

**St. Cuan's College,  
Castleblakney  
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.**



## **School Guidance Policy**

**Ratified & Adopted by The Board of Management**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

St. Cuan's College is a Catholic Diocesan Co-Educational College.

St. Cuan's College is dedicated to the academic, social, cultural and spiritual growth of its students. In this pursuit, we are devoted to achieving the highest attainable level of education and promoting the development of young men and women of strong moral character consistent with the school's Christian tradition.

We endeavour to create a stimulating, respectful and supportive environment for staff, students and families in which all are valued and encouraged to develop and share their unique talents. St. Cuan's College promotes further education beyond Leaving Certificate, inviting the local community to join us in our pursuit of personal development - mind, body and spirit.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 states that a school 'shall use its available resources to ...ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational needs and career choices... (d) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students...in consultation with their parents having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school'.*

Guidance is now regarded as a core element of the school's overall programme. The guidance programme should reflect the needs of the students at all stages of their school life.

Our objectives are conditioned by the good practice disseminated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. We see guidance as a continual developmental process which begins prior to the entry of the student to St Cuan's and concludes after the students has left the school.

## **AIM OF THE PROGRAMME**

The aim of the programme is to provide for the educational, vocational and personal/social development of all students.

## **CONTENT OF PROGRAMME**

The school guidance programme includes the following:

- Counselling: All students have the opportunity to meet the Guidance Counsellor for counselling. Counselling helps students explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them. It gives care and support to students learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up and school life and with their individual personal circumstances.
- Guidance and Vocational Preparation Programmes: These assist students with decision-making, problem-solving, behavioural change and skills for coping with ever-changing circumstances in their personal, educational and career development. They include classroom guidance activities which provide classroom based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school Guidance Programme. Such experiences include information giving, ICT, skills development (e.g. planning, decision making, study skills, communications and values clarification) and vocational preparation.
- Other existing programmes which address Guidance Issues include:
  - Pastoral Care
  - Settling In Programme (First year)
  - SPHE
  - RSE
  - Religious Education
  - CSPE
  - The Prefect System
  - Transition Year
  - LCVP
  - Work Experience
  - Career Investigation
  - PLC Courses

## **ASSESSMENT**

The Guidance and Learning Support departments use standardised tests to provide information which is helpful in predicting academic performance, assessing learning support requirements and levels of achievement. Aptitude tests, interest inventories and examination performance can help in problem-solving, decision-making and planning for the future.

## **CONSULTATION**

Students, subject teachers, year heads, learning support, guidance counsellor, school management and parents are all involved in the consultation process.

## **REFERRAL**

When necessary and appropriate, students are referred to qualified professionals outside the school.

A student may be referred by the Guidance Counsellor to other professionals outside the school, e.g. NEPS.

An individual student may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor by self, teachers, school management, parents/guardians. The voluntary participation of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

## **STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMME**

Students are provided with an opportunity of one to one meetings with the Guidance Counsellor. Follow-up, if necessary, is arranged by the Counsellor and the student. Times of such meetings are notified to subject teachers. Certain topics are covered in class by the Guidance Counsellor. Individual counselling is arranged as necessary.

## **TEAM APPROACH TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME**

In St Cuan's, it has been recognised for many years that all staff have a vital part to play in student care. All staff therefore, has a role to play in the delivery of the School Guidance Programme. The team approach has been very effective.

Through the Pastoral Care structure, staff will meet students on an individual basis in the course of the year. From time to time staff members will refer students to the Guidance Counsellor. Referrals on an emergency basis by staff members are also provided for, as are referrals to external agencies.

Students relate to different teachers in different ways and are encouraged to talk to any teacher they feel comfortable with if they need to. The individual appointment system applies to all teachers as all have a duty to care.

The Guidance Counsellor plays a very important role in co-ordinating the school guidance programme. The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the school's team and works with Year Heads, Subject teachers, and the Deputy Principal and Principal.

### **INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS**

As partners in education every opportunity is availed of to consult parents, provide them with information and involve them as much as possible.

### **SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLAN**

The School Guidance Plan provides an essential framework for delivery of the school's guidance programme. Successful planning ensures a structured response to the educational, vocational and personal social needs of the students.

The development of a school guidance policy based on a consultative process and presented in written form is highly desirable and facilitates accountability and evaluation requirements.

The policy sets out the school's response to the current needs of students in the area of Guidance and Counselling and will be reviewed at regular intervals.

### **THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR AT ST CUANS COLLEGE**

The Guidance Counsellor is seen as the central person responsible for the continuous developmental guidance process which begins prior to the entry of the student to St Cuan's and concludes when the student has left the school.

The three key areas in which the counsellor has a major role and responsibility are personal counselling, career counselling and educational counselling.

The counsellor relates to school management through meeting the Principal and Deputy Principal on matters affecting the planning of the school's provision of personal, career and educational counselling, as well as on matters affecting individual students requiring intervention. The counsellor also relates with Year heads, SNAs, subject teachers and parents.

The counsellor has a role in informing the school management and staff of the operation of the guidance department, in contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate programmes, in administering tests and interpreting their results, in managing information, in administering the guidance service and in liaison with referral agencies and professionals outside the school.

### **PERSONAL COUNSELLING**

Being informed by the theoretical background of counselling which takes systems into

account as influential in the life of an adolescent, the ways in which the counsellor fulfils this role includes:

- Publicising to the students and at parents' meetings the role of the Guidance Counsellor and his/her availability to individual students for consultation within the framework of guidance hours available.
- Students and parents are free to request a consultation with the counsellor.
- The counsellor also initiates consultations with pupils, teachers and parents when particular circumstances arise indicating that a pupil may be in need of counselling on a personal issue which impinges on their school life.
- The counsellor is consulted by school management and pastoral care personnel on such issues.
- Every student is seen individually by the counsellor on personal and career related matters.

### **CAREER COUNSELLING**

The ways in which the counsellor fulfils this role include:

- The counsellor addresses all students prior to them choosing their subjects for the Leaving Certificate. The counsellor also addresses a meeting of parents on the same topic.
- In Transition Year, the counsellor is timetabled to teach a Careers course. The topics covered include interest inventories, preparation for subject choice, information on the education system and an explanation of the wide variety of third level destinations available and the routes by which they are accessed, differential aptitude tests, computer based career programmes.
- The counsellor co-ordinates a course in 5<sup>th</sup> year which is time-tabled for one period a week and is assisted by other members of the teaching staff in the delivery of this course. Topics covered include a careers project, computer research, careers library research, job interview, preparation for mock interviews, part time jobs, study skills, third level open days. The counsellor is assisted in this work of another member of the teaching staff who individually meets with each student and briefs the students with information on potential opportunities at third level, or other career options. This information is then passed on to the Guidance Counsellor who may use it for the LCVP Careers interview.
- The Guidance Counsellor assists students with filling out the CAO forms and gives relevant information about how these forms are processed, including the dates by which they must be posted.

### **EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING**

The ways in which the Guidance Counsellor fulfils this role include:

- Gathering all relevant information about the incoming students from primary school.

- Liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads concerning pupils who require intervention.
- Offering those pupils counselling with regard to study techniques, educational planning and personal organisation.
- Monitoring and being aware of the delivery of study techniques courses.
- Provides guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progress through meetings (e.g. prior to Transition Year, prior to 5<sup>th</sup> year subject choices, and a few months before the Leaving Cert exam).
- Being available to pupils after Junior and Leaving Cert results have been issued.
- Liaise with Special Needs and Learning Support departments to identify students requiring further attention.

### **COUNSELLING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Guidance Counsellor is trained in counselling. This is one of the ways in a counsellor helps students. The counsellor offers students counselling in many areas including:

- Personal problems
- Family problems
- Relationship problems
- Coping skills
- Motivation
- Making Choices
- Transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> level education and the adult world

Students can self refer or be referred by parents or teachers. Parents may ask the counsellor's help in order that the counsellor may help with their child. Students are encouraged to discuss their problems with their parents where appropriate.

At the beginning of the counselling contract students are always informed that what is said in the counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the student UNLESS the counsellor feels there is a danger to themselves or anyone else. Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse. (See Child Protection Guidelines)

The Guidance Counsellor receives professional support by means of regular meetings with a trained counselling supervisor.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date:

Date

Date of next review: