

St. Columba's College Stranorlar



Guidance Plan

September 2021



St. Columba's College Guidance Plan

Our Mission Statement

St. Columba's College is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School in the trusteeship of CEIST and is committed to the pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.

In achieving this, the Guidance Counsellors play an important part in the areas of counselling and guidance as well as involvement in the Pastoral Care Programme.

Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, St. Columba's College is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

The central purpose of the school community is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of the students.

The school is committed to:

- Respecting the dignity of the students with his/her background, tradition and beliefs: valuing the potential of each and encouraging the strong to support the weak.
- Enabling the student develop a healthy self-image and form positive relationships with others.
- Encouraging the student to develop a sense of creativity and of collaboration of others.
- Preparing the student through the academic and technical training for a vocational role in life.
- Providing a disciplined atmosphere in which the student is encouraged to grow in freedom and to take increasing responsibility for his/her own education and for the life of the school community.

Aims

- The Guidance Programme in St. Columba's College aims to provide support for students to enable them to make wise and informed personal, social, educational and career choices.
- St. Columba's Guidance Department strives to be inclusive in providing for the needs of all students: junior, senior, minority, international, special education needs, learning supported and gifted etc.
- The Guidance Plan will provide a framework for the delivery of St. Columba's Guidance and Counselling Programme.
- The Guidance Plan will include all Guidance activities and recognise the important role of other staff members in the planning and delivery of St. Columba's Guidance and Counselling Programme.

Objectives

This Guidance Policy aims to provide a whole school approach which will allow students:

- To grow in independence and take ownership of their rights and responsibilities, enabling them to make informed choices and effectively manage their personal transitions.
- To develop and explore an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities.
- To identify and explore personal, educational and career opportunities and pathways to progression.

Rationale:

This Guidance Plan demonstrates a commitment to provide Pastoral Care and Guidance to the students and teachers in their charge and the intention of St. Columba's College to discharge its responsibility under the Education Act (1998), Section (9) Subsection (c) which states that:schools must ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.

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, designed to assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions to these choices. These choices may be categorised into three distinct but interlinked areas:

- Educational
- Social/Personal
- Career

1) Educational Guidance – for example:

- To enable and support the transition from Primary to Post-Primary.
- To encourage and support students to remain in formal education
- To encourage students' development as '*independent learners*'
- To provide the option of a Transition Year Programme
- To provide the option of the Leaving Certificate Applied
- Subject Choice and Levels for the Junior Cycle/ Leaving Cert. Programme with particular reference to required or recommended subjects for all Further Education, Higher Education and training courses including Apprenticeships.
- Study Skills and motivation. (Rayse the Game Seminar September)
- 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
- Providing care and support to students facing challenges and in times of personal crises.
- Assisting students to explore their thoughts and feelings.
- 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 Wellbeing, R.E., SPHE, & CSPE Programmes
- The Personal Development of our students are also addressed inter-departmentally

3) Career Choices/Guidance

- Self-assessment of skills, qualities, personality type
- Careers information
- National Framework of Qualifications

- 3rd level providers
- College applications: CAO and UCAS
- Access Routes
- International opportunities
- Grants and scholarships
- Further education and training information
- Vocational decisions
- 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

Provision of Guidance at St. Columba’s is supported by and involves the following:

Section 1: RESOURCES

1.1: Time Allocation: Currently 35 hours

Timetables are included in **Appendix 1.**

1.2: Personnel

Guidance Counsellors

Ms. Catherine McNulty BA, HDip, Grad Dip in Guidance Counselling (DCU)

Ms. Eithne Sproule BComm, H Dip, Grad Dip in Guidance Counselling (UL)

Student Support Team

- The Student Support Team has a central role in the provision of guidance in the St. Columba’s College.
- The composition of the team (Deputy principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellors and SEN co-ordinator) is also critical to the provision of comprehensive student support services – educational, personal and social.
- The team meets every 3 weeks for each Year group at Junior Level and every 2 weeks at Senior Level and it has a vital role in communicating the needs of individual students and groups to the whole staff, management and parents.
- The Student Support Team structure supports the Continuum of Support model: guidance for a few, guidance for some and guidance for all.

Student Support Team Members:

Mr. Tom Rowan	Principal
Mr. John Sweeney	Deputy Principal
Ms. Georgina White	Deputy Principal
Ms. Eithne Sproule	Guidance Counsellor
Ms. Catherine McNulty	Guidance Counsellor
Ms. Mairead Holmes	SEN Co-ordinator
Mr. Sean Kelly	6 th year Year Head
Mr. Jarlath Donnellan	5 th year Year Head
Ms. G White/Mr. Donnellan	Transition Year

Mr. Annmarie Wade	3 rd year Year Head
Ms. Catherine Cooke	2 nd year Year Head
Ms. Amanda Timony	1 st year Year Head

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO GUIDANCE

While the Guidance Counsellors have the overall responsibility for co-ordinating and compiling the Guidance Plan, all members of staff have a contribution to make. The Guidance Counsellors are members of the school educational team and so work with various members of that team to provide students with the best possible service.

Members of this team include:

School Management	Year Heads
Class Teachers/Tutors	Subject Teachers
SEN Co-ordinator	Learning Support Team
Programme Co-ordinators	Parents
School Ancillary Staff	Assistants
SPHE Co-ordinator	

The Guidance Counsellors may also liaise with the following outside agencies:

Department of Education & Science	Health Service Executive
Feeder Schools	NEPS
Social Services	Garda Liaison Officers
Local Community	Local Business
SOLAS	Third Level Colleges
Donegal Youth Service	Support Groups
Donegal ETB	CAMHS
JIGSAW	School Completion Programme
Educational Welfare Officer	Business in the Community (BITC)
Tusla Education Support Service	Finn Valley Family Resource Centre

1.3: Facilities

- Two Guidance offices equipped with telephone, personal computer, printer and broadband access. Computer networked to the main school network.
- A laptop and Chromebook each provided by the college.
- Notice Boards and holders for newsletters and relevant documents outside each office.
- Access to computer rooms throughout school year.

1.4: Materials

- Each office has a stock of Irish and UK prospectuses.
- Go Careers Interview Techniques.
- Use of internet:
 - www.careersportal.ie
 - www.qualifax.ie
 - www.ucas.co.uk
 - www.cao.ie
 - www.careersnews.ie

1.5: External: Open Days, Career Exhibitions, Guest Speakers, Past Pupils, Career Information sessions, Parents, NEPS Psychologist, Child & Family Services, Finn Valley Family Resource Centre, HSE/NHS Information sessions and Work Placement opportunities.

Section 2: GUIDANCE CURRICULUM

The Guidance Curriculum is delivered both formally and informally.

2.1: Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance curriculum is delivered through:

1. Individual meetings of a personal counselling nature and careers/vocational guidance nature.
2. Classroom guidance delivered in regular weekly classes to senior cycle students and rotating modules, class group or year group interventions and team teaching for junior year groups.

2.2: Informal Guidance

The Informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with Management/other teaching staff to promote cross-curricular links and to enhance the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of the Guidance Plan. Meetings with parents/guardians and outside agencies form an integral part of Informal Guidance. Also, attendance at career events, SPHE events eg Road Safety Roadshow, guest speakers from colleges and organisations such as AWARE, JIGSAW, DYS are part of informal guidance.

2.3: Formal and Informal Guidance Programme

	Ms. E. Sproule	Ms. C. McNulty
Number of weekly timetabled guidance classes	8	5
Number of weekly SPHE classes	1	2
Number of classes for Pastoral Care team meetings (In the event of a family bereavement/crisis/school refusal or other relevant situations, the Pastoral Care team will arrange to visit the home)	2	2
Number of classes for Guidance Counsellors Planning*	1	1
Number classes for administration*	4	1
Number of periods available to meet students for guidance/careers/personal issues*	16	9

(* Classes allocated to each of these areas will vary from week-to-week depending on circumstances)

(See Appendix 2 for detailed Year Group's Guidance Plan)

Section 3: TESTING

1. Assessment tests for incoming first years (CAT 4 and National Group Reading Test (NGRT)) are administered by a team of teachers and marked by the SEN Co-ordinator and an external business. The results are used by the SEN Co-ordinator to identify students requiring learning support. Results are available to all teachers on VS Ware to facilitate differentiation.
2. Throughout the year the SEN Co-ordinator uses the WIAT 3 test in Reading, Spelling and Numeracy. The NGRT is administered again after Christmas in 2nd Year.

Section 4: PROTOCOL FOR MEETINGS

1. Meetings with students

All meetings are by appointment. Students are either given an appointment by the Guidance counsellor or may request one. An appointment card is issued by the Guidance Counsellor and must be presented to the student's subject teacher and signed prior to attending meeting. If the scheduled time does not suit the subject teacher, it will be re-arranged.

All senior students are seen at least once during senior cycle by the Guidance Counsellor.

2. Meetings with parents/guardians

Parents/guardians may make appointments with the Guidance Counsellor by telephoning the school. On occasion the Guidance Counsellor may request another staff member eg. Year Head, subject teacher and/or management to be present at the meeting. The student may be invited in to all or part of the meeting with approval of parent/guardian. This gives the student responsibility, ownership and inclusion in the meeting's outcome. Notes are kept of all meetings by the Guidance Counsellor.

Section 5: REPORTING PROCEDURES

In both Personal Counselling and in Careers/Vocational Meetings, the confidentiality rule is followed ie. Designated Liaison Person and/or parents/guardians are informed if the student is in danger to him/herself and/or to others **or** if it is a legal requirement. The student is informed of the limits to confidentiality at the beginning of a meeting. If it is felt that it is in the student's best interests to inform a teacher/parent/guardian of a particular difficulty, this is only done with the knowledge and agreement of the student.

Section 6: REFERRAL SYSTEM

Students may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor by Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Student Support Team or any Staff member. They may also be referred by parents or by self- referral. Peer support is encouraged.

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. If it is deemed necessary to make a referral, this is communicated to the student and the parents.

Where a parent is being advised to take a student to the G.P., a letter is sent home with this recommendation and a copy of the letter is also sent to the G.P. (**See Appendix 3**)

Section 7: REFERRALS TO STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

All staff are aware of the Student Support structure and are encouraged to use the Consultation Forms (see **Appendix 4**) which are available in the staff room. This consultation form can be given to any member of the Student Support Team. If necessary, the issue may be addressed immediately by a member of the team or otherwise that student will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

The relevant Deputy Principal reports to Staff Meetings with an updated list of students who are receiving student support and the range of challenges being presented.

Section 8: RECORD KEEPING PROCEDURES

Records of all careers/vocational guidance meetings are kept.

To maintain confidentiality, records of counselling meetings are generally brief but will contain some of the actual words/phrases used by the client.

To ensure accuracy, these notes are written as soon as possible after the meeting.

Details of actions taken are recorded. Notes are generally brief.

Section 9: IN –CAREER DEVELOPMENT

To maintain qualified membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, a chartered member must complete 10 hours of in-service training annually. (IGC Constitution and Code of Ethics 2004).

In-career development is essential to the work of the Guidance Counsellor. Regular attendance at local IGC meetings and Counselling Supervision is facilitated by the school by sensitive time-tabling. (Currently, Thursday afternoons left free of time-tabled classes in so far as it is possible).

The annual IGC Conference provides a range of in-service through the provision of workshops and presentations relevant to our work. Additional in-service is arranged locally and at national level and is open to all registered members of the IGC. The DES supports the provision of in-service for IGC members through funding for Counselling Supervision.

Attendance at Open Days, Guidance Seminars, CAO conference, HSE/SPHE, NCGE, PDST, Education Centres, Health Promoting Schools, and NEPS in-service etc. all constitute in-career development.

Section 10: LINKS WITH OTHER STAFF/OUTSIDE AGENCIES

The following demonstrates the whole school approach to Guidance and the collaboration between the whole school community and the Guidance Counsellors.

Subject teacher/Class teacher

- Encourages students to reach their academic and personal potential.
- Monitors behaviour and report to Year Head/Guidance Counsellor /Student Support Team if concerned.
- Liaises with parents via student journal.
- Girls Active
- Debating and sport
- Musical

- Class talks
- Educational tours/trips

Year Head

- Member of Student Support Team.
- Referral person for Subject/Class teacher.
- Holistic monitoring of students.
- Refers students to Guidance Counsellor when necessary.
- Liaises with parents as necessary.
- Refers students to Management when necessary.

TY Co-ordinator

- Motivates and develop personal skills through the TY programme.
- Organises events, outside speakers, excursions etc which promote personal development.
- Liaises with management, Guidance Counsellors, parents in programme development.

Programme Co-ordinator

- Plans and administers LCVP, LCA and TY programmes.
- Promotes programme with students, parents/guardians, outside agencies.
- Organises and monitors Work Experience
- Organises visits out and guest speakers

SPHE Teachers

- Promote self-esteem and positive self-image
- Enables and encourages student discussion in relation to social, personal and health issues.
- Attends in-service
- Attendance at events such as the Road Safety Road Show

SEN Co-ordinator

- Collaborates with management on the allocation of hours for Learning Support.
- Attends Student Support meetings.
- Liaises with parents and external agencies.
- Attends primary school reviews and case-conferences.
- Attends weekly meetings with Additional Needs Assistants.
- Identification of students that JCSP may suit and promotion of the programme.

Learning Support Teachers

- Provides targeted support for identified students
- Consults with NEPS psychologist, Guidance Counsellor as necessary.
- Regular meetings and contact with parents.

Parents Council

- Forum for parents to participate in ongoing development of school
- Voice and link for parents with school.
- Review school policies and suggestions re. same.

Student Council

- Identifies areas of student concern.

- Liaise with Teacher Representative/Guidance Counsellor to promote positive change.
- Helps to organise school activities eg. LGBT week, Anti-Bullying week.
- Liaises with the Donegal Youth Council

Outside Agencies

The Guidance Counsellors in St. Columba's promote and foster links with the following:

- NEPs: - counsellors have occasional contact and meetings with school psychologist.
- HSE, Child & Family Services: Where necessary, Guidance Counsellors have meetings with representative from the HSE in supporting students.
- Social Workers.
- Tusla Education Support Service
- Educational Welfare Officer
- Employers/Local Business
- Colleges/Admission Officers
- ETB/ SOLAS
- Past Pupils
- Primary Schools
- PLC colleges
- Army, Navy, Gardai
- Support agencies, eg. AWARE, A.A., JIGSAW, Donegal Youth Service (DYS) provide guest speakers to address students
- Retreat Teams

Section 11: COMMUNICATION

The Guidance Counsellors are engaged in communicating with the whole school community including students, other staff members, parents and management. The importance of effective communication is valued and therefore every effort is made to ensure that effective communication takes place.

1. Students

The majority of guidance related information is given to students during class periods and uploaded to Google Classroom. Information relevant to individual students is given during one-to-one appointments. This is also an opportunity to get to know more about the student and their individual needs.

Newsletters are a written method of communication used to impart important information that may have been sent to the Guidance Department by external colleges/agencies. Important deadlines are included and students are also directed where to find more information if applicable. Newsletters are uploaded to Google Classroom and the website. Links to useful resources on websites such as Careers Portal and Qualifax are posted on Google Classroom.

Notice Boards are used outside both Guidance Offices to display posters.

2. Other staff members

An information leaflet is given to staff early in September detailing all the Open Days that will be attended by the leaving cert students. It will also contain a reminder of how the career appointments operate.

Staff are also informed on an individual basis of any information they need to know about students.

3. Parents

A letter is sent to all Leaving Cert parents early in the first term, outlining the list of Open Days that the school will be attending and the Policy for Attendance at Open Days. The Newsletter system is explained and the importance of students reading them carefully and acting on any information relevant to them is stressed.

Guidance Counsellors give presentations at:

- First Year Parents Information Evening (Sept)
- Third Year Parents & Students Info. Evening on Programme and Subject Choice (Jan)
- Leaving Cert Parents Guidance Information Evening (Oct)
- Assisting with SUSI grant applications (May)

After the Study Skills & Motivational Seminar in September there is a Parents Pep Talk presented by Ray Langan.

4. Management

Communication between the Guidance Counsellors and the Principal and Deputy Principals occurs regularly in relation to student issues that arise on a day-to-day basis.

Section 12: REMOTE LEARNING

Google Classroom is used for distributing information both during school and school closures.

Live classes delivered via Webex/Zoom.

Recorded presentations uploaded to Google Classroom

Telephone support provided to students during school closures.

Student Support meetings take place on-line.

Students encouraged to email Guidance Counsellors with queries through school email account.

Section 13: RELEVANT POLICIES

The Guidance Plan is developed in conjunction with the following policies:

- Additional Educational Needs
- Anti-Bullying
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Critical Incident
- Data Protection GDPR
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Student Council
- Substance Use
- Remote Learning
- Communications
- Extra-curricular Trips
- One to one teaching

Section 14: AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Information Pack for SEN students
- More formal Guidance Programme for Junior classes especially 2nd Year through Wellbeing
- Re-introduction of Assessment tests at Senior Level.
- Guidance Module in TY.

Review

The Guidance Plan will be reviewed annually by the Guidance team and the School Planning coordinator.

Changes to the Policy will be informed by the changing needs of the student body, changes in legislation and DES guidelines and circulars.

This Policy was agreed on 29th of September 2021

Signature:
(Chair of St. Columba's Board of Management)

Date:

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(Principal)

Date:

Date for Review: October 2022