

SCHOOL GUIDANCE POLICY

Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 states that a school ‘ shall use its available resources toensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational needs and career choices...

(d) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students...in consultation with their parents having regard to the characteristics spirit of the school’.

Guidance is now regarded as a core element of the school’s overall programme. The guidance programme should reflect the needs of students at all stages of their school life.

Our objectives are conditioned by the good practice disseminated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. We see guidance as a continual developmental process which begins prior to the entry of the student to The High School and concludes after the student has left the school.

AIM OF PROGRAMME

The aim of the programme is to provide for the educational, vocational and personal/social development of all students.

CONTENT OF PROGRAMME

The school guidance programme includes the following:

Counselling:

All students have the opportunity to meet the Guidance Counsellor for counselling. Counselling helps students explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them. It gives care and support to students learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up and school life and with their individual personal circumstances.

Guidance and Vocational Preparation Programmes:

These assist students with decision-making, problem-solving, behavioural change and skills for coping with ever-changing circumstances in their personal, educational and career development. They include classroom guidance activities which provide classroom based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school Guidance Programme. Such experiences include information giving; ICT; skills development (e.g. planning, decision making, study skills, communications, values clarification) and vocational preparation.

Other existing programmes which address Guidance Issues include:

- Pastoral Care
- Social, Personal and Health Education
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Religious Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- The School Assembly Programme
- Transition year Programmes which include:
 1. Educational skills (preparation for Leaving Certificate subject choice)
 2. Education for the future (RSE)
 3. Information and communications technology.
 4. Media Studies
 5. Religion and Personal Studies
 6. Work experience
 7. Financial Survival Skills
 8. Other TY options; e.g. Self Defence/Entrepreneurship/ECDL
- Other Main stream subjects.

Planning and Organising Workplace Learning: this may involve work experience, work shadowing, visits to work places, colleges and higher education institutes etc.

- Career Preparation Course – Form 5 (coordinated by the Guidance Counsellor and delivered by a team of teachers).
- Modular Careers Course - Form 6

- **Assessment:**

The Guidance and Learning Support departments use standardised tests to provide information which is helpful in predicting academic performance, assessing learning support requirements and levels of achievement. Aptitude tests, interest inventories and examination performance can help in problem-solving, decision-making and planning for the future.

- **Consultation:**

Students; Subject teachers; Form head; Year Head; Learning Support; Guidance Counsellor; School Management and Parents are all involved in the consultation process.

- **Referral:**

When necessary and appropriate students are referred to qualified professionals outside the school.

Referral includes two types of activity:

- Referral of an individual student by the Guidance Counsellor to other professionals outside the school, e.g. NEPS
- Referral of an individual student to the Guidance Counsellor by self, other students, teachers, school management and parents. The voluntary participation of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

Provision of Information:

Information is an important component in guidance. As information is continually changing Information Technology has a vital role to play.

STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMME

Students are provided with an opportunity of one to one meetings with the Guidance Counsellor. Follow-up, if necessary, is arranged by the Guidance Counsellor and the student. Times of such meetings are notified to subject teachers. Certain topics are covered in class by the Guidance Counsellor. Individual counselling is arranged as necessary.

TEAM APPROACH TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

In The High School, it has been recognised for many years that all staff have a vital part to play in student care. All staff therefore, have a role to play in the delivery of the School Guidance Programme. The team approach has been particularly effective.

Through the Pastoral Care structure many staff meet students on an individual basis in the course of the year. From time to time staff members will refer students to the Guidance Counsellor. Referrals on an emergency basis by staff members are also provided for, as are referrals to external agencies.

Students relate to different teachers in different ways and are encouraged to talk to any teacher they feel comfortable with if they need to. The individual appointment system applies to all teachers as all have a pastoral/caring role.

There is a pastoral care approach to deal with issues such as bullying, school attendance/punctuality, behaviour and progress in school (see relevant school policies).

The Guidance Counsellor plays a very important role in co-ordinating the school guidance programme. The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the school's team and works with Form Teachers, Year Heads, Subject Teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal. On a regular basis the Guidance Counsellor reports to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

As partners in education every opportunity is availed of to consult parents, provide them with information and involve them as much as possible.

SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLAN

A School Guidance Plan provides an essential framework for delivery of the school's guidance programme. Successful planning ensures a structured response to the educational, vocational and personal/social needs of the students.

The development of a school guidance policy based on a consultative process and presented in written form is highly desirable and facilitates accountability and evaluation requirements.

REVIEW

This policy sets out the school's response to the current needs of the students in the area of Guidance and Counselling. It will be reviewed at regular intervals.

THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

The Guidance Counsellor is seen as the central person responsible for the continuous developmental guidance process which begins prior to the entry of the student to The High School and concludes when the student has left the school.

The three key areas in which the counsellor has a major role and responsibility are personal counselling, career counselling and educational counselling.

The counsellor relates to school management through meeting the Principal and Deputy Principal on matters affecting the planning of the school's provision of personal, career and educational counselling, as well as on matters affecting individual students requiring intervention. The counsellor also relates with Year Heads, Form teachers, Learning Support teachers, Special Needs teachers, Subject teachers, parents and the School Nurse as appropriate.

The counsellor has a role in informing the school management and staff of the operation of the guidance department, in contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate programmes, in administering tests and interpreting their results, in managing information, in administering the guidance service and in liaison with referral agencies and professionals outside the school.

PERSONAL COUNSELLING

Being informed by the theoretical background of counselling which takes systems into account as influential in the life of an adolescent, the ways in which the counsellor fulfils this role include

- Publicising to the students and at parents' meetings the role of the Guidance Counsellor and the counsellor's availability to individual students for consultation at any time, within the framework of guidance hours available.
- Students and parents are free to request a consultation with the counsellor.
- The counsellor also initiates consultations with pupils, teachers and parents when particular circumstances arise indicating that a pupil may be in need of counselling on a personal issue which impinges on their school life.
- The counsellor is consulted by school management and pastoral care personnel on such issues and is also a member of the Serious Discipline Committee of the school.
- Every student in Form 6 is seen individually by the counsellor on personal and career related matters.

CAREER COUNSELLING

The ways in which the counsellor fulfils this role include:

- The counsellor addresses all students in Form 4 prior to them choosing their subjects for the Leaving Certificate. The counsellor also addresses a meeting of parents on the same topic.
- In form 4 (Transition Year) the counsellor is timetabled to teach an Educational Skills course to all Form 4 students in rotation. The topics covered include interest inventories, preparation for subject choice for the Leaving Certificate, information on the education system and an explanation of the wide variety of 3rd level destinations available and the routes by which they are accessed, differential aptitude tests, computer-based career programmes.
- The counsellor co-ordinates a course in Form 5 which is timetabled for one period a week and is assisted by other members of the teaching staff in the delivery of this course. Topics covered include a careers project, computer research, careers library research, job interview, preparation for mock interviews, part time jobs, study skill, 5th year UCD open day. The counsellor is assisted in this work by another member of the teaching staff who individually meets with each 5th year student and briefs students with information on potential opportunities at third level. This information is then passed on to the guidance counsellor for use at the Form 6 careers interview.
- The Guidance Counsellor in association with the Parents' Association organises a mock interview evening for students in Form 5.
- Personal and career related matters. Follow up meetings and telephone conversations also take place between the Counsellor, students and parents as required.
- Another member of staff takes responsibility for advising the students on the completion of UCAS applications to the British third level system.

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING

The ways in which the Guidance Counsellor fulfils this role include:

- Visiting the primary schools from which the pupils will transfer to the school and discussing the prospective students with the primary school Principal or sixth class teacher. These visits are conducted in conjunction with the Year Head of the incoming Form 1. The information gathered and the information available from the diagnostic tests conducted prior to entry is brought to bear in the planning of the composition of the classes in Form 1.
- Liaising with the Principal and Year Heads concerning pupils who require intervention.
- Offering those pupils counselling with regard to study techniques, educational planning and personal organisation.
- Monitoring and being aware of the delivery of study techniques courses within the Social, Personal and Health Education.
- Providing guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progress through meetings, e.g. prior to Transition Year, prior to

the Leaving Certificate course and a few months before the Leaving Certificate examinations.

- Being available to pupils who have left the school to offer advice after the Leaving Certificate results have been issued, i.e. at the beginning of the new school term.
- Liaise with Special Needs and Learning Support departments to identify students requiring further attention.

Counselling – Confidentiality

The Guidance Counsellor is trained in counselling. This is one of the ways in which a counsellor helps students. The counsellor offers students counselling help in many areas including:

- Personal problems
- Family problems
- Relationship problems
- Coping skills
- Motivation
- Making Choices
- Transition to 3rd level education and the adult world.

Students can self refer or be referred by parents or teachers. Parents may ask the counsellor's help in order that the counsellor may help their son/daughter. Students are encouraged to discuss their problem with their parent/guardian where appropriate.

At the beginning of the counselling contract students are always informed that what is said in the counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the student UNLESS the counsellor feels there is a danger to themselves (including eating disorders) or anyone else. Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse (Child Protection Guidelines definition applies here)

The Guidance Counsellor receives professional support by means of regular meetings with a trained counselling supervisor.

Thelma Jones
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