



Patrician High School

The very spring and root of honesty
and virtue live in good education

SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELLING POLICY

AIM OF THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE SERVICE

The school guidance counselling service is administered by a professionally trained School Guidance Counsellor. The SGC, as part of a school team, focuses primarily on the personal and social, educational and vocational development of his/her students. The aim of the service is to professionally answer the guidance and counselling needs of the student (the central figure in the learning process) in the context of the overall school mission. (School mission statement included)

The Guidance Counselling Service includes:

COUNSELLING

Counselling is an interactive learning process between counsellor and student, whether individual or group, which approaches, in a holistic way, personal, educational and/or vocational issues. Moreover, the availability of a counselling service can support individual students inside/outside the classroom context, the pastoral and the disciplinary structures in the school. Competitiveness, bullying, social exclusion, family crisis, scholastic under-achievement, abuse, homophobia, peer pressure, substance mis-use and racism are some of the problems which can be assisted with the support of counselling.

Individual Counselling - is an interactive process, which facilitates meaningful understanding of the self and environment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour.

Group Counselling - is a broad term covering types of counselling for more than two people. In group counselling members listen to, support and challenge each other and thus, learn to be open, constructive, and assertive and to experience how others see them.

Peer Counselling - occurs on limited and well prepared occasions where pupils help and support each other on topics educational and vocational but not necessarily on personal issues.

It is essential that a counselling service within the school operates in collaboration with processes within the school, which promotes the wellbeing of the school, particularly pastoral and disciplinary

teams. Working within the requirements of The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors Code of Ethics for legitimate practice, ensures that the service is properly supervised and monitored so that the student needs are prioritised and their rights protected. The service would be both reflective of, and in line with, the Dept. of Health and Children's National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children First (1999) and with the recent Dept. of Education and Science Guidelines on Child Protection (2004)

DEVELOPMENT

The SGC along with other specialised teachers i.e. Religion, SPHE, Year Heads, Class Tutors, TY and LCVP Co-ordinators facilitate and partake in developmental programmes designed to help students with their personal/social, educational and vocational development.

In personal/social development the programmes would include personal and social skills, self-awareness, decision-making skills, planning and health promotion.

In educational development the programmes would include subject/course/level choices, motivation and learning and study skills/exam techniques.

In vocational development the programmes would include employment opportunity awareness. Educational and training courses, higher and technical education choices and job search skills.

CONSULTATION

SGC consultation is provided by and to significant adults in the student's life. These adults include the school principal, the deputy principal, year heads, pastoral team, external agencies and parents. These consultations - advice, information or counselling - must always recognise the primacy of the student's integrity and the need to maintain appropriate confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All students have a right to confidentiality in their dealings with the SGC. The right is not universal, however, and there are some cases in which - for the student's best interest - confidentiality cannot be guaranteed e.g. in the case of abuse, bullying, and risk to another student's life. In counselling the student, the counsellor should make the student aware that confidentiality could not be guaranteed in any of the above cases and that information of this nature would have to be referred on. In short, students who meet with the SGC will be informed of the following

- 1) All things discussed are confidential between the student and the SGC except when the student himself or another person is at risk
- 2) Any information which highlights that the student or another person is in danger.
- 3) If the student is in danger of doing grievous harm to himself.

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS

Ethical awareness is a prerequisite for the SGC. He/she is obliged to operate, in policy, process and practice in an ethical manner. The SGC's primary focus is the welfare of the student and he/she is ethically bound to act in the best interest of the student. The counsellor must act within the law and within the ethical guidelines as outlined by his/her profession. The SGC is expected to be competent in and mindful of the legal and ethical responsibilities of his/her work. Furthermore, the SGC is ethically obliged to seek out new developments in the personal, educational and vocational fields with a view to improving the overall counselling service to the student.

INFORMATION

Information is an essential component of the SGC's portfolio. The SGC must be involved with

- *Information gathering
- *Information organisation
- *Information dissemination.

The main function of the above is to provide as much information as possible on the widest range of options open to the student.

The SGC needs to be familiar with

- 1) The requirements of students' parents, pastoral structures and school administration e.g. a familiarity with the whole school body and its extensions into the community
- 2) The sources of useful information locally and nationally e.g. relevant I.T. programmes, newspapers, essential addresses etc.
- 3) Systems for acquiring, storing and disseminating information e.g. an adequate careers library, appropriate student and parental access to pertinent useful information etc.
- 4) Methods of processing and using information for the student in an integrated way e.g. making it clear, understandable and student friendly.

The goal of the information service is to help the student in decision making processes, problem solving and with skills enhancement directed towards the ever-changing circumstances of their own development.

PREPARATION

The SGC is involved in preparation of transitions with the students at different stages of the student's secondary education

- 1) The incoming first year might find the move to a large second level school very off-putting, not to say, intimidating. Help with adjustment to his new educational environment would be part of the SGC's brief.

2) Students leaving school after the Junior Cert. to take up apprenticeships, further training etc.

3) The junior cycle student, moving into transition/fifth year will need preparation regarding subject levels, work experience and the importance of decision-making now for his future.

4) The Leaving Cert. classes have been prepared since transition/fifth year for this stage. However, preparation for the actual leaving of school must now intensify. Information is the key factor in sixth year along with one to one counselling. The student must be properly prepared for post-schooling options e.g. employment, training, further education, emigration, unemployment and ways to circumvent it.

The SGC alone will not be able to deal with the totality of preparation necessary in a second level school. However, preparation for transitions can be successfully undertaken as a member of a team, which includes parents, pastoral care members, co-ordinators of TY and LCVP, employers and training & services agencies.

TEAM

The SGC is a member of an overall educational team which includes subject teachers, class tutors, year heads, deputy-principal, principal, specialist teachers P.E. Religion, Learning Support, S.P.H.E., C.S.P.E., school chaplain and ancillary staff. Furthermore, the SGC, in conjunction with staff and management, will be central to and supