

**ST. MAC DARA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE,
TEMPLEOGUE,
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GUIDANCE PLAN

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Introduction

Chapter One: The School Guidance Programme

- 1.1 School Context**
- 1.2 The Guidance Counselling service in a whole school context.**
- 1.3 Personal and Social Guidance**
 - 1.3.1 Orientation of Guidance and Counselling Practice**
 - 1.3.2 Group Counselling**
 - 1.3.4 Peer Counselling**
 - 1.3.5 Referrals**
- 1.4 Educational Guidance**
- 1.5 Career Guidance**

Chapter Two: The Guidance Curriculum

- 2.1 Guidance Programme**
 - 2.1.1 Junior Cycle**
 - 2.1.2 Senior Cycle**
- 2.3 Overview of the Guidance Year Plan**
 - 2.3.1 Term 1**
 - 2.3.2 Term 2**
 - 2.3.3 Term 3**
 - 2.3.4 August**
- 2.3.5 Other Guidance Service Activities**

Chapter Three: Guidance Service: Polycys and other services

- 3.1 Policy on the provision of information for students**
- 3.2 Policy on Assessment**
- 3.3 Policy and procedure for individual appointments with a Guidance Counsellor**
- 3.4 Assessment for Learning in the Guidance classroom**
- 3.5 Wellbeing**
- 3.6 Additional Information**
- 3.7 Resources**
- 3.8 Evaluation and Appraisal Systems**

Chapter Four Conclusion

Bibliography

Introduction

The main aim of Guidance and Counselling in second level schools is to provide a variety of services in three main areas, Personal and Social Guidance, Educational Guidance and Career Guidance. It involves the full range of interventions which assist students to make choices about their lives.

The first chapter looks at the school, St. Mac Dara's Community College which this programme is designed for. Section 1.3 focuses on Personal and Social Guidance and finally Educational and Careers Guidance activities are examined.

The next chapter examines the school guidance curriculum detailing junior and senior cycle activities and finally discusses evaluation and appraisal systems of the Guidance and Counselling Service within a whole school context.

Chapter One

The School Guidance Service in the context of our School Mission Statement

Mission Statement

We, the community of this College through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential.

Aims of the school Guidance service

The school guidance service reflects, in its aim, the school Mission Statement and the schools policy on guidance counselling. The aim of this service is to assist students in a meaningful way in their all-round development and personal growth within the educational philosophy of the school.

The main role of the Guidance service is to assist students in their educational, career, personal and social development while at school. This chapter outlines a programme that incorporates these three areas.

1.1 Setting the Scene

The Guidance Programme Plan outlined below is designed for St. Mac Dara's Community College, a large Community College in South Dublin. The school has approximately 840 students and one Guidance Counsellor, Mr. Diarmid Finnegan. It is co-educational and run by the auspices of Dublin Dun Laoghaire Educational Training Board. Mr. Diarmid Finnegan's total weekly timetabled hours for guidance 21 hours 20 minutes. There is one Guidance Counsellors' Office/Careers Reading Room/Library with computers, broadband and WIFI access.

Planning within the school Guidance service:

The key to development planning within this service is to know the needs of the students and how to meet those needs. This service will, in collaboration with all those involved with the Whole School Guidance, keep records of the demands made on the service in a systematic way. Further to this, information will be gathered, both formally and informally regarding the opinions of service users – pupils, parents, staff and school management – with respect to the needs of these clients.

In an on-going process of evaluation, the planning of this service will be guided by the current needs and demands made by contemporary life on all aspects of our students development. Consequently, school management will review in partnership with the guidance counsellor, parents, staff and students how an integrated approach to meeting the guidance needs of pupils can best occur.

It is crucial that this collaborative approach to planning the Guidance Counselling Service is adopted if it is to have depth, breadth and real meaning throughout the school.

1.2 The Guidance Counselling service in a whole school context.

Everybody in the school community is involved in the Guidance Programme. However, in effect, the Guidance Counsellor consults with the following key personnel in the development and evaluation of the programme: Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Tutors, Chaplain, Care team, Learning Support Administrator, SPHE Co-ordinator, TYP Co-ordinator, LCVP Co-ordinator, Parents Association, DDLETB Psychological Support Service, Student Council.

The Guidance and Counselling Department functions as a member of an educational team which includes the following:

- Management – Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal etc.
- Year Heads/Tutors
- Care Team
- Whole School Planning Group
- SPHE Team
- Extra-Curricular Development Team
- Guidance service team
- Wellbeing Team

The School management and Care team meet on a timetabled period weekly and there is also a lot of input here into the planning of the Guidance Programme and evaluation of the service.

Membership of these teams implies that the guidance service is open and committed to effective networking and teamwork in pursuit of a common goal i.e. the augmentation of the all-round development of the students in our care. This in turn has implications for the guidance counsellor and his appreciation of his own capacity to function as a member of a team and his ability to relate to colleagues in a professional manner.

Guidance service: Policy on Consultation

The Guidance service actively engages in a two-way process of consultation with students, teachers, parents, school management, and referral agencies. The guidance counsellor consults with partners with reference to and on behalf of the student in our care. We have a clear concept of our duties and responsibilities to all partners in consultation and all are made aware of the boundaries within which consultation takes place. If a consultation directly involves a student who is receiving counselling, the student is aware of the consultative process and is informed of its outcome. Respect for the individual is central to all consultative process and appropriate confidentiality is observed.

Consultation is an important process which deepens the knowledge base of the service and thereby increases its effectiveness. The service cannot function in isolation and needs to give and to receive information appropriately. Throughout the school year, time is allocated for both formal and informal consultation in the following ways:

Management

- Meetings with the management and the Care Team are scheduled weekly to ensure that management is up to date on areas of concern and is informed of relevant happenings within the service. There is scope here for managerial input into the evaluation and planning of the programme.

Staff

- Meetings with members of the Care Team and other staff are built into the timetable in order to facilitate good communication and to allow opportunities for referrals. There is also input here into the planning of the Guidance Programme.

Parents

- Parents / Guardians, who are usually the most significant influence on the development of our students are consulted by means of the following formal and informal strategies:
 - Parent –teacher meetings.
 - Parent information evenings.
 - Individual consultative meetings/phone calls.
 - Parental involvement in developmental projects and association with the Parents Council.

The service is always open to communication with parents. It places special emphasis on the value of this two-way interaction and collaboration and appreciates the valuable contribution parents can make to many aspects of the guidance counselling service.

Students

Consultation with students and on behalf of students is an integral part of the service. The willingness to listen and to be open to learning in partnership is communicated to all students. The process of consultation can take many forms and is encouraged throughout the student's years in this school.

1.3 Personal and Social Guidance

The overall aim of personal and social counselling in schools is to provide students with opportunities to work in self-defined ways towards living in a more satisfying resourceful way as a member of the broader society. Counselling incorporates a broad range of concerns including addressing and resolving specific problems, coping with crisis, improving relationships and self-esteem, dealing with conflicts, developing coping strategies and exploring thoughts and feelings. The guidance service is available to all people in the school

community including parents and staff, However priority will always be given to students. Guidance Counselling incorporates individual counselling, group counselling and peer counselling. NCGE explains that Personal and Social Guidance Services facilitates “the transfer of knowledge and skills relating to a student’s personal and social development, self-awareness decision-making and planning”.¹

1.3.1 Orientation of Guidance and Counselling Practice

The NCGE Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools defines counselling as “Helping pupils on an individual/group basis to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices, open to them, about the consequences of each choice.”² The NCGE outlines further the responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor in relation to counselling:

The Guidance Counsellor draws on knowledge, skills and attitudes from his/her training and experience, to help pupils to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviours or effect changes in their lives. Counselling should be offered on an individual or small group basis. The focus of counselling may be on personal, educational and career issues, individually or in combination. The Guidance Counsellor provides a caring context for counselling young people in personal crisis.³

Burkes and Steflre define counselling a follows:

Counselling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature.⁴

¹ NCGE 2004, Planning The School Guidance Programme, (NCGE 2004), 6

² NCGE, Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools (NCGE 1996), 4

³ Ibid, 6

⁴ Burkes and Steflre, *Theories of Counselling* (3rd Ed), New York: cited in An Introduction to Counselling, Me Leod, Join, Open University Press 1999

In 1996 the National Centre for Guidance in Education published a report for the Minister of Education in relation to the guidelines for the practice of guidance and counselling in schools. It states:

Counselling: Helping pupils on an individual/ group basis to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices open to them, and about the consequences of each choice....

Personal and Social Development: providing knowledge and skills relating to personal and social development, self-awareness, and decision making and planning.⁵

Counselling facilitates students in crisis by suggesting and exploring a range of coping strategies and interventions in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs and developmental stage. Counselling can only take place in an atmosphere where the young person feels accepted and understood and where confidentiality is guaranteed except in cases where there is a risk to the student, to others or where there is on-going abuse or neglect. The Guidance service is committed to following the Department of Health's Child First Guidelines. Counselling can only take place at the request of the person and his/her willingness to participate. Thus while the person might be referred to the Guidance service for counselling by ,members of staff, year heads, tutors or parents , after an initial consultation it is always the students choice whether to continue or not.

The theoretical orientation of the school counsellor which is influenced by both Karl Rogers Person-Centred Therapy and Gestalt Counselling Therapy stresses the importance of three concepts during the counselling process: Congruence (genuineness, or realness), Unconditional positive regard (acceptance and caring) and accurate empathic understanding (an ability to deeply grasp the subjective world of another person).⁶ The therapeutic goals of Rogerian Client-Centred Therapy fundamentally seek to place responsibility towards change with the client, allowing him or her move towards autonomy. The role and function of the Guidance Counsellor within this setting is to foster a therapeutic climate in which the student can move towards a clearer understanding of his or her true self, with the Guidance

⁵ National Centre for Guidance in Education, Guidelines for the practice of guidance and counselling in schools, A report for the minister of Education Niamh Bhreathnach TDJNCGE 1996), 4/5

⁶ Corey, Gerald, Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy

Counsellor creating a sense of security and safety and immersing himself to the point of almost being the student's alter-ego.⁷

Ryan suggests that the Department of Education requires the counselling dimension to be very much related to education and should concentrate on study guides, on improving student's skills and confidence, on discipline and relationships with teachers, and in general very much complement the guidance role. He considers further that the role of the career guidance and personal counselling cannot be separated in a secondary school. He further states that students come to the guidance teacher to talk about subject choice but often the original problem is not the true one and their difficulties and concerns are really about relationships, home trouble, or other social problems.⁸

1.3.2 Group Counselling

Group counselling will be offered in areas of assertiveness skills, self-esteem, early school intervention, dealing with aggressive behaviour. Counselling will be also offered to groups of students in circumstances of bereavement, parental separation and severe social problems. These groups will consist of six students whose attendance on the programme is voluntary. Parental consent is necessary here. The use of forms of Art therapy such as painting and using clay is one of the methods used.

The Guidance Service, in consultation with year heads, tutors and psychological support service may attempt to identify specific target groups who could benefit from group counselling. Group counselling has been offered in the following areas:

- Self esteem
- Coping with transition from primary to secondary educational
- Assertiveness training
- Aggression replacement therapy
- Early school leaving interventions
- All these groups are voluntary and run for a fixed period of time

⁷ Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 176

⁸ Ryan, Liam, *Counselling the Adolescent in a Changing Ireland Institute of Guidance Counsellor* 1993, 69/70

1.3.3 Peer Counselling

A peer group counselling is a discussion involving a small group of participants with a co-ordinator, which seeks to gain an insight into the participants' attitudes, experiences, feelings and perceptions. The peer group plays a supportive role in the social development of students. Student's concentration, reasoning and individual contributions to discussion are improved. The guidance service together with the co-ordinator and the chairperson of the student council offer programmes to promote leadership skills, mentoring and develop ways to meet the needs of the target groups.

1.3.4 Early School Leavers

The Guidance Service, in consultation with staff and resource department will attempt to identify potential early school leavers and develop appropriate early intervention strategies for this group of students. Where possible these would include making the curriculum more relevant by reducing the number of academic subjects and providing more personal and social development programmes, The guidance service will ensure that the curriculum provides for all abilities and talents and students are motivated to reach their full potential. It will focus on numeric and literacy skills liaising with the relevant school bodies. The approach needs to be personal, holistic, flexible, responsive and non-authoritarian.

1.3.5 Referrals

Students can be referred to the Guidance Service by Year Heads, Tutors, Parents and other staff. However, after the first appointment it is the students own decision to continue or not.

When a young person's problems are such that the guidance counsellor judges his expertise to be inadequate, then the Guidance Counsellor will refer the student to a more specialised service where such is available and will monitor the progress of such a referral. The Guidance Counsellor can refer a student to a non-school based professional where appropriate. Parental consent is required except in circumstances of physical/sexual abuse and neglect by family members following national health board regulations.

1.4 Educational Guidance

NCGE suggests: “Educational Guidance: services, such as counselling, and activities such as class/group work, to assist decision making related to course, subject and level in post-primary school: motivation and learning: study skills and examination technique.”⁹ The guidance service must administer various assessment tests to first year students, transition year students, and senior cycle students. It must provide assistance in areas such as subject choices options after the junior cent such as LCVP and TYP. It must organise introductory presentation on Guidance and Counselling to first year parents and primary schools and to first year classes along with presentations from Psychological Services on dealing with transitions for first years. The guidance service together with other departments organises a series of lectures for parents. These include:

- Options after the Junior Certificate: Transition Year, LCVP etc.
- Subject Choice for Leaving Certificate
- CAO and UCAS and Options after the Leaving Certificate
- Coping with Adolescent: A Parent’s Guide

The Guidance Service will consult with staff on a regular basis about how it can provide programmes to meet the needs of the students.

1.5 Career Guidance

Career Guidance is not an event but a process which begins on student entry to second level education and continues until he/she leaves and even after leaving school. NCGE explains, “Career guidance: services such as counselling, and activities such as class/ group work, to assist decision making related to choices of Education and Training courses: employment opportunities: job search skills: work and other life roles.”¹⁰ The Guidance service will include some or all of the following services:

- Organise career events and open day
- Provide information including, CAO, UCAS and the points system. It must liaise with staff when necessary

⁹ NCGE 1999, *Guidance and Counselling in Post-Primary schools*, (NCGE 1999),

¹⁰ NCGE 1999, *Guidance and Counselling in Post-Primary schools*, (NCGE 1999), 6

- Organise guest speakers and college presentations
- Provide students with skills and knowledge of career resources and software
- To enhance student skills in researching their own career
- Computer packages to assist in making informed career choices e.g. Qualifax, Pathfinder, Career directions, Careers Portal etc.
- Grants and scholarships
- Living away from home
- Mock interviews
- Careers nights for parents

Chapter Two: The Guidance Curriculum

2.1 Guidance Programme: First to Sixth Year

2.1.1 Junior Cycle

First Year

- Introductory presentation on Guidance and Counselling to first year parents
- Introductory presentation on Guidance and Counselling to first year classes
- To assist students with decisions in relation to options after the junior cert
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/ software and the internet
- To assist students in using the careers library
- To provide personal/ group counselling where necessary
- Implementation of transition from Primary to Secondary School programme as outlined in this document.
- Assisting the implementation of the Care Programme with first year Year Head. Close liaison with form tutors and class teachers to identify those students who are experiencing difficulty.
- Academic monitoring and comparison of performance with results of CAT4 Aptitude Test to identify those who are over or underachieving.
- Individual counselling for students at risk.

Second Year

- Liaise with staff
- To assist students in using the careers library
- To provide personal/ group counselling where necessary
- To assist students with decisions in relation to options after the junior cert
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/ software and the internet
- To Continued liaison with the Year Head to identify students at risk.
- Individual counselling for students at risk.

- Assembly visits with information on role of Guidance Counsellor and access of services
- Evaluation of progression from first year.
- provide personal/ group counselling where necessary

Third Year

- Study Skills workshops
- To administer Psychometric Tests including the DATS and other Career Inventories
- To assist students with subject choices
- To assist students in using the careers library/ Careers Computer packages
- To provide personal/ group counselling where necessary
- To assist students with decisions in relation to options after the Junior Cert
- Presentations to parents in relation to options after the Junior Cert
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/ software and the Internet
- To provide personal/ group counselling where necessary
- Implementation of transition from junior to senior cycle programme as outlined in this document.
- Implementation of study and exam skills programme and classes.
- Assembly visits with information on role of Guidance Counsellor and access of services
- Information on training courses for those leaving school.
- Career interest tests conducted with students.
- Programme choice and subject choice classes.
- Individual Guidance for students/parents requiring information on programme/subject choice
- Personal Counselling.
- Evaluation of progression from second year.

2.1.2 Senior Cycle

Transition Year

- To assist students in developing their curriculum vitae
- To provide students with interview skills
- To develop students awareness of career areas that match their knowledge skills and interest
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To assist students with subject choices
- To assist students in securing employment for work experience
- To develop students research skills-sourcing available positions information on employers
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To assist students in identifying core skills, knowledge, aptitudes required for certain jobs
- To consider options after the Leaving Cert such as Third level, FETAC, etc.
- To organise career exhibits, school factory visits, guests speakers from the community, etc.
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To assist students in identifying core skills, knowledge, aptitudes required for certain jobs
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To act as the school staff liaison for Jigsaw Tallaght Peer Education (Mental Health support) programme.
- To assist students participating in Jigsaw Tallaght Peer Education (Mental Health support) programme.
- To liaise with transition year coordinator and other staff involved
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/software and the interest
- To assist students in using the careers library and guidance computer packages
- To provide Personal/ Group Counselling where appropriate

Leaving Certificate

Fifth Year

- To assist students in developing their curriculum vitae
- To provide students with interview skills by preparing for the mock interviews
- To develop students awareness of career areas that match their knowledge skills and interest
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/software and the Internet
- To assist students in using the careers library
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To provide career information classes including, CAO, UCAS and the points system and alternative options after the Leaving Cert in the careers library with Internet access
- To organise career presentations, guest speaker from the community, school factory visits, etc.
- To administer Psychometric Assessments including Career inventories
- To organise study skills workshops
- To provide Individual counselling/Group Counselling where necessary
- Interest inventories and aptitude tests.
- Individual compilation of test results, academic performance, interests, hobbies and achievements prepared by all fifth years for file.
- Individual careers interview available on request.
- Organisation of taster session visits in IT Tallaght , UCD and TCD
- Personal counselling available on request or by referral.
- Evaluation of progression from fifth year.
- Assistance of students in seeking work experience.

Sixth Year

- To assist students in developing their curriculum vitae
- To provide students with interview skills by preparing for the mock interviews
- To develop students awareness of career areas that match their knowledge skills and interest
- To assist students in using computer aided guidance packages/ software and the Internet
- To assist students in using the careers library
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To assist students with subject choices
- To assist students in securing a place at third level
- To enhance and develop students verbal and written communication skill
- To assist students in identifying core skills, knowledge, aptitudes required for third level comes
- To provide career information classes including, CAO, UCAS and the points system and alternative options after the leaving cert in the careers library with Internet access
- To organise career presentations, guest speaker from the community, school factory visits, etc.
- To administer Psychometric Assessments including Career inventories
- To organise study skills workshops
- To provide individual one to one career appointments
- To consult with parents where appropriate
- To inform students of open days and organise visits to third level Colleges
- To provide relaxation and stress management workshops
- To provide Individual counselling/Group Counselling where necessary
- Implementation of the programme for transition from school to further education and work
- Close liaison with the year head and class teachers to identify students experiencing difficulties.
- Timetabled guidance class – educational, personal and vocational guidance modules.
- Guest speakers on all aspects of higher education, training and employment during the year.
- Applications to CAO and Further Education Colleges facilitated.

- Applications to College Access programmes facilitated e.g. HEAR and DARE
- Scholarship Applications distributed and facilitated.
- Application to further education colleges in Ireland and UK are facilitated.
- Application for training courses and jobs are facilitated.
- Mock interview preparation and organisation.
- Exam technique, stress, motivation and relaxation.
- Assistance of students in seeking work experience.
- Personal counselling available to all sixth years.
- One to One career appointments for all students on an on-going basis.

2.3 Overview of Guidance Year Plan

2.3.1 Term 1

- First Year Orientation Program
- Meetings with Year Heads, Tutors, Pastoral Care Team, Chaplain, Learning support teacher, Resource teachers, Subject Teachers and Coordinators
- Liaising with DDLETB Psychological support service Local Health board and local Gardaí
- Presentations for first Year, third year and sixth year parents
- Sourcing and updating Careers library, Computer Packages
- Classroom work with TYP, LCVP, Fifth Year and Sixth Year Students
- Personal/ Group counselling
- Organising study skills days for Junior and senior cycle students
- Individual career appointments for final year students
- Organising and reviewing careers nights for senior cycle students in three local schools
- Organising Career presentations from guest speakers in the school
- Identifying students at risk at the pre-parent teacher meetings
- Attending Higher Options with leaving cert students
- Attending meetings with Jigsaw, Tallaght (Mental Health Support) in relation to their Peer Education Programme.

- Liaising with parents committee
- Attending parent-teacher meetings
- Attending Guidance Counsellor's regional and national meetings
- Attending Counselling supervision and CPD from Institute of Guidance Counsellors

2.3.2 Term 2

- Providing Classes to senior cycle
- Updating Careers Library and computer Packages
- Providing career guidance/personal counselling appointments to senior cycle students
- Meetings with Year heads, Tutors, Pastoral care team, Chaplain, Learning support teacher, resource teachers, Year heads, Tutors and subject teachers and coordinators
- Administering Psychometric tests for senior cycle students and giving feedback
- Visiting Third level Colleges on open days
- Preparation for mock interviews –
- Assisting students TY students with subject choice
- Administering psychometric tests CAT4 for incoming first year students
- CAO and UCAS on line applications
- Liaising with parents and attending parents meetings
- Liaising with DDLETB Psychological support service
- Attending Guidance Counsellor's regional and national meetings
- Attending Counselling supervision and CPD from Institute of Guidance Counsellors

2.3.3 Term 3

- Providing classes to senior cycle
- Providing Stress Management workshops
- Researching where last year's Leaving Certs are now
- Evaluating and reviewing Guidance programme
- Attending Guidance Counsellor's regional meetings
- Updating and sourcing of careers library and computer packages
- Attending Guidance Counsellor's regional and national meetings
- Attending Counselling supervision and CPD from Institute of Guidance Counsellor

2.3.4 August

- Assisting students and parents with CAO, UCAS, FETAC and other options.

2.3.5 Other Guidance Service Activities

- Meeting with Guidance Counsellors in local schools on a regular basis; carers nights, in-service training etc.
- Giving feedback to parents, staff Board of Management and parents on guidance services
- Liaising with school departments and subject teachers
- Liaising with DDLETB Psychological support service, Local Health board and local Gardaí
- Evaluation and review of school guidance service including feedback from staff, final year students, parents association, and school management
- Administration and Management of the school guidance service
- Record keeping and report writing
- Maintain links with local community (employers etc.)
- Attending Guidance Counsellors regional and national meetings
- To act as the school staff liaison for Jigsaw Tallaght (Mental Health support) Peer Education programme.
- Attending meetings and conference of Institute of Guidance counsellors
- Attending Counselling supervision and CPD from Institute of Guidance Counsellors

Chapter Three: Guidance Service Policys

3.1 Policy on the provision of information for students

Information

Students need to have information on all aspects of their educational, vocational and personal development available to them. The service will assist students in the acquisition of useful information for enlightened decision-making. The needs of the students guide the nature of information available and a detailed need analysis is a prerequisite for information gathering.

The student first needs to understand how the school system operates.

The pastoral care programme, support services, mentoring system and guidance counselling practise and procedure is clearly explained to all students as part of their induction programme. The school journal outlines all significant rules and policies by which all students, staff and parents agree to abide within the school community and extended activities.

Information within the school system is made available by means of:

- Noticeboards: These are excellent means of communication and promotion providing that they are regularly updated and kept in good order.
- Intercom: This is used to draw student's attention to current events and notice board items. This facility is used on a daily basis to communicate news and also provides a means of affirmation for achievement with a whole school audience.
- Library: The school has an extensive library with a careers section which provides all students with accessible careers information. Computers further enhance the quality of information available to all students.

Information from outside the school system is made available by:

- The Computer Room: The impact of IT on the guidance counselling service has greatly improved the quality and quantity of information reaching schools. Much of the available careers software is of excellent quality and the fact that many now have the capacity to personalise user files (e.g. Qualifax, Careersportal, etc.) makes them highly attractive to students. The internet also makes specific information accessible immediately and this has significant advantages over the traditional careers library.

- Open days: The service will organise a number of visits to college open days throughout the school year. As a source of information, these visits can be excellent and they also provide the student with the opportunity to experience college life in a supportive atmosphere. The calendar of open days is made available to all senior students in September. Students are encouraged to attend open days which are specific to their interest areas.
- Career exhibitions: The service facilitates attendance at career exhibitions such as the Higher Options Conference and the More Options Exhibition. These exhibitions form part of the guidance calendar and provide an excellent means by which students and parents can access college, training agencies and services at all levels.
- Visiting speaker: Throughout the year, the service in conjunction with the SPHE, Chaplain and organises a series of guest lectures on a variety of topics. These topics range from talks on personal hygiene, study skills, interview technique etc. As part of the vocational guidance programme, the service invites speakers from third level and further education colleges to promote courses, training programmes and job opportunities both here and abroad.

3.2 Policy on Assessment

Assessment

“The focus of counselling is to identify people’s abilities, personality characteristics and patterns of interests and to assist people in making choices and changes to improve their sense of well being and lifestyles”

Piettofesa Hoffman & Splete.

In this context, the school counselling service acknowledges the value of the use of psychological and educational standardised measurement instruments. Such instruments are used to enhance the counselling process and to flesh out the profile of the student, in so far as such tests are capable of so doing, for the purpose of general school records. The service is vigilant that those who use tests or have access to test results, are responsible in their use and competent in their interpretation.

In this school, the rationale for testing is many faceted but the principle from which all assessment emanates can be summarised in the words of Anastasi:

“Intelligence tests, as well as other kinds of tests, should be used not to label individuals, but to help in understanding them.”

Anastasi and Urbina (1997)

Operating from this principle, the rationale for testing may be listed as:

- ◆ Prediction of academic performance
- ◆ Categorisation of occupational interests
- ◆ Educational and career planning
- ◆ Personal and social development

Results of testing in these areas are viewed in the context of the whole student and test results are supplemented by school records and public examination results. This information is used to better equip all concerned with the welfare of the student and the student themselves in decision making.

Modes of Assessment:

Aptitude Tests

Problem Checklists

Personality Type Tests

Interest Tests

State Examination Results

Performance tests

General Ability Tests

School Progress Reports

The school guidance service will administer only tests which they are competent to administer and interpret. The results of tests will remain confidential with the exception of the CAT4 which are used for first year profiles. This service will endeavour to use the most recent editions of tests and norms within budgetary constraints.

3.3 Policy and procedure for individual appointments with a Guidance Counsellor

Scheduled appointments.

- Every sixth year student will have a minimum of one individual counselling appointment during their final year. These are scheduled appointments and are viewed by the counsellors as a priority service.
- Students make appointments through the procedure already outlined in the referral policy
- On making an appointment, the student is given a stamp in their Journal which states the time and date of the meeting.
- The student presents this journal to the teacher as he/she requests permission to leave her class for her appointment.
- The appointment is for the duration of one class period. If the appointment runs over time, a note explaining her absence is forwarded to the relevant teacher.
- Appointments are prioritised based on the level of urgency of the issue at hand. While every effort is made to see students as soon as possible, the service is constrained by time and numbers. This can, at times, create waiting lists.
- As counsellors are frequently called in to deal with crises situations, scheduled appointments may have to be cancelled at short notice. When this happens, the student is informed as quickly as possible and they must return to regular class. Their appointment is rescheduled for the next available time.

Unscheduled appointments.

- At times, the service needs to meet with students without prior appointment.
- In this instance, the secretarial office is informed as to the whereabouts of the student.
- Where possible, the class teacher is informed either at the time or soon afterwards as to the students whereabouts.

3.4 Assessment for Learning in the Guidance classroom

STRATEGIES		EXPLANATION
Share the learning intention	Teacher clearly sets out the purpose of the lesson i.e. ‘what we are learning today’.	Example: The purpose of this lesson is that you will have an understanding of the CAO system.
Share the criteria for success	Teacher will tell the students what they will learn in the class i.e. ‘What am I looking for?’	Example: ‘By the end of this lesson you will be able to explain the term CAO and what the system is. You will know it is a third level college application system.
QUESTIONS		
	Allow for wait time	Systematically allow 5+ seconds for all replies to teachers questions, without prompting or answering first
		If no hands up-select students to answer questions – allow no volunteering or hands up OR
	Distributing answering	Ensure all students get to answer questions fairly by systematically calling, as appropriate, upon who will answer each question and track distribution OR
	Think, pair and share	In pairs students discuss question before answering

Due to the nature of Guidance Classes as information providing service many classes do not require written tests, homework etc.

As much as possible the teacher will use AFL techniques in classes to assess student's grasp of the concepts and topics covered.

3.5 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a core principle of the new Junior Cycle curriculum and is defined as children being confident, happy and healthy and is seen as contributing directly to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. (DES, 2012)

The Guidance Counsellor works collaboratively with other members of the Wellbeing team in planning and developing the schools Wellbeing programme.

3.6 Additional Information

The School Guidance Service strives to incorporate the following into our service:

Retention

- An emphasis on the value of staying in school and progressing to further education.
- Educational Counselling in class setting and one to one on subject choice, levels, programme choice etc. to ensure appropriate options are chosen to best suit student's needs.
- Other educational guidance – study skills workshops, exam preparation, stress management etc. assist students cope with the academic pressures improving retention.
- Vocational guidance – access programmes, career counselling, career investigations, exhibitions, speakers, open days etc. all promote and familiarise students with careers and further education. This creates awareness of and desire to achieve career goals and so improves retention.
- Personal counselling – assistance in the resolution of personal difficulties improves retention in school.

Attendance

- Attendance is monitored through class attendance records taken every class.

- Participation in some Access Programmes and career related trips is dependent on regular attendance and this promotes and encourages good attendance

Literacy

- Aptitude tests CAT4 and DAT's assess literacy
- Student Year Book and Career Directory, Prospectuses and other resources
- Reading
- Writing
- Power points
- Listening
- Speaking
- Websites
- Key Words on walls
- Key Words in back of folders

All the above promote and improve literacy in the Service

Numeracy

- CAT4 and DAT's assess students Mathematical reasoning
- CAO points calculation
- Budgeting for College

Exam Attainment

- The Guidance Service and Careers Classes are a non-exam subject however there is a strong focus and promotion of setting high targets for exam attainment in order to achieve College places.
- Exam attainment discussed with students during career interviews
- Participation in Summer Schools, Study skills workshops etc. improve exam attainment.

Parental Involvement

- Throughout the year and particularly at times of transition, it is the policy of management and the guidance service to meet with parents for the purpose of

information dissemination and to answer any queries which parents may have. Parents are informed of the availability of tests, testing procedures and test results. The service is always open to parents for follow-up information. In the event of referrals, parents are always an integral part of the procedure.

- Assistance with college application forms and SUSI applications are offered to all parents.

Partnership with Others

There are a number of partnerships within the School Guidance Service

- Junior Achievement Programme
- DIT, UCD, TCD and other colleges.
- South Dublin/Wicklow IGC
- Tallaght Schools Guidance Cluster Group – More Options Exhibition
- School Staff Liaison for Jigsaw Tallaght (Mental Health support) Peer Education programme
- Dublin I.T's, Universities, Further Education Colleges
- H.P – I.T workshop

3.7 Resources

The Staff: As the major concern of this service is the holistic development of the student within the school context, the primary resource which the service draws upon is the school staff who are crucial to this aim. The expertise and professionalism of the staff is the first resource tapped when the service requires assistance. All departments of the educational programme have a significant contribution to make to the guidance programme which this service offers. In particular, the guidance service works closely with the IT and the resource department.

The Chaplaincy and the Care Team work in tandem with this service in the provision of a personal development programme. Educational guidance is the concern of every department within the school and as such, the guidance service uses all departments as a resource in implementing its educational guidance programme.

Literature and IT: The service uses only current, noteworthy literature and computer software in the implementation of its development programmes. The service will keep up to date with guidance resources for use in schools through subscription to the IGC and the NCGE. As new resources become available, they are listed and reviewed by these organisations. This policy applies to tests and norms used as guidance resources also.

Library: Guidance section in the library which contains prospectuses and Career Information Resources. College literature maintained and updated by Class Captains and Guidance Counsellors. Career questions box with query slips checked weekly and student contacted and given appropriate guidance. Computers in the library with career related website addresses displayed on wall and instructions for Qualifax course search and Online Interest test.

Referral and information agencies: Referral, consultancy and information agencies used as guidance resources shall be evaluated and monitored as to their effectiveness in meeting the needs of our students. The guidance service seeks to maintain a wide network of resource agencies outside the school to ensure that our students have current information and effective support systems available to them at all times.

3.8 Evaluation and Appraisal System

The school guidance programme must be evaluated within a whole school context on an annual basis and reviewed in design every three years.

Demonstrating accountability through the measured effectiveness of the delivery of the guidance program and the performance of the guidance staff helps ensure that students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the general public will continue to benefit from quality comprehensive guidance programs.¹¹

Sr. Una Collins suggests:

Evaluation of the Guidance Service within a whole school context presumes that there is a process engaged for all aspects of the school services and key deliverables, Guidance is being evaluated within the school's delivery not an extra not separate, not parallel. The owing of whole school evaluation and the processing of it is a key

¹¹ N.C. Gysbers, and P. Henderson, P. *Developing and managing your school guidance program* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counselling Association 1994, 362

strategy of good and healthy learning and a requirement of good school management.¹²

Evaluation should be an on-going process and should include the needs are met: Personal and social, educational and career. Questionnaires should be presented to Principal, Deputy Principal and the parent's council, a random group of students from each year group to examine the impact of the guidance and counselling service. The following approach needs to be followed:

Provide parents, Colleagues and students with copies of the School Guidance Service policy and previous years objectives.

Ask the questions

What is going well?

What needs to change or to be added to the provision of guidance in this school?

How might the person responding to the questions assist in developing the school provision of guidance?¹³

The service will engage in an on-going process of self-evaluation which will use as its criteria, the level of satisfaction expressed by its primary users, the students. The service will constantly check the degree to which they feel the service meets their needs. Further to this, evaluation will take place at the end of each term in consultation with the principal, using criteria which have been previously agreed finally, at the end of each year, the service will evaluate the feedback from students, staff and parents in an effort to ascertain the degree to which the service meets the needs of its users. This feedback will be used in the planning of the service and the evaluation and recommendations will be discussed with management.

¹² NCGE *Managing the School Guidance Service* by Sr. Una Collins, accessed at www.ncge.ie/handbook_docs/sections/managing-school_guidance_service.doc on 10th December 2007

¹³ *ibid*

Chapter Four Conclusion

Guidance Counselling involves the full range of interventions, which assist pupils to make choices about their lives.

The first chapter looked at the school, St. Mac Dara's Community College which this programme is designed for. The next section outlined the personnel involved in the programme and section 1.3 detailed personal and social guidance and then career educational guidance activities are examined.

The second chapter examined the school guidance curriculum detailing Junior and senior cycle and finally discussed evaluation and appraisal systems within a whole school context highlighting the importance of meeting personal, social and educational guidance needs of the school.

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