsibilities.

### **Heads of House (Boarding), the Director of Boarding, the Girls Education Director and Director of Pastoral Care (responsible for Day students)**

The primary responsibility of these staff is a pastoral one. They are expected to know their students well and understand their needs. The role is a parental one, one of support and encouragement, sometimes correction, but always as a mentor rather than a monitor. They will need to give time to this pastoral role well beyond the time for administration and routine etc.

The Head of House is responsible for the character of the house, for its tone and morale. School and house aims and individual needs can only be met in a positive climate.

In boarding the Deputy Head of House is expected to make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the house and to the well being of the members of that house. He or she should provide general support and assistance to the Head of House.

### **Advisors and Advisor groups**

The staff at The Armidale School have many roles including teaching, coaching and involvement in the activities program – and they advise. The last is a very important component of the overall role of staff within the school and should involve staff more closely with students than most interactions. In 2010 the Advisor System was introduced by giving current students in Years 10-12 the opportunity to select their Advisor who they will retain throughout their years at school. Students in Middle School are allocated to their Homeroom Teacher according to classes while Year 9 students are allocated according to their Houses. At the end of Year 9, students choose their senior advisor.

The advisor is an advocate for their students and is the connecting point between home and school and between the student and the faculty. The advisor can act as a mediator as well as a confidante and act in the student's interest in a general practical manner. It is vital that the advisor communicates with the parents of each of his or her students. The first contact should be an introduction at the beginning of Term One informing the parents that their son is in their particular advisor group. This is the first and most important step in establishing a partnership based on mutual support for the student.

A fundamental aspect of the role of the advisor is to assist the students in the long term by having those conversations from which a young person learns how to respect rules, how to judge the effects of their actions on other people and thus be a positive presence in the life of the School.

The interaction that develops between the advisor and his or her students should lead to the potential formation of a more long-lasting and meaningful relationship between a student, staff member and, ultimately parents.

### **Advisor Meetings**

The underlying function of advisor meetings (held four times a week) is more important than just gathering together for administrative purposes; they enable the advisor to establish an informal relationship with each of the students in the group. Students should be encouraged to support the educational endeavours of the school and assume some responsibility for their engagement in the many opportunities on offer. The quality of life in the school community is the responsibility of all students.

### **Chaplain**

Beyond being a member of the Wellbeing Team, the chaplain is expected to be involved in a more general pastoral ministry to the students, staff and parents. This is a nebulous responsibility, which cannot be defined but means time spent informally getting to know individuals.

It also means being available for consultation, crisis or referral. The chaplain is expected to be teacher and a youth worker i.e. a person who has a real love for working with children and can reach and communicate with them. He or she will work closely with and consult with the Headmaster, the Deputy Headmaster, the School Counsellor, the Director of Pastoral Care and Head of Houses.

### **School Counsellor**

Beyond being a member of the Wellbeing Team, there are three main areas of responsibility in this role:

- Psychological Counselling and referral for student's, parents and staff with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.
- Coordination of the Support Services centre linking with support services and curriculum areas in the school.
- Initiating and supporting mental health promotion and prevention programs such as Mind Matters into the school

The School Counsellor can be contacted in person, by phone or by email and available to counsel students if and when required.

### **School Nurse**

The School Nurse runs the Health Centre which caters for all students and, in some cases, staff (in acute events and in School-provided services like free health checks). A staff member is on call 24 hrs a day but residential staff know also to ring 000 in the case of emergency. The distribution and monitoring of medication is managed by the Health Centre. The Health Centre also manages student access to ancillary services such as dental, physio and the like.

## **Senior Students**

Support and lead younger students through a variety of activities such as House events, the Cadet Unit, school leadership positions and peer group mentoring.

## **Student Welfare**

The Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster and Director of Pastoral Care are ultimately responsible for the welfare of students attending The Armidale School.

Student welfare is not conducted in isolation. Often the problem may first become apparent to the Director of Studies, a Cadet CUO or a sport coach. The team approach is then applied; all of the staff concerned then work together to assist the student using the skills and experience of a diverse range of staff members. Invariably the most effective method of helping students is to draw on this diversity of expertise found within the school. The Director of Pastoral Care oversees student wellbeing and heads the Wellbeing Team. Regular articles in TAS Talks (the School weekly newsletter) keeps community stakeholders abreast of programs, events and the like. Parents are also notified of particular concerns the School might have regarding their child and, where required, called in to meet with key staff.

The number one right of any student at TAS is to feel safe, while the number one responsibility of students is to ensure others feel safe. The students are reminded of this regularly and encouraged to look after each other. They are also closely monitored in their behaviour (including the use of bullying surveys) and encouraged to report anti-social behaviour (through such avenues as the [bullying@as.edu](mailto:bullying@as.edu) forum). Students have open access to the School Counsellor as well as other less formal channels of support. The School Liaison Police Officer in recent years has been Ron Halliday ([hall1ron@police.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hall1ron@police.nsw.gov.au)) and he has visited the School as part of the Year 10 STEPS Program to conduct sessions on adolescents and law. Where required, the School liaises with other agencies such as the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Armidale Hospital.

### **Procedure for Dealing with Students at High risk of Self-Harm**

The following advises Heads of House especially, and all TAS staff generally, about how a student presenting at risk of serious self-harm should be handled.

#### **Determining the severity of risk:**

Determining the level of risk involves placing the behaviour and words of the student within their context. There is, for example, a significant difference between "I thought of taking my life in the holidays two months ago" or "I need to tell you, Miss, that I have been doing some cutting" and "I want to end things now". Other things like the current mood, body language, student history and the like inform us in these matters.

Assessing the level of risk is not easy and, not being trained mental health professionals, TAS staff are always encouraged to forward concerns. This should be to refer the matter to the School Counsellor, Medical Centre, Director of Boarding (for boarders specifically) or other Senior Staff (Director of Pastoral Care, Girls Education Director, Deputy Headmaster, Headmaster). If in doubt, staff must always refer the incident on. If no one at School can be contacted, ring "000" and get an ambulance.

**What to do in acute circumstances:**

If the student is indicating that serious self-harm is likely, the School will follow the steps below:

1. Ensure the immediate safety of the student concerned and others around the student; if necessary, call for help from Senior Staff, the Medical Centre, or Police;
2. The student needs to be removed from the care of the School and placed with parents/guardians;
3. If this is not possible, then the student is to be admitted to hospital; and
4. The student's potential return to School is contingent upon the advice of a known professional's assurance that the risk has passed and the student is safe within our care. This final step is not always possible.

The safety and wellbeing of all members of the School community is paramount. No staff member will ever be criticised for over-escalating an issue – this includes calling an ambulance – and staff are encouraged to adopt a cautious positions always.

This is documented in an incident and accident report which is tabled at Executive and kept on student file.