

COLÁISTE MUIRE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Guidance and Counselling Policy



2024/25

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PLAN 2025

Rationale:

Section 9(c) of the Education Act (1998) requires schools to “ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their career choices...” The provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools under this Act. Guidance is a core requirement of the school’s overall programme and an integral part of the school plan.

This guidance plan is a structured document that describes the school guidance programme and specifies how the guidance needs of students are to be addressed. It includes reference to personal counselling, an integral component of guidance work.

The plan forms part of the Whole School Plan. It refers to the ‘subject’ guidance as it is delivered to Colaiste Mhuire students cognisant of their needs and of the available resources and mindful of the requirement of access to appropriate guidance through a whole school response to the guidance needs of all students.

Mission Statement:

‘Coláiste Mhuire is committed to excellence. We provide a caring and disciplined environment in which all students are challenged to reach their academic and personal potential’.

The philosophy of the school demands high standards of work, personal behaviour and respect of self and of others and Guidance in Colaiste Mhuire, with its student centred holistic approach, reflecting the ethos of our mission statement.

Relationship to School Ethos:

The plan reflects the mission statement and school ethos and the uniqueness of Colaiste Mhuire in its own particular context and circumstances.

The enhancement of self-esteem and of life skills and the development of potential, academic, personal and emotional through a holistic approach, leading to greater personal autonomy for all students are its central tenets.

Scope of the Plan:

Guidance and Counselling refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions to fulfil these choices. These choices may be categorised into three distinct but interlinked areas:

- Personal and Social Development
- Educational Guidance
- Career Guidance

Guidance activities that assist students make informed choices include:

- Personal counselling
- Assessment using psychometric instruments and inventories
- Career information (classroom, personal vocational guidance interviews, attendance at career events...)
- Use of information technology e.g. Qualifax and other relevant websites
- Personal and social developmental programmes

Aims and Objectives of the Guidance Plan

Our aims and objectives are guided by the principles of The Institute of Guidance Counsellors and The National Centre for Guidance in Education and focus on responding to the Guidance needs of the school.

1. The guidance programme will be delivered through class contact and one-to-one consultations.
2. The guidance programme is set out to reflect the needs of the students at all stages of their school life.
3. The guidance programme sets out to identify the needs of each specific year group and design a programme which meets those needs. It sets out to be accessible, student-centred, inclusive and responsive.
4. It sets out to assist students to make choices and to make transitions in the educational, social and personal aspects of their lives.
5. It sets out to provide the following: counselling, assessment, information, advice, educational development programmes, personal and social development programmes and referral.

Other Guidance activities that support the aims of the school guidance programme would include: consultation with parents, school staff and students, feedback on the needs of individual students to those concerned, networking with relevant agencies and individuals and managing, organising and coordinating guidance activities into a coherent programme.

Specific responsibilities of the Guidance and Counselling service

The specific responsibilities of the Guidance and Counselling service are:

Counselling - Empowering students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviours and resolve issues in their lives. Such activity may be personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling, or it may involve combinations of each. Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crises. Counselling on an individual basis should be part of the support structure that the school provides to students. Within the overall time allocated for guidance, adequate time should be given for the counselling function in the guidance programme.

Support – The Guidance Counsellor provides support to parents, teachers, the school principal, the Board of Management and referral agencies in assisting the personal and social, career and educational development of students. Such support may include advocacy on behalf of the student. Support also refers to working in conjunction with and supporting the well-being departments of SPHE, CSPE, Physical Education, Religion, TYP and other guidance-related activities.

Assessment – The Guidance Counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other evaluative instruments to support the relevant objectives of the school guidance programme. Such objectives may be related to career and educational planning, personal decision-making and the development of self-awareness. Information from these sources supplemented by school records and public examination results enable the Guidance Counsellor to assist a pupil in decision-making, problem-solving, behavioural change and life changes. Confidentiality will be respected at all times.

Information – Assisting students to acquire, interpret and use information relevant to their personal and social, educational career development.

Classroom Guidance Activities – Providing classroom-based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school guidance programme. Classroom guidance activities fall into two main categories:

- Skills enhancement e.g. decision-making, job search, preparation for work and study skills.
- Information giving e.g. education, training and employment, opportunity awareness and pathways.

Planning and Organising Workplace Learning – Schools need to make provisions for work-based or work-simulation learning experiences relevant to the personal and social, educational and career learning objectives of the school guidance programme. Such experiences include work experience, work shadowing, visits to workplaces, training centres higher education institutes etc. The Guidance Counsellor should be involved and consulted in this field.

Referrals – Students can self-refer, or be referred to the Guidance Counsellor or School Counsellor.

The Guidance Counsellor or School Counsellor will, where appropriate, onward refer students e.g. The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS), following standard procedures and in consultation with parents/guardians/school management.

The Guidance Counsellor and the School Counsellor also provide support for students referred to him/her by teachers, parents, and school management.

Reporting procedures - Child Protection Guidelines will be adhered to in all cases. If a child protection case arises the DLP (Principal: Mr Keith Quinn) or in his absence, the DDLP

(Deputy Principal: Mr Niall O'Brien) will be informed immediately. The student is informed of this.

A student can be referred to the Guidance Counsellor or School by the class teacher, head of year, pastoral care team, tutor, fellow student or through self-referral. **To Support We Report** is a referral campaign that all staff and students are encouraged to utilise.

Professional Development – The Guidance Counsellor should keep abreast of ongoing changes in the fields of training, education, work and child welfare. The Board of Management and school management should facilitate the attendance of the Guidance Counsellor at relevant events and in-career professional training during the school year. Participation in these events should be related to the objectives of the school guidance programme. Timetabling should allow the Guidance Counsellor to attend CPD and supervision provided at the local IGC (Institute of Guidance Counsellors) level.

Appointments – An appointment system operates whereby a student may request an individual appointment with the Guidance Counsellor. The Guidance Counsellor will also book students in for appointments during class time and students record this in their journal. Appointments may be made at the Guidance office at times convenient to the student and the Guidance Counsellor. A slip is given to students on returning to class.

Record Keeping:

All records regarding student's contact with the Guidance Office are held in a locked filing cabinet in the Guidance Counsellor's office. Any records that may arise from issues relating to Child Protection Guidelines should be kept indefinitely. All other student records are kept for 7 years. The detailed records of personal counselling sessions generally contain some of the actual words and phrases used by students to ensure accuracy, notes are written up as soon as possible after the session.

Counselling Policy:

1. Confidentiality is a central and integral part of the counselling process and is assured to each student who avails of the Counselling Service. It offers safety and privacy to those who choose to discuss personal and private concerns. Information given during the counselling session is held in strict confidence. **However, the issue of confidentiality is always discussed with students during the first session and limits to confidentiality are explained.**
2. Guidance and Counselling files are not attached to any academic record held within Coláiste Mhuire.

Limits to Confidentiality:

In certain circumstances, counsellors may need to break confidentiality if they believe there is a real intent of serious harm or danger to either the student or another individual. Such circumstances may pertain to issues relating to sexual abuse, rape, self-harm, suicidal ideation or criminal activity.

Critical Incident:

Should a critical incident occur, adherence to the Critical Incident Policy will take precedence.

Guidance in Coláiste Mhuire includes all support services within the school:

The Guidance Counsellor			Year Heads
The pastoral care team			Class Tutors
			Subject Teachers
Special Educational Needs			Principal
Department and Assistants	Special Needs		Deputy Principal

Guidance provision is an integral part of all aspects of school life. All teachers and support staff have a part to play in the planning and delivery of the school's guidance plan.

All guidance and counselling should be in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor and appropriate records retained by the Guidance Counsellor.

What do we provide at the moment?

- All students have access, on an individual basis, to the Guidance Counsellor and the School Counsellor
- Students may make individual appointments and may be referred by parents, year head, other teachers, the Principal or the Deputy Principal
- There is at least one pastoral care meeting every term where vulnerable students are identified or reviewed.
- Wellbeing programmes may highlight the need for 1 to 1 counselling
- Referral of disclosures when concerned about student safety to the DLP
- To facilitate a smooth transition from the Junior Cycle to the Senior Cycle, we encourage students in 5th/6th Year to participate in our Mentoring Programme. In this programme, each student will receive guidance from a dedicated member of the teaching staff
- Career Guidance is timetabled 6-week module as part of our Well-Being rotation during 1st, 2nd and 3rd year

- Referral to other professional agencies e.g. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), HSE Duty Social Worker etc. where necessary.

First Year:

There is contact before entry with primary school; the Special Needs Co-Ordinator meets with the 6th Class teachers in feeder primary schools. The educational passports of incoming first years are examined. The Guidance Counsellor is also available to respond to queries before entry.

There is also a 1st Year Parents' Information Night in the first term where parents have the opportunity to meet the 1st Year Head and Class Tutors.

To ease the transition to Secondary school the following provisions are put in place for incoming first-years

- Entrance tests are held together with school tests to ensure any problems or resource requirements are highlighted
- There is an SEN team, Pastoral Care team and Mentoring programme in place, all to ensure our first years integrate as easily as possible into our school
- Information is given to all incoming 1st Years about the Guidance Service (personnel involved, location, how to make an appointment, what counselling is, confidentiality etc.)
- Parent meetings/Information Evenings

Interventions are made in the following ways:

- Wellbeing classes and tutor time
- Induction classes & mentoring scheme with TY students
- 1-to-1 and group consultation with parents for adjustment problems
- Subject choice (changes)
- Consultation with class teachers & SEN Co-ordinator
- Irish language exemption
- 1-to1 counselling – career information/study plans/ personal counselling (on request of appointment by student/year head/parent/class teacher)

The rationale for these interventions:

- Ease the transition to Secondary School
- Increase the student's self-esteem
- Make students aware of the support available if they are experiencing difficulty
- Early identification of problems encountered by students
- Liaise with other staff members e.g. year heads, class tutors, principal, and deputy principal should this be deemed necessary
- Ensure the student is safe and aware of the policies in the school

Second Year:

- Meet the classes and explain the role of the guidance service again

- Individual appointments as necessary
- Information on study techniques
- Subjects and levels in preparation for Third Year
- Create awareness in students of the necessity to seek advice if changing level in subjects, i.e. implications for the future
- Bring student's attention to the changes adolescents encounter

Interventions are made in the following ways:

- Wellbeing Classes
- 1:1 meeting and group counselling if required
- Group meetings with Guidance Counsellor

The rationale for these interventions:

- Increase the students' self-esteem and self-awareness
- Ensure the student is safe and aware of the policies in the school
- Make students aware of the support available if they are experiencing difficulty
- Early identification of problems encountered by students

Third Year:

- Self-Management
- Organisation & Study Skills
- Individual appointments as necessary
- Guidance is provided to assist students in subject choices for the Senior level students
- Subject choice workshops with senior student input
- Aptitude tests: CAT assessment & feedback
- Ensure the student is safe and aware of the policies in the school

There is a Senior Options Evening to which all 3RD Year and TY parents are invited where subject choices are discussed. Information is also provided on the TY programme. Individual appointments are available where necessary.

Transition Year:

- Introduction to Qualifax.ie
- Preparation for work experience
- Overview of third-level options
- Subject choices
- Ensure the student is safe and aware of the policies in the school

There is a Senior Options Evening to which all TY parents are invited. Subject choices are discussed. Individual appointments are available where necessary.

Fifth Year:

- Matching aptitudes and abilities to career choices
- Preparation of CV's
- CAO preparation
- Qualifax
- Careersportal.ie
- Post Leaving Certificate courses
- Other work and training opportunities
- Subject levels

Sixth Year:

- CAO & UCAS preparation and registration
- Personal statements
- Individual appointments
- Career talks
- Careersportal.ie
- Visiting speakers from prospective colleges
- Attendance at Higher Options at the RDS
- LCVP programme which includes the Preparation for Work module. A career investigation is prepared and work experience is completed

Other related policies

Pastoral Care
 Special Educational Needs
 Anti-Bullying Policy
 Positive Behaviour Policy
 Policy on Cyber Bullying
 Substance Abuse Policy

Student Council Policy
 Internet Usage Policy
 Critical Incident Policy/Crisis Response Action
 Religious Education Policy



Guidance and Counselling Policy

The Board of Management reviewed and ratified this policy on 30th January 2025.

Signed: _____

Ms. Moira Mahon
Chairperson of the Board of Management

