

# **Columba College**

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## **Section One – Aims of the School Guidance Programme**

### **1.1 Rationale**

Schools are required in accordance with the Education Act (1998) to ‘ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance’ (Guidelines for schools on the implications of section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998), with the consequence that guidance is an integral part of the school’s curriculum activities. The Education Act 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 overall School Plan (Planning the school Guidance Programme National centre for Guidance in Education 2004).

### **1.2 Scope**

The Guidance Plan involves all aspects of school life and as such is a whole school activity. While the Guidance Counsellor has the overall responsibility for co-ordinating and compiling the plan all members of staff have a contribution to make. The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the school educational team and as such works with various members of that team to provide students with the best possible service.

#### **Members of the School Guidance Planning Team**

- Bernice Martin (Principal)
- Ann Marie Kiernan (Guidance Counsellor)
- Miriam McElroy (Home School Liaison)
- Denise Scally (Form Tutor)
- Carmel Nulty (Special Needs Assistant)

### **1.3 School Philosophy and Mission Statement**

Columba College as a post primary school aims to provide a learning environment which will allow all students to achieve their full potential and enable them to develop into caring and responsible adults/citizens capable of contributing to and fulfilling their roles in the community and society.

The Guidance Plan aims to assist the holistic development of all students so that they can learn to know and value their talents and abilities and effectively manage their personal transitions, while at the same time learn to value and respect others and make a positive contribution to society.

### **1.4 Guidance in Schools**

Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices. These choices may be categorised into three separate but interlinked areas.

- **Personal and Social Guidance**  
This encompasses developmental skills crucial to the student's education and career example: self-awareness, decision making, planning, coping strategies.
- **Educational Guidance**  
This is developmental and includes areas such as subject/course choices, subject levels, motivation and learning, study skills, learning related problems, psychometric testing.
- **Vocational Guidance**  
This includes such areas as unemployment rights and duties, job opportunities, vocational education and training, further education job and interview preparation, career research and career/course information.

### 1.5 Counselling

‘Counselling is an interaction process which facilitates meaningful understanding of the self and environment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour’  
(Shertzer & Stone, 1974)

Personal Counselling facilitates students by suggesting and exploring a range of coping strategies and interventions in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs. Teaching and support personnel and liaise with pupils in the addressing the objectives of the service as outlined below.

- Objectives.
- Develop awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities.
- Identify and explore opportunities.
- Grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves.
- Make informed choices about their lives and follow through on these choices. We endeavour to provide a counselling environment that is both caring and non-judgemental, and confidential. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where there is a risk to the students or others.

#### Counselling Approaches

Some counselling approaches that may be used include

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**  
This focuses on thinking patterns and behaviours.
- **Goal attainment**  
Goals are negotiated at the outset and can be incorporated into any theory of counselling. Person centred (Rogarian), rational – emotive therapy, Gestalt may be employed in this model.
- **Reality therapy**

This approach helps students to explore their wants, perceptions, and level of commitment while discussing aspects of behaviour, assisting students to evaluate their behaviour and so encourage them to make specific attainable plans.

## **Section Two – The Role of the Guidance Counsellor**

**Name of Guidance Counsellor:** Ann Marie Kiernan

**Qualifications:** B ed, H Ec, H.Dip pastoral care, H.Dip (Hons) S.G.C

In Columba College the Guidance Counsellor is professionally trained to undertake the following tasks within the school guidance programme.

### **2.1 Counselling**

Empowering students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviours and resolve issues in their lives. Such an activity may be personal counselling, educational counselling career counselling, or it may involve combinations of both.

### **2.2 Assessment**

The Guidance Counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other evaluative instruments to support relevant objectives of the school guidance programme. Such objectives may be related to career and educational planning, personal decision making and developmental of self-awareness.

### **2.3 Information**

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

### **2.4 Support**

The Guidance Counsellor provides support to students, parents, teachers, and principal and referral agencies in assisting the personal, social, career and educational developmental of students. Such support may include advocacy on behalf of a student. support also refers to assistance in the planning and development of programmes which will be beneficial to students.

### **2.5 Classroom Guidance Activities**

Providing classroom based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school guidance programme.

