

# Whole School Career Guidance Policy

## Aims

One of the key aims of our *School Guidance Plan* is that it is integral to and reflects the mission statement of St Louis Community School “to provide students with an education that has a sound academic and practical content which develops opportunities for them to realise their individual potential and to develop their sense of personal worth”. Our primary aim is that it should contribute to the students’ intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social and personal development. In the DES and NCGE document ‘**Planning the School Guidance Programme**’, it is stated that: ‘*The Education Act 1998 requires the Board of Management of a school to develop a school plan based on the needs of the school. The school guidance plan forms part of the school plan. Schools are required to “to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance”.*

“Guidance” refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assists students to make choices in three main areas:

### 1) Educational Choices – for example:

- To remain in formal education
- To encourage students’ development as ‘*independent learners*’
- To provide the option of a Transition Year Programme
- Subject Choice and Levels for the Leaving Cert. Programme with particular reference to required or recommended subjects for all Further Education and training courses
- To aim at achieving the highest Academic standards
- The Development of students’ full potential in all areas of their individual gifts and talents

### 2) Social/Personal Guidance – in the context of one to one and group/class work where appropriate;

- Provision of and access to Personal Counselling
- Behavioural choices in both their personal & educational development
- Relationship issues in relation to bullying, suicide prevention and other matters relating to students’ Mental Health . As part of our whole school approach to guidance these issues are also addressed in the R.E., SPHE, & CSPE Programmes
- The Personal Development of our students are also addressed inter-departmentally

### 3) Career Choices/Guidance

- Careers information
- Further education and training information
- Vocational decisions supplemented by careers assessments
- Development and identification of ‘personal transferable skills’
- Information on the world of work
- Experience of the world of work through work experience
- Personal Marketing skills, CV preparation & interview skills

St Louis’ School Guidance Programme encompasses a specific set of *blended learning experiences* that the school provides in response to the needs of its students. A “*blended learning approach*” refers to method of delivering these experiences, for example:

- Use of IT resources
- Outside speakers
- Class/group work
- A variety of assessments including careers assessment, aptitude assessments etc
- Individual and group work
- Attendance at open days, seminars, experiential workshops, exhibitions etc
  - Work experience
    - Individual careers, educational and personal counselling

## **Principles**

The main *principles* underpinning the guidance provision and programme are as follows:

- Accessibility
- Guidance as a whole school concern
- Impartiality – regardless of student’s abilities, aspirations
- Student Centred – focused at all times
- Inclusive of all student groups and major stakeholders, including parents and identifying **TARGET GROUPS** within the school populations
- Respect for confidentiality codes and ethical guidelines as laid down by the IGC.
- Empower participants to take responsibility for their own life, career, educational and personal choices
- Deploy all resources available and extend where possible and necessary

## **Counselling**

Counselling is a **key aspect** of the School Guidance Programme. It is offered on an individual and group basis as part of the developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis.

- It has as its objective the **empowerment** of students so that they can make their own decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties that they may be experiencing.
- It helps students explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them.
- It provides care and support to students as they cope with the different aspects of growing up. It is offered in a non-judgemental manner and observes appropriate confidentiality.

## **Educational Guidance**

Educational Guidance includes assistance in the transition from primary to post-primary, from junior cycle to senior cycle and from second to third level or the world of work.

- It involves psychometric testing, subject choice, study skills, examination techniques, organisation and motivation.
- It also involves decision making with regard to senior cycle programme and further education.
- It is offered on an individual and class basis.

## **Career Guidance**

This involves empowering students to recognise their talents and abilities thus enabling them to make informed choices and to take responsibility for their future. This also involves psychometric testing, the development of self-awareness and acquisition of information and research skills.

This school is committed to providing ‘appropriate guidance’ as defined in Article 9c of the 1998 Education Act. Apart from these legal and statutory requirements the school has a history of both providing guidance and developing a pastoral ethos.

## **Objectives – Guidance Outcomes**

Objectives refer to the specific guidance outcomes sought for each particular target group. As outlined under the aims of the guidance programme they will be identified and delineated in relation to each target group. **See yearly School Plan.**

## **Resources**

“Resources describe the personnel, time allocation, equipment, materials, physical locations and finance required for the performance of the guidance activities and the management of the school guidance programme.” *Planning the School Guidance Programme*, NCGE, DES, 2004.

For example:

- Board of Management and Principal
- Guidance Counsellor
- Pastoral Care Team
- Subject Teacher and Learning Support Teacher, Special Needs Assistants

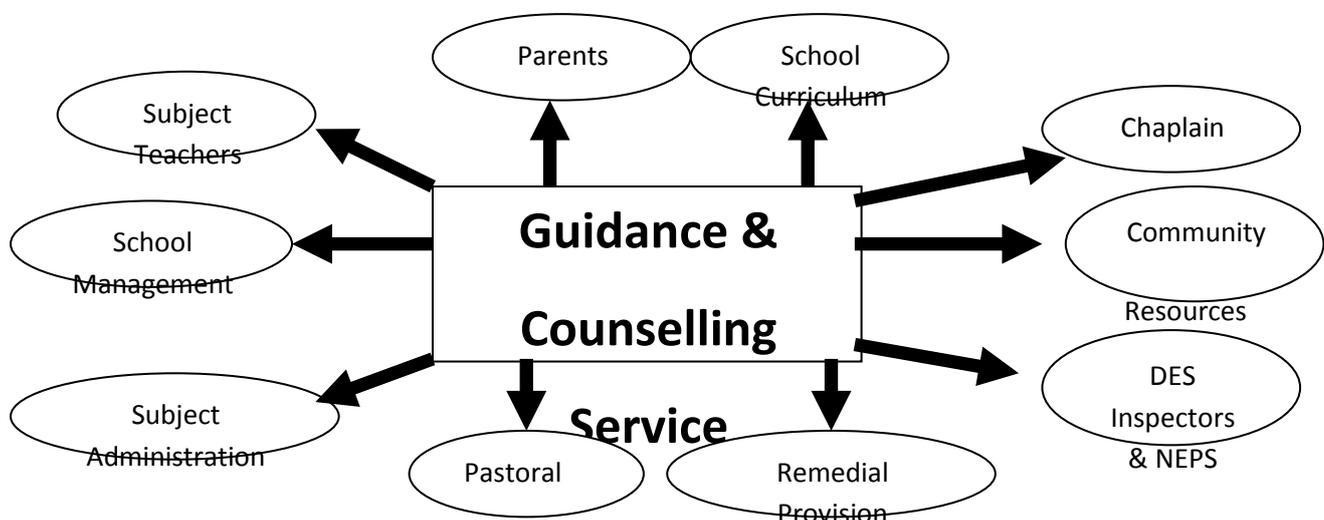
- Year Heads, Deputy Principal
- Chaplain
- Parents
- Students
- School Budget
- Guidance Office
- IT resources and computer room
- National Resources including: Institute of Guidance Counsellors, NCGE, DES, SDPI **Health Service Executive, Child and Adolescent Guidance Clinics & Private Clinics, Community Care Psychological Department, Samaritans, National Learning Network, Family Life Centre (Castlebar), Social Worker, Aware, GROW (mental health problems), Local Health Centre & Clinics, Western Care, Work WEB** etc
- Guidance Materials; Assessment materials, DRT, EIRQUEST, CAMBRIDGE PROFILE, CENTIGRADE, Rothwell-Miller Interest Inventory, Career Interest Inventory, Multiple Intelligence Test etc

### **Stakeholders Guidance Roles**

It is stated in the DES publication, “**Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students’ access to appropriate guidance**”.

“*The development and implementation of the school’s guidance plan is a whole school responsibility. It should involve the guidance counsellor in the first instance, as well as all other relevant members of management and staff of the school. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of this process and representatives of the local community, especially local business, NEPS and other relevant agencies should also be consulted and actively involved as appropriate.*”

### **Whole School Approach to Guidance and Counselling Provision**



**Board of Management and School Principal:** Has the Overall responsibility to ensure the guidance provision in school is ‘appropriate’ for all students

**Guidance Counsellor:** Has the responsibility to ensure the Guidance Plan is evaluated & delivered annually

**Personal counselling:** It is important to note that all parents/guardians are contacted prior to any student attending personal counselling. Parents/guardians will be informed if such support is recommended.

- **It is important to note that all contact with students, parents/guardians are managed under the strictest policy of CONFIDENTIALITY.** All contact is treated with confidentiality and Parental consent is required for students under 18 years
- Empowering students to make life, career and educational decisions/choices
- Educational counselling – e.g. subject choice, academic goal setting, study skills in groups or individually where necessary
- **Study Skills and Examination techniques**
- Assessments – careers, educational, personal interests, aptitude
- Personal development issues – (SPHE, Religion, CSPE)
- Career Counselling – reference to further education and training
- Vocational Information – through use of ‘blended learning approach’ already referred to under ‘aims’
- Referrals – outside agencies, NEPS etc
- Child Protection Guidelines – see school policy
- Classroom Guidance Activities

### **Subject Teachers**

- Provide educational guidance – specialised subject information
- Expert awareness of student’s abilities, strengths, special educational needs
- Vocational - how their subjects relate to particular careers and further educational opportunities
- Study skills, exam techniques
- Knowledge and support of individual students
- Referrals to Guidance Counsellor – Pastoral Care Team – programme established by Guidance Planning Group)

### **Individual Parents and the Parents Association**

- Positive influence – active role in encouraging child’s development and education
- Consultation with Guidance Counsellor and other school staff, for example designated parent teacher meetings
- Attendance at relevant information sessions held for incoming first years, transition years, students entering senior cycle etc..
- Contributing to development of the school guidance plan through evaluation processes, reviews etc

### **Individual Students and Students’ Council**

Students are the focus of the guidance provision in the school. It is critical that their voice is listened to and attended to in relation to the current provision of guidance and any gaps that may be identified by the students themselves in relation to that provision.

- Student Council formulate proposals for revision of guidance plan
- Student Council participate in guidance needs analysis and review of current provision

## **Pastoral Care Team**

- The Pastoral Care Team has a central role in the provision of guidance, as outlined previously, in the school.
- The composition of the team is also critical to the provision of comprehensive student support services – educational, personal and social.
- The team meets every week and it has a vital role in communicating the needs of individual students and groups to the whole staff, management and parents.
- There is an active personal care team policy within the school

## **Target Group**

The target group of the Guidance & Counselling Service is Years 1 to 6. It must be pointed out that not all functions of the role of the Guidance Counsellor are carried out in all year groups all the time. For example Year 6 is allocated more time for individual career interviews and Year 3 and 4 more time for subject choice. First years often require a lot of time for personal counselling. Guidance Counsellors should be particularly aware of the assistance that may be required by certain pupils. These include;

- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Non-national pupils
- Pupils who have been bereaved
- Students with disabilities with physical and/or intellectual challenges

## **Multicultural Awareness**

We recognise and are sensitive to cultural differences. We aim to inform ourselves of traditions and values of our international students so that there is a strong support for them.

## **Record Keeping**

Record keeping is an integral part of the administration of the guidance and counselling service. Guidance counsellors record counselling sessions and Vocational Guidance interviews. The Guidance Counsellor keeps all records of testing, planning, reviews & student records in a secure filing cabinet in the Guidance Counsellors office. The Guidance Counsellor has a Computer where all administration & students records are kept in her office. A laptop is used for power-point presentations & additional material used in class. There are computers with internet access in the Guidance Office which students can avail of in small groups. A record is kept of all counselling sessions and these are stored in a filing cabinet in the Guidance Counsellors Office.

## **Referral System**

Students may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor by Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, or Staff member. They may also be referred by parents, home school liaison teacher or by self-referral. Peer support is encouraged. Our BB/BS mentoring programme ensures young students are supported. The student council and prefect system further enable vulnerable students to be identified. Students see the guidance counsellor on an appointment basis with the co-operation of class teachers. Students will be referred to outside agencies when appropriate and in consultation with the student's parents he/she can be referred to the appropriate professional. In other instances Management can enlist the support of a Juvenile Liaison Officer, Social Worker, General Practitioner or another professional who is already in consultation with the family. In keeping with Article 3.6 (ii) of the 1996 'Guidelines for Practice of Guidance & Counselling in Schools', the voluntary participation in counselling of the referred pupil is always respected.

## Confidentiality Policy

“Nothing will be done without you knowing.”

All guidance and counselling practice in St Louis Community School is informed by our **‘Confidentiality Policy’**.

“**Guidance counsellors (and others)** take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of information about clients/students in the course of professional work. They reveal such information only with the clients consent, but with certain exceptions, which include: **where concealment would result in danger to the client/student or others**; when required by Law or designated guidelines – for example the ‘Child Protection Guidelines; or for the purposes of professional supervision.” – Institute of Guidance Counsellors - Code of Ethics.

### **Statement of Confidentiality in the Careers Guidance & Counselling Office**

*“Anything you tell me is confidential unless you lead me to believe that you or another family member are at risk from harm. If you do tell me something that concerns me I will need to talk to someone outside of here about this. You will always be informed, by me, the Guidance Counsellor if such a situation should arise and you will be also be informed as to who this information will be shared with. The one exception to this would arise in circumstances where you were out of reach or outside of school hours”.*

Issues outlined are based on two sources:

#### a) **Institute of Guidance Counsellors – Code of Ethics**

- It is important that it is made clear to students and staff that while confidentiality is preserved confidentiality **cannot** be guaranteed at **all** times.
- There are **limits to** confidentiality

#### b) **‘Child Protection Guidelines’ – Department of Education.**

- Concerns are shared on a ‘need to know basis’ with the ‘Designated Liaison Person’ who is the Principal.
- Sharing such concerns is **not** regarded as a breach of confidentiality.

#### **Rationale**

- This is only done for the protection and safety of the student or other person/s and it is done purely for reasons of care.
- We all have to acknowledge our own professional limitations and there are situations where expert advice and help must be sought in everyone’s best interests, that is to say, in the best interests of the individual student and the parents/guardians who have a legal right to information if the student is below **18** years of age.
- The guiding principle of our confidentiality policy is **best care and best practice**.

## **Evaluation of School's Guidance Needs and Services**

Gathering information about the school's guidance programme and reporting the results of the evaluation are critical for the development of the guidance service in school. The reporting of results to the school partnership gives visibility to the work of the guidance counsellor and transparency to the guidance service provided. Evaluation is undertaken with the support and advice of the Department of Education Psychological Service. However, the functions listed above are both demanding and challenging to the Guidance Counsellor in the following ways:

- the management of one's time between the different functions
- the harnessing of the involvement of the other participants in the guidance process, that is pupils, parents, staff, school management and the wider community
- meeting the wide range of needs and expectations of the various consumers which include the pupils, parents, staff and school management
- providing a meaningful guidance service that takes into account the number of pupils in a school and the number of hours per week allocated for guidance activities

In order to meet these diverse demands and challenges successfully, the guidance counsellor requires support from school management, staff and from the Department of Education. This support is evident from the deliverance of the yearly Guidance Plan. Regarding Special Educational Needs, the **philosophy** of St Louis in its provision of guidance to students with Special Educational Needs is based on **Total Inclusion**. “Inclusion is a must” and failure to provide ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ is deemed discriminatory. Our whole school guidance policy supports all Special Education Needs (SEN) students ensuring that all SEN students reach their full potential while in the education system and in turn are better prepared to face 3rd level education and the work force.

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