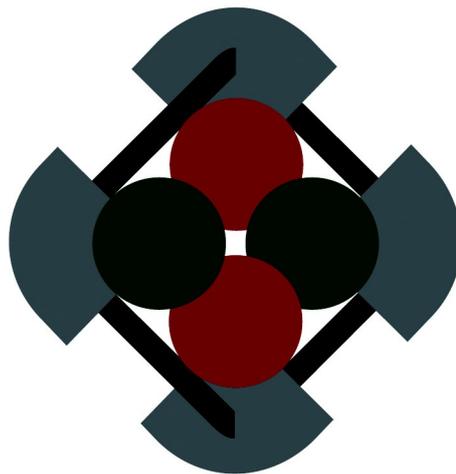


**St. Ciaran's  
Community School**  
Guidance Department Policy

**[Reviewed August '18]**



# Guidance Counsellor's Department Plan

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## ***POLICY PREAMBLE***

The provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools. The Education Act (1998) in section 9(c) states that a school *"shall use its available resources to... ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices."*

The school is therefore required to develop and implement, as part of our overall plan, 'a comprehensive guidance plan, taking into account the needs of students, available resources and contextual factors.' (*Circular M37/03*, in relation to above 9(c) document)

Guidance refers to a range of learning experiences designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions based on these choices. These choices may be categorised into the three separate but interlinked areas:

- Career
- Educational
- Personal and Social

The nature and range of guidance activities offered within St. Ciarán's Community School are based on the premise that guidance is both a whole school concern and a specialist area within education.

It was the working practice within St. Ciarán's Community School that these specialist responsibilities are proportionately distributed between two practitioners as allocated by the Department of Education & Science under the normal rules of allocation and the Guidance Enhancement Initiative. Since the removal of the allocation under the G.E.I. most of these responsibilities have been passed on to a single Guidance Counsellor. Consequently there has been a reduction in the services offered.

This plan refers to the subject 'Guidance' as it is delivered in St. Ciarán's Community School, cognizant of student needs and available resources. This plan is not a rigid template and reflects the distinctiveness of St. Ciarán's Community School in its own particular environment and circumstances. The Guidance Department's Plan that follows is an attempt to set down in writing what is already happening in practice, some of it in a voluntary capacity, as well as to focus on areas with a view to implement strategies for their improvement. This plan forms a part of the Whole School Guidance Plan.

## ***Mission Statement***

The Guidance Department aspires to engage with the students of St. Ciarán's Community School in a respectful and professional manner and to encourage every student to acquire the necessary skills for lifelong learning and personal fulfillment.

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## ***Aims & Objectives***

The aim of this document is to provide a flexible framework for the delivery of the school's guidance program. It will provide an ordered response to students' personal, social, educational and future careers needs.

## ***Overview of Present Guidance Practice***

### ***Curriculum:***

Given that career and/ or course choice are of a more immediate concern to Fifth and Sixth Year students, a high proportion of Guidance resources are given over to individual work with senior students.

Where timetabling allows, each Fifth Year and Sixth Year class is assigned one class period per week specifically for Guidance. Given the constantly changing nature of Guidance a flexible curriculum is followed.

All First Year Groups and Third Year Groups have a minimum of two classes on subject choice annually.

The Guidance Counsellor is involved in the delivery of the Guidance Module in both the LCA programs.

## ***In-school Cooperation***

The Guidance Counsellor attends the weekly timetabled Pastoral Care Meetings involving Counsellor, Chaplain, Deputy Principal, Year Heads and Principal.

The Guidance Counsellor will attend a weekly timetabled Special Education Needs Meeting involving the Deputy Principal and the teachers involved with Special Education Needs.

The Guidance Counselor liaises with the Special Education Needs Department where psychological assessment results and or psychological reports recommend a consult with the Guidance Department.

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## ***Extra-Curricula Involvement***

Where possible the Guidance Counsellor will be available to talk to parents and/or students in the school on the day of the release of C.A.O. offers in August.\*

The Guidance Counsellor offers an annual public information evening for Senior Students and their parents regarding the C.A.O. This talk is normally held in January, and is placed in the school calendar.\*

Under the Constitution of the Parents Association the Guidance Counsellor is an ex-officio member.\*

The Guidance Counsellor when requested will attend/ deliver the annual LCA / LCVP Information Evening.\*

The Guidance Counsellor will assist with the incoming First Year Assessments in the early part of the academic year.

## ***Community Interaction***

To maintain good working relations with a representative group of Higher Education Institutes and to offer students and parents another opportunity to seek information directly from these H.E.I.s, an annual College Fair is held for the students and parents.\* The involvement of the Parents' Association in organising this event is central to its success.

## ***Continuing Professional Development***

In accordance with best practice, the Guidance Counsellor will attend the National In-Service Day organised by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and recognised by the Department of Education and Science. \* (This day has since been moved to a Saturday.)

The Guidance Counsellor will also attend Supervision operated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, and where possible their Branch In-Services.

In order to keep up to date with any major changes within the C.A.O. system, the Guidance Counsellor will attend the annual Conference hosted by the Central

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Applications Office at the outset of the C.A.O. season.

Time and other duties permitting, the Guidance Counsellor may attend H.E.I. Open Days for the purpose of maintaining good working relations with the H.E.I. Admissions Staff and to stay abreast of the constant changes within the H.E.I..\*

### ***In-School Activities***

In the normal course of events a Guidance Counsellor is available to make interviews before the start of the school day until 8.40 a.m.\* This system is in place in order to minimise disruption to ordinary classes. All students who have made an appointment are given an appointment slip which is shown to the appropriate teacher and returned to the Guidance Office.

The Guidance Counsellor is timetabled for classes with Senior Cycle students. Classroom Guidance is delivered in timetabled weekly classes. Tuesday afternoons are left free of scheduled classes as per the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the Department of Education and Science request to attend C.P.D. and Supervision.

The Guidance Counsellor delivers the Guidance Module in the LCA program and, when running, assists with the preparation for the Recorded Interview and Career Investigation in the the LCVP Program.

It is the role of the Guidance Department to track student numbers issued by the C.A.O. system on an annual basis and deliver an analysis to the Principal each year. This information is annually renewed and available to students and parents on the Guidance Department website. In line with General Data Protection Guidelines the information is anonymized.

Presently, the Guidance Counsellor attends the Annual School Open Night as part of the Croke Park Hours.

A comprehensive Study Skills section for Juniors and Seniors is maintained on the Guidance website.

When requested, the Guidance Counsellor will complete the Supplementary Information Forms for students who apply through the C.A.O. with a Specific Learning Difficulty or a Disability.

The Guidance Counsellor facilitates the communication of information between the H.E.I.'s and other interested parties via the School's website and Facebook page. This is updated a number of times per week.

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All Sixth Year students are afforded the opportunity to attend the Higher Options Conference in September of each year.

It is the function of the Guidance Counsellor to offer Sixth Year students an opportunity to prepare for Post Leaving Certificate interviews and/or interviews with Access Officers, and to prepare for career related psychometric tests.

The Guidance Counsellor is a member of a designated committee responsible for the applications for Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Examinations.

When requested by a student, and where appropriate, the Guidance Counsellor may act as a referee and/or write a reference for a senior cycle student. Also where requested by a student, the Guidance Counsellor may help senior cycle students prepare Curriculum Vitae.

It is the function of the Guidance Counsellor to register the school each year with the U.C.A.S. system and to monitor online the U.C.A.S. applications made by Sixth Year students.

It is the function of a Guidance Counsellor to order all informational literature related to Career Guidance. This includes ordering any necessary supplies of prospectuses, pamphlets, booklets or audiovisual material.

Where needed, and where it may be reasonably accommodated, it is the function of a Guidance Counsellor to meet with past students who request Career Guidance, who do not require the assistance of an Adult Education Officer.

It is a function of a Guidance Counsellor to arrange for visiting speakers representing specific professions or a H.E.I. to visit the school and make presentations for interested students when feasible or requested by teachers.

On a needs basis, a Guidance Counsellor may arrange out of School visits for individual students or small groups of students to talk to Lecturers /Course Directors / Admissions Officers and/or to visit campuses and/or labs and workshops.

In order to advise teachers of students' absences for these events, lists of students attending Career related events are emailed/handed in to the Front Office so as students may be marked as 'Absent on School Business'.

The Guidance Counsellor will liaise with the Special Education Needs Department where a Psychologist's Report recommends a consult with the Guidance Department.

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Where requested, the Guidance Counsellor will assist a student in making an application for a Language / Maths Exemption(s) from the National University of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin or the University of Limerick.

It is the role of a Guidance Counsellor to advise Senior Cycle Students of the calendar of career related events at the beginning of the Academic Year. Ongoing additions or changes to this calendar, as communicated to the Guidance Counsellor, are posted on the Guidance Department Website and/or the school's Facebook page.

A Guidance Counsellor will take referrals from the appropriate post holder regarding subject changes requested from individual students.

Recognising that modern Career Guidance relies heavily on internet-based information, it is the role of the Guidance Counsellor to maintain a comprehensive and annually updated Career-related Internet Site for students and parents, including 'Subject Choice Sheets' for First Year and Third Year Subject Choice.\*

### *Curriculum Content/Guidance Syllabus 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Year*

#### **Year 1 Organisation**

- No formal timetable.
- Small Group/Individual sessions by appointment or referral

#### **Syllabus**

Introduction: Discussion on transition to second level, issues around bullying. How to access the Guidance Service.

- Subject Choice Decisions. Subject Choice information given in class, also permanent information available on Guidance Department website.

#### **Year 2 Organisation**

- No formal timetable.
- Small Group/Individual sessions by appointment or referral.

#### **Year 3 Organisation**

- No formal class contact
- Small Group/Individual sessions by appointment or referral.

#### **Syllabus**

- Subject choice for students going directly to 5<sup>th</sup> Year or Transition Year. Senior Subject Choice classes offered also permanent information available on Guidance Department website.

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## Year 5/6 Organisation

- Formal class contact, for entire academic year involving one 40 minute session per week for 6<sup>th</sup> years. Schedule of work updated annually on website.
- Small group/individual sessions by appointment or referral
- 5<sup>th</sup> Year Visit to an IOT
- 6<sup>th</sup> Year Visit to a University
- Recorded Interviews for 6<sup>th</sup> Year LCVP portfolio. (When program running.)
- Career Investigations for 6<sup>th</sup> Year LCVP portfolio. (When program running.)

## Syllabus

- The Role of the Guidance Counsellor
- Guidance Related Internet Sites
- Interest Inventories
- Study Skills
- Overview of PLC Courses
- The Career Investigation
- Occupational Trends
- Sample Application Forms
- Work and the Law
- C. V.s and Interviews
- Standards Based Apprenticeship System
- A Year Out: The Options
- Sport & Recreation (Scholarships & Bursaries)
- Living Away from Home: Money Management
- The C.A.O. System
- U.C.A.S.
- Investigating Colleges
- Careers
- Stress Management
- Relevant Topics as determined by the specific needs of the class.
- Options after the Leaving Certificate

The above is entirely dependent on time restrictions and the individual makeup of class groups.

## External

- Students are encouraged to attend career talks / presentations / seminars / workshops / Open Days.
- A number of visiting speakers are brought into the school.

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- The School host an annual College Fair, facilitated by the Parent's Association and sponsored by local business. This event also functions as a core contact with other schools in the immediate area.\*
- Liaise with the H.S.E., TUSLA and N.E.P.S. where appropriate.

### ***Homework Procedures***

Formal homework is not given.

### ***Use of Information Technology***

All students are continually encouraged to make use of Internet based resources for Career Guidance. The Department's website is a central resource for students.\*

### ***Assessment Procedures / Evaluation***

Assessment is not a feature of the guidance program. Casual 'assessment' in the clarification of subject choice and career choice, improved study skills and examination technique etc provide some insight into the efficacy of the Guidance Counsellors' interventions.

### ***Referrals & Reporting Procedures***

Referrals are normally through self referral or from management, parents or teaching staff.

In both personal and vocational counselling the rules of confidentiality are adhered to. According to Child Protection Guidelines, the D.L.P. is informed if a student is posing a danger to him/herself and /or to others. All Senior students are informed of the protocols surrounding confidentiality at the start of the school year as are individually referred students.

A supply of distinct referral forms are left permanently in the staff room and this is the preferred means of passing on referrals to the Guidance Department.

### ***Psychometric Testing***

The Guidance Counsellor will assist with the administration of tests for incoming First Years, when requested. Presently the tests used are the appropriate level

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psychometric ability tests. These instruments are machine scored and the data securely held on a password protected and encrypted computer in the Guidance office.

### ***Data Protection Protocols***

Following the introduction of the GDPR on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 it is the policy of the Guidance Department to destroy permanently all records relating to past students, seven calendar years after they have left the school. All psychometric results and all correspondence or communications involving these students will also be permanently destroyed seven calendar years after a student has left the school.

Guidance has a zero paperwork policy, where all notes are typed and digitally stored. The information retained is at an absolute minimum required.

In accordance with the Guidelines of Ethical Testing, actual psychometric results may only be given to students following a full consultation. Printed Psychometric results will only be released to parents or guardians after a written request has been received from said parents or guardians. Within the school, the results of said tests may only be shared with members of staff on a needs only basis.

The CAT4 tests are specifically used to identify students with potential learning difficulties or exceptional learning abilities in first year, plus they are used as part of the data transmitted to the S.E.C. as part of the R.A.C.E. applications. They are not used as a part of S.S.E.

Psychometric Test results are accessed through a secure encrypted website. Results are stored electronically on password protected and encrypted hard drives. Hard copies are stored with the Special Education Needs Department, the security of which is outside the Guidance Department's remit.

### ***Counselling***

The Guidance Counsellor will endeavour to undertake one-to-one counselling sessions with students. This is very much a combined effort with the school Chaplain.

Counselling helps students in crisis by exploring and developing a range of coping strategies and interventions in a thoughtful and caring way deemed appropriate to the student's individual needs. Counselling takes place in an accepting, non-

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judgmental atmosphere where the young person feels secure enough to explore new ways of dealing with difficult situations, and where confidentiality is guaranteed.

In some instances students may be referred to a psychologist or to a therapist in the area. Other students may be referred to the NEPS psychologist, Pieta House, JigSaw Navan, Primary Care or other external agencies.

The following list will give an indication of many of the presenting problems:

### Personal Problems

(e.g. anxieties, fears, self - esteem issues, developmental problems, illness, bereavement)

### Family problems

(e.g. separation, divorce, bereavement, violence, family tensions, arguments)

### Peer Group Problems

(e.g. slagging, bullying, fighting, relationship problems)

### Educational Problems

(e.g. motivation, behavioural problems, discipline, school-work, exam pressure, student/teacher relationships, truancy)

### Behavioural Problems.

(e.g. eating, sleeping, obsessions, aggression, psychosomatic, running away, stealing, self-harm, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, crime, violence.

### Vocational Problems

(e.g. career/work choices, work experience, early school leaving.)

### Social Problems.

(e.g. abuse, accommodation, unemployment, substance/alcohol/drug abuse)

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### ***Guidance Enhancement Initiative:***

#### ***The following were the specific core duties under the above initiative:***

The primary responsibilities under the G.E.I. are the promotion of Science, Engineering and Technology and to monitor Second Years with a view to reducing early school leaving rates.

The G.E.I. Post involved the following:

Organise visiting speakers to the school to speak to Junior and Senior Cycle students.

Organise external visits by students to Science, Engineering and Technology related events.

Assist First Years with the transition from primary school to secondary. Time permitting students are interviewed individually.

Organise an external professional to complete Mock Interviews with Sixth Years.

To organise, on a biennial basis, an external professional to deliver an R.S.E. presentation to both the Fifth and Sixth Year Groups.

Personal Counselling responsibilities for two year groups, throughout their time in the school.

As part of the R.A.C.E. Committee, assist with R.A.C.E. applications on behalf of the above year groups.

Consult with S.N.A.'s, with regard to students receiving counselling, as to their school progress.

Look at Second Years and identify from psychometric tests and other data such as house exams and attendances, those who are underachieving and may be at risk of early school leaving. The importance of early intervention is noted and students are helped with study and timetabling and extra support is offered in weak subjects if time and resources permit. Parents are contacted where necessary.

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### ***Areas to be evaluated / improved:***

Due to limited resources and the necessary prioritising of Senior Cycle students there is limited Guidance offered at Junior Cycle.

A Higher Education Access Program coordinator would improve the school's ability to cater for the entire school population.

An integrated student shadowing program would give more students first hand knowledge of many college courses.

These areas can be looked at should extra resources become available.

***\* As all these activities are undertaken in a voluntary capacity.***

### ***Review***

It is the intention of this Department to schedule an annual review of this policy.

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## ***Bibliography***

The following documentation, as recommended by the IGC forms the research material used as a basis for this plan.

## **References**

The Education Act, 1998

Planning the School Guidance Program. National Centre for Guidance in Education

Planning the School Guidance Plan, School Planning Development Initiative (SDPI), 2004

Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9C of the Education Act 1998, relating to students access to appropriate guidance. DES, 2005.

Circular letter No PPT 12/05: Guidance Provision in Second-Level Schools.

Institute of Guidance Counsellors – Constitution and Code of Ethics 2004

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011

GDPR Guidelines issued by the I.G.C on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018

## **Websites**

Central Application Office (CAO) [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

Department of Education and Science [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

Solas [www.solas.ie](http://www.solas.ie)

Institute of Guidance Counsellors [www.igc.ie](http://www.igc.ie)

National Centre for Guidance in Education [www.ncge.ie](http://www.ncge.ie)

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland [www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie)

Qualifax [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)

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