### **2.6 Workplace Learning**

This is normally done in 5<sup>th</sup> year (1 week block in February of each year). The school makes provision for work based or work stimulation learning experiences relevant to the personal and social, educational and career learning objectives of the school guidance programme.

## 2.7 Referrals

Seeking for students the assistance of the non-school based professionals following standard procedures example I.E.P's

## 2.8 Professional Development

In order to keep abreast of on-going changes in the fields of training, education, work and child welfare the guidance counsellor is committed to C.P.D (see appendices)

# **Section three – Guidance Provision and Programme**

## 3.1 Introduction – provision

Guidance allocation is 9 hours 20 minutes per week.

It is inclusive of classroom guidance and one to one work. The guidance curriculum may be divided into components.

- Formal Guidance
- Informal Guidance

### Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance is delivered using two forms of intervention employing a number of methodologies.

- Individual contact of a personal counselling nature and careers / vocational guidance.
- Classroom guidance is delivered in regular weekly classes to senior cycle students. At junior level it is on a rotating basis in consultation with form tutors/subject teachers.

### Informal Guidance

The informal guidance programme consists of liaising with other teaching staff/management to promote cross curricular links and the to enhance the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of the guidance plan.

## 3.2 Guidance Programme

The following outlines year by year the aims, curriculum, and activities of whole school guidance programme.

### **First Year Students**

#### Aims

- To promote a smooth transition for students from Primary Education to Secondary Education.
- To ensure relevant and appropriate subject choice.
- To facilitate the personal and social development of students.
- To develop good study skills appropriate to 2<sup>nd</sup> level programmes.

## Activities

- Liaise with the principal in relation to primary school visits prior to entry.
- Presentation to parents to address various transition issues as well as subject choice.
- Member of the J.C.S.P team.
- Induction programme on entry to school.
- One to one guidance available on request or by referral.
- SPHE programme provided by class teacher.
- Class teacher/subject teachers monitoring of students.
- Liaise with learning support.
- Liaise with H.S.L.
- Pastoral Care Structure.

## **Second Year Students**

### Aims

- To advance the personal and social development of students.
- To facilitate the improvement of study skills.
- To ease the transition from first to second year.

### Activities

- SPHE programme.
- Class teacher / subject teachers monitoring of students.
- One to one guidance available by request or by referral.
- Intermittent visits by Guidance Counsellor to classes.
- Liaise with learning support teacher
- Liaise with H.S.L.
- Pastoral Care Structure.

## **Third Year Students**

### Aims

- To enhance personal and social development of students.
- To promote good study skills.
- To facilitate appropriate and relevant choices for senior cycle.

### Activities

- SPHE programme.
- Presentation to parents and students regarding senior cycle options/subject choices.
- One to one available on request or by referral.

- Study skills Presentation.
- Pastoral Care Structure.
- Monitoring of student academic progress

### **Fifth Year (5<sup>th</sup> year - Year 1 Senior Cycle)**

#### Aims

- To enhance personal and social development of students.
- To promote good study skills.
- To develop the skills necessary to research career choices.
- To develop and promote, skills and qualities necessary for the work place.

#### Activities

- SPHE programme.
- Dedicated 40 minute class per week of guidance.
- One to one guidance available on request or by referral.
- Schools/Business Partnership programme.
- Use of computer room for career research.
- Career exploration project.
- Work Experience Programme.

### **Sixth Year (6<sup>th</sup> year – Year 2 senior cycle)**

#### Aims

- To monitor students as they progress developmentally and academically.
- To encourage each student to fulfil his/her potential.
- To assist students in making career decisions
- To prepare students for life after school

#### Activities

- SPHE Programme.
- Dedicated 40 minute class period of guidance per week.
- One to one guidance available on request or referral
- Use of the computer room for career research
- Mock interview.
- College application procedures
- Study skills class
- Guest Speakers from 3<sup>rd</sup> level colleges
- Planning a gap year
- Careers events
- College open days.

## Section Four – Current Guidance Procedures

### 4.1 Protocols / procedures for meetings with Parents.

- The guidance counsellor is available to meet with parents at the parent teacher meetings. If parents are unable to meet with the Guidance Counsellor during these meetings they are invited to make an appointment for another time.
- Parents are welcome to ring the school at any time to make an appointment to meet with the Guidance Counsellor. A request for a meeting will be acknowledged and be arranged for the soonest available time.
- In certain circumstances the Guidance Counsellor may need to contact the parent(s) in order to request a meeting with them. Contact is made with the parent directly by phone to arrange a mutually convenient time for the meeting. If appropriate, the parents are informed over the phone of the reason for the meeting.

### 4.2 Protocols / procedures for meetings with students

- The general principle and cornerstone of the counselling relationship is based on confidentiality. However there is no law of confidentiality which would command silence when the welfare of the child is concerned. Confidentiality statement made to students is enclosed in the appendices.
- Student appointments  
The appointments may occur in any of the following ways
  - A student may present an appointment slip to the teacher, signed by the Guidance Counsellor.
  - On conclusion of the appointment the Guidance Counsellor writes the time on the slip, to be given to the subject teacher on return.
  - In the case of teacher refusal a follow up appointment can be made.

### 4.3 Record Keeping Procedures

- Records of personal counselling and careers vocational guidance interviews are kept.
- Records of counselling sessions contain some of the actual words and phrases used by the client.
- To ensure accuracy these notes are in so far as possible written as soon as possible after each session.
- Notes are generally brief.

### 4.4 Open Days

As part of careers programme in the school 6<sup>th</sup> year students are encouraged to attend open days that are organised by third level Institutions. In order to minimise disruption to school life students are encouraged to attend open days at the weekends. The school views open days as a good way to meet and speak with lecturers and current students, discuss study plans, and find out more about what the different

institutions can offer them. They may include an opportunity to visit any exhibitions hosted by various institutes. These allow students to form a better picture of what is entailed in further education and of what life as a third level student is like.

#### 4.5 Students dropping a subject/ changing subject level

A student may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor in the event of that student wishing to drop a subject, to ensure they understand the implications, if any of their actions. Equally in the event of a change from higher to ordinary, ordinary to foundation a student may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor, she will consult with the relevant subject teacher. A change of subject level form/dropping subject must be completed and returned.

#### 4.6 Subject Choice Procedures

Subject choices have to be taken by students on two different occasions

- Junior cycle – after the taster programme 1<sup>st</sup> year (Sept. – Oct.)
- Senior cycle – In 3<sup>rd</sup> year in preparation for senior cycle. Subject bands vary from year to year based on the following – student choices, available resources.

In keeping with our policy of supporting students through the process of developing their full potential the Guidance Counsellor provides help and support at each stage of the decision making process and is available to students for advice and guidance.

### **Section Five – Administration of the Guidance and Counselling Service**

Administration of the service necessitates time spent each week by the Guidance Counsellor in carrying out clerical and administrative duties.

The following gives a brief outline of these duties:

#### 5.1 Information Collation

Information gathering, organisation and dissemination are an essential and important function carried out on a daily basis.

Managing this information involves:

Visits to College Open Days

Work place visits

Visits to Career Exhibitions

Organising visiting speakers to the school

Arranging access to computers and technology

Disseminating information to classes and groups

Continuous research to ensure availability of most recent information

#### 5.2 Administration for testing

Collating all materials required before testing such as question booklets, answer sheets

Ordering new materials from suppliers

Collating all materials post testing

Correcting answer sheets or arranging for computerised marking of tests

#### 5.3 Managing the Guidance Library

Ensuring up to date information is available

Filing careers books, prospectuses, leaflets, videos, C.D's and other relevant information.

#### 5.4 Office Organisation and Filing

Filing materials for careers, counselling and educational matters

Record keeping of attendance at open days and other events

Organising appointments

Record keeping of individual guidance appointments

#### 5.5 Correspondence

Correspondence takes place between the Guidance Service and a variety of people and organisations

Some examples are

Parents

Third Level and Further Education Colleges

Employers/ work placement personnel

Industry and representatives of industry

Visiting Speakers

CAO

#### 5.6 Phone Calls

The work of the Guidance Counsellor necessitates phone calls being made to others and received from others on a daily basis. Some examples

To/ from parents

To/ from Third Level/ Further Education Colleges

To/ from industry representatives

To/ from organisations such as STEPS

To/ from visiting speakers

#### 5.7 Programme development and planning

There is no set curriculum for careers classes therefore it is necessary for the Guidance Counsellor to plan the content of the careers programmes

This involves writing the guidance programme

It also involves keeping abreast with new developments in careers and courses and incorporating these into the guidance programme

Evaluating the effectiveness of the programmes

Liaising with other staff members in relation to programmes such as SPHE and CSPE

#### 5.8 Report writing

Occasionally behaviour reports on students

#### 5.9 School Planning Evaluation

Evaluation of the Guidance and counselling service in conjunction with the school plan is ongoing. This involves:

Organising and chairing meetings of the School Guidance and Counselling Planning Group

Writing agenda for meetings

Keeping records of meetings/ items discussed/ decisions made...

Engaging in correspondence, phone calls report writing involved in the planning process

Distributing written information to the partners involved in planning

Planning, devising and distributing surveys to the partners

#### 5.10 Notice Board

An important resource in information dissemination to students, staff and parents is the Careers Notice Board outside the office and the School Guidance Notice Board in the staff room. These are a means of conveying any relevant information in graphic form under the diverse areas of guidance. This is an effective means of communicating with the wider school population. Administration of these involves:

Providing current information in relation to careers and courses

Information re new developments in courses, CAO

Providing information regarding holistic development

Providing 'student support' phone numbers/ names/ addresses of helping agencies

Ensuring notices/ posters/ phone numbers are accurate and current

### **Section Six – Continuing Professional development for the Guidance Counsellor**

Supervision for counselling:

'Supervision is a working alliance between a supervisor and counsellor in which the counsellor can offer an account or recording of her work; reflect of her work; reflects on it; receives feedback, and where appropriate, guidance ' (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993)

The Guidance Counsellor has been given Tuesday afternoon to avail of supervision and CPD and avails of this through the Westmeath branch of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

In-service

The Guidance Counsellor from time to time attends other in-service. This includes information meetings with the HEI's, conferences/workshops on various areas such as courses dealing with suicide, depression, marital breakdown, alcohol and substance abuses and other issues that affect teenagers.

Most recent C.P.D includes - Suicide Intervention Skills, Self-harm Workshop

### **Section Seven – Policies**

The Guidance Planning Group has been working on policies relevant to guidance.

For example: Policies on homework, Critical Incident have been fully completed and others are work in progress or to be reviewed. These include SPHE/RSE, Pastoral Care, and Substance Abuse.

### **Section Eight – Development Areas 2013-2015**

Critical reflection and evaluation is a very important part of the school Guidance programme. It is necessary to review the plan in order to measure the strengths and weaknesses of guidance within the school and plan for improvement.

- **Health Promoting Schools**  
H.P.S concept is a whole school approach to all aspects of Health and learning. In conjunction with the HSE Columba College is currently seeking the opinions of staff, parents, and students in relation to areas for development, see appendices HPS. A committee will be formed representative of all the school community to establish aims and an action plan for the year.
- **Staff Questionnaire**  
Staff were issued with a questionnaire concerning guidance needs. While opinions expressed varied top issues were  
Student motivation  
Provision for learning needs of all pupils  
Pastoral Care System  
The issues are currently being discussed decide what strategies can be adapted to improve the current situation
- **Pastoral and the SPHE programme**  
These are the backbone to a whole school approach to guidance. How best to improve delivery of the programme and communication issues between form tutors is an aim for the 2013-2015 term
- **Learning Support**  
In order to meet the educational and personal requirements of all students' early interventions need to be planned for some students. This would include adjusting their curriculum and providing extra support not only in numeracy literacy but also in personal

social and career development. Links with the learning support co-ordinator is a high priority

- Career Guidance

The development of an information pack for 6<sup>th</sup> year students regarding college application (CAO and PLC). In so far as possible to provide mock interviews for students who hope to access college through the PLC route. It is also hoped to review psychometric tests currently in use.

