**TCG Supporting Students**

**who are pregnant and those who are parents**

**within TCG**

**Guidelines for Best Practice**

**Purpose of the Guidelines:**

* To enable Temple Carrig School (TCG) to put in place supports aimed at ensuring that students who become pregnant or who are parents are supported to continue in education. This will include:
  + Clear communication with all partners
  + Openness and transparency
  + Inclusiveness
  + Facilitation to allow full debate (formal and informal)
  + Reasonable time frame
  + Clearly identifiable feedback mechanism
  + Designated person to lead the process (Key Liaison Person)
* Specifically, the guidelines will enable TCG to:
  + Raise the awareness of all in TCG and create an environment where student care is paramount and whereby a student will be able to disclose their pregnancy
  + Respond to a disclosure of pregnancy
  + Identify and respond to the individual needs of students who are pregnant and those who are parents in TCG
  + Support the student for the duration of their pregnancy and their return to TCG following the birth of their baby
  + Ensure that health and safety matters relating to pregnancy are met
  + Enable TCG to respond in a focused and planned way to the range of needs that emerge throughout the pregnancy
* For the student, the guidelines will:
  + Ensure that each student who is pregnant or a parent is aware of the supports in TCG that are available to them
  + Provide a student care plan which aims to set out clearly the roles/responsibilities of TCG and the student
  + Outline a framework to support the student. This framework will be between the student, their parents/guardians and TCG

**Core Principles of the Guidelines:**

The vulnerability of a student who is pregnant or about to become a parent, must be kept to the fore at all times. There may be a number of issues in relation to disclosure, health issues and education. It is imperative that the sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship is managed in a manner that is respectful, professional and trustful.

* Confidentiality:
  + All staff should treat in confidence all information disclosed, whether this information is disclosed directly by a student or by a member of staff. Any queries should be discussed only with the Principal or Key Support Person. This is to ensure the following:
    - To protect the interests of the student
    - To safeguard any disclosure or suspicion of a child protection nature
    - To safeguard the welfare of another individual
  + Specifically, a staff member should always respect the nature of a relationship occasioned by the sharing of information with them by a student of personal information
  + It is good practice to inform and/or seek the consent of a student to disclose personal information to a third party
  + Access to personal information with regard to students should be available to designated personnel only
  + Staff should always show respect for the interests and welfare of students and therefore the personal circumstance of a student must never become the subject of conversation between any other persons in TCG. Conversations of this kind do not include conferring with, or reporting to, the Principal or Key Support Person relating to the personal circumstances of a student, in the interests of that student
* Health and Well-Being:
  + The health and well-being of each student is of paramount consideration in TCG in delivering an inclusive and integrated system of education
* Equality and Access:
  + Access to education will, at all times, remain inclusive and anti-disriminatory
  + These guidelines promote the right to the continued education and support of students who are pregnant and students who are parents within TCG
  + TCG is committed to the elimination of any form of discrimination or harassment, which may arise for any student who is pregnant or a student who is a parent while in TCG
  + Each student is entitled to be treated in a consistent, fair and non-judgemental way
* Partnership:
  + Partnership between TCG, home/family, community/statutory agencies and voluntary bodies is central to supporting a student in this context
  + Respect and support from within TCG for those who volunteer to work with these students is expected

**Responding to a Disclosure of Student Pregnancy:**

The following guidelines aim to ensure that in the event of a disclosure of a pregnancy that the disclosure is handled in a manner which is respectful, sensitive and at all times is supportive of the student’s well-being. Students should feel safe and comfortable in coming forward to make disclosures. A disclosure of pregnancy may come from the student themselves, her partner (who may also be a student), parents or a third party.

It is important to consider the following when a disclosure is made:

* The initial disclosure may be a partial disclosure or a series of indirect questions about pregnancy which is often to gauge the reaction of the staff member to the fact that the student may be pregnant
* The student may be experiencing a wide range of emotions in response to the pregnancy which can often be conflicting and traumatic and could include:
  + Fear, uncertainty with regard to what is involved, guilt, blame, embarrassment
  + Confusion and anxiety while awaiting a reaction from the person to whom the disclosure is being made
  + Fear of consequence from the disclosure particularly if the parent/guardian is unaware of the pregnancy
  + Stigma resulting from the perceived reaction from the staff, other students and the wider community
* All disclosures of pregnancy or suspected pregnancy should be treated seriously in an informed, sensitive and professional manner
* It is important to observe what is said and the behaviour of the student as the disclosure is being made, noting any signs of anxiety, stress, fear etc
* Allow the student to talk without prompting, do not rush the student
* Maintain a calm atmosphere throughout this time
* Avoid questions that provide a yes or no answer as these may curtail the spontaneous nature of the disclosure
* Be honest and do not promise what you cannot deliver
* Check with the student how she/he is at the moment both psychologically and healthwise
* Inform the student about the level of assistance which TCG and external agencies can provide
* Agree the next steps in the process with the student, in particular explore if parents/guardians are aware of the pregnancy and how best to manage this
* Staff cannot make a promise to keep a disclosure of pregnancy a secret and should advise the student that this will be referred to the Key Support Person. In the event that it is necessary to inform the parent/guardian, this must be managed by the Principal/Key Support Person in a sensitive transparent way with the student concerned
* Should the student disclose, or if it is suspected, that the pregnancy occurred as a result of child abuse, the Principal/DLP must be informed immediately and the TCG Child Protection Policy implemented in line with the Children First Guidelines and DOES Guidelines

**Working with Parents/Guardians of Student Concerned:**

In safeguarding the health and safety of a student, TCG has a responsibility to ensure that if parents/guardians are unaware of the pregnancy that they are informed about the pregnancy at the earliest possible convenience. This will be done by the Principal or Key Support Person.

In order to ensure the best outcome for the student if a disclosure/suspicion of pregnancy has emerged the following should be borne in mind:

* Be sensitive to the rights, needs and concerns or parents/guardians
* In order to ensure an ongoing relationship with the parent/guardian, open, honest and non-judgemental communication from the start is essential
* As an initial step it is important to work with the student on a one-to-one basis to explain why the parents/guardians need to know particularly from a health perspective and to enable the student to tell them herself/himself at home
* When it is deemed appropriate that parents/guardians need to be informed and if the student remains unable to inform the parents/guardians on his/her own, the Key Support Person and the Principal could set up a meeting with the parents/guardians in consultation with the student and support the student when telling the parents/guardian herself/himself
* If the student remains unable or refuses to inform the parents/guardians, it is important that she/he is informed that TCG is obliged to do so in her/his best interests, unless doing so is likely to endanger the student in any way. In the event that such a potential risk has been identified TCG will need to determine the nature and extent of the risk and if necessary, liaise with colleagues in the local Health Service Executive without delay to agree on an appropriate plan of action
* If no such risk is identified the Principal/Key Support Person will set up a meeting with the parents/guardians and the student to inform them about the pregnancy, remaining at all times sensitive to the potential stresses at the time. It is important that TCG offer support to the student and parents/guardians and link them to other support services as required (see Appendix 1)
* TCG should reassure the parents/guardians and the student of their commitment to support the student to remain in TCG and partake in school life
* Subsequent meetings should be arranged to provide ongoing support and information with both the parents/guardians and the student. During these meetings the parents/guardians should be informed of the role of TCG will now play, including the development of a care plan, in partnership with the parents/guardians, student and other agencies

**Guidelines for Support During Pregnancy:**

In order to create the best conditions to support the student throughout their pregnancy and to provide the necessary level of support to the student, TCG will create a care plan in partnership with the student, parents/guardians and any relevant external agency.

**Student Care Plan:**

We will endeavour to develop a care plan to meet the individual needs of the student. This plan will be developed in consultation with the student concerned and will address the following:

* Support during pregnancy
* Health & Safety matters
* Expectations of TCG with regard to the performance of the student
* Address the issue of continuing in education after the birth

Maintaining the balance between supporting the student and carrying out “school as normal” is crucial for TCG. This may involve discussing with the student and parents/guardians what is acceptable behaviour and norms for the student during pregnancy and after birth. This discussion should take account of the needs of the student, teachers and other students.

It may be necessary to agree with the student any parameters on discussion of the pregnancy with their peers. Agreement on how to address issues such as non-attendance or time keeping will need to be addressed in the student care plan.

The care plan will address the following issues:

* Role and responsibilities of staff
* Health & Safety
* Academic Considerations
* Liaising with external agencies
* Demographic considerations

**Role & Responsibilities of Staff**

* TCG will designate a member of staff to act as “Key Support Person” to work with the student throughout the pregnancy and after the birth. This individual will be student centred and have a specific interest in such matters as pastoral care and show particular skills in the area of student support
* The Key Support Person is not expected to have expertise with regard to counselling a student who is pregnant on the outcomes of that pregnancy and options open to her at that time
* The Key Support Person will act on behalf of TCG as a liaison with the student and parents/guardians in addressing issues raised by pregnancy for both the student, TCG or other agencies as required
* The Key Support Person in collaboration with the student and his/her parents/guardians would design a care plan for the care of the student while in TCG
* The care plan will involve the parents/guardians and the student meeting with the Key Support Person at intervals during the pregnancy
* The Key Support Person will meet with the student at least once a month to monitor and review the plan
* Provision will be made for additional ad hoc meetings with the student as specific needs arise and to offer whatever support is relevant
* The Key Support Person may also need to attend external meetings with other agencies, which may arise when implementing the plan

**Health & Safety**

* TCG has a duty of care to ensure that the School environment promotes conditions where the health and safety of each student is safeguarded while on the premises
* The following issues should be addressed when developing the care plan:
  + Review of TCG building and classrooms to ensure that, in as far as is reasonable, that adjustments are made to facilitate ease of access to locations of study and class
  + The provision of information on health related matters in conjunction with other agencies (the local HSE etc) on an potential risks associated with pregnancy and TCG will include:
    - Particular contact sports such as PE, team sports
    - Academic TCG based activities which may involve exposure to any chemicals considered to be hazardous in the event of exposure during pregnancy
    - Any infections health conditions which may arise in TCG
    - Physical safety matters such as: potential difficulties regarding the student moving within the environs of TCG, carrying bags, size of desks, climbing stairs, need for special breaks, access to bus services
    - Flexibility around the wearing of TCG uniform to ensure that the student is as comfortable as possible
  + Duration of maternity leave will need to be decided
  + TCG will be informed by the student about visits to GP and to both antenatal and postnatal care
  + An ongoing review of the plan will occur throughout the pregnancy, in particular liaising with other agencies such as local parent support programmes to ensure that emerging needs are met

**Academic Considerations**

An academic plan which will meet the student’s requirements will be drawn up. This will be done with the student, parents/guardians, Year Head and Key Support Person. It will make provision for the following:

* The curricular expectations for the academic year in particular identifying potential subjects requiring attention in conjunction with the range of needs which may arise throughout the stages of pregnancy and birth, ensuring at all times the ongoing inclusion of the student in TCG
* How and when to access extra tuition
* Special exam arrangements
* Childcare and counselling considerations

**Liaising with External Agencies**

* TCG will work in close liaison with external agencies and act as a source of referral if and when the need arises
* The Key Support Person will refer the student to appropriate agencies to discuss the options available to her during the pregnancy and post birth (see Appendix 1)
* In the event of a miscarriage, still birth or post termination, TCG will continue to support and care the student in liaison with other relevant agencies (see Appendix 1)

**Demographic Considerations**

When supporting students and managing the academic care of students it is important that TCG is aware of the additional needs of students who have longer distances to travel for ante-natal care which may result in longer absences from school.

**Supporting the Student after the Birth:**

New challenges arise for the both the student and TCG in supporting the student after the birth of his/her child. The student is now a parent and will be coming to terms with their new status and responsibilities. The challenges presented by this may cause the student to review their commitment to completing their education. It is important that the support process begun during the pregnancy continues.

The following issues will need to be discussed:

* Student as a parent within the education system
* Continual affirmation of the student as a young person with the same needs as other young people their age
* External support structures that will assist the student to continue in education

**Student as a Parent in TCG**

In consultation with the student, TCG may need to plan how best to manage the student’s return to school after the birth of their baby and their reintegration to the class. This may include:

* Increased academic support following maternity leave
* Facilitating attendance at child health clinics and other appointments
* Encouraging full participation in school life – including extra curricular activities. (Some activities may be subject to a medical certificate of fitness)
* A more flexible approach in relation to academic demands may be agreed between the student and TCG which will allow for the extra demands on the student which parenthood brings

**Continued Affirmation of the Student as a Young Person**

TCG in conjunction with the parents/guardians will encourage the student to be continually engaged with their peers in the areas of sports, trips etc. Although their lives have changed, they are still young people with the same needs as their peers.

**External Support Structures**

Continued liaison with external agencies is imperative to enable the student to cope with the addition demands, both psychological and practical of being a parent (see Appendix 1)

**Support for Students who choose not to return to Education**

In the event that the student concerned does not return to TCG following the birth of the baby, it is important that the Key Support Person meets with the student subsequently. A meeting should be held that gives the student the opportunity to address any concerns he/she may have which may act as an impediment to returning to TCG to complete his/her education.

**Appendix 1:**

**Health Centres/Hospitals:**

Greystones Health Centre 01 287 7311

Victoria Road

Rathdown Lower

Greystones

Co Wicklow

National Maternity Hospital 01 637 3100

Holles Street

Dublin 2 [www.nmh.ie](http://www.nmh.ie)

Rotunda Maternity Hospital 01 817 1700

Parnell Square East

Dublin 1 [www.rotunda.ie](http://www.rotunda.ie)

**Pregnancy Counselling/Support:**

Bray Women’s Health Centre 01 276 1522

Bri Chualann Court 0818 227 034

Adelaide Road

Bray health@braywomenshealthcentre.ie

Co Wicklow

HSE Options Pregnancy Support 1800 828 010

Childline 1800 666 666

**Student Care Plan**

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| **Student Details** |  |
| Name: |  |
| Date of Birth: |  |
| Address: |  |
| Contact No: |  |

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| --- | --- |
| **Parent/Guardian Details** |  |
| Names: |  |
| Address (if different): |  |
| Contact Nos: |  |

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| --- | --- |
| **Emergency Contact Details** |  |
| Name: |  |
| Relationship to Student: |  |
| Contact No: |  |

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| --- | --- |
| **School Details** |  |
| Name of School: | Temple Carrig School |
| Academic Year: |  |
| Form Tutor: |  |
| Year Head: |  |
| Key Support Person: |  |

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| --- | --- |
| **Medical Details** |  |
| GP Name: |  |
| GP Address: |  |
| GP Contact No: |  |
| Hospital Name: |  |
| Hospital Address: |  |
| Obstetrician Name: |  |
| Contact Number: |  |
| Emergency Contact: |  |
| Emergency Contact No: |  |
| Due Date: |  |
| Ante Natal Care  Appointment Details: |  |
| Any other information: |  |

**Academic Year Profile:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Specific Demands (include exams, projects, trips)** | **Action/**  **Recommendation** |
| English |  |  |
| Irish |  |  |
| Maths |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| PE |  |  |
| Lifeskills |  |  |
| Extra Curricular Sport |  |  |

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| --- |
| **Extra Tuition Requirements:** |

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| **Specific Academic/Exam Requirements:** |

**Policy Development**

TCG will endeavour to ensure that a proactive supportive climate prevails within TCG by:

* Promoting an atmosphere of openness, honesty and respect in which students, staff and parents are encouraged to talk openly about concerns generally
* Promoting student self-esteem in a cross curricular way, in particular key values such as:
  + Identifying and expressing feelings and emotions
  + Being sensitive to and respecting the rights, needs and wishes of others
  + Raising awareness on the impact of negative relationships and issues of trust
  + Developing skills of sharing, negotiation, co-operation, listening and dealing with conflict
  + Enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence
  + Identifying a range of trusted adults to share concerns with
  + Offering support to students who are pregnant
  + Providing time and space for students to explore why discrimination occurs and to take positive steps to control it
  + The development of student centred problem solving skills
* Review and Evaluation
  + The policy should be reviewed and evaluated every three years, paying particular attention to:
    - Student care and needs during pregnancy and after the birth
    - Training needs for staff
    - Consulting and supporting parents
  + The policy should be included in the annual induction programme for staff
  + The policy should be included in policy and procedure awareness for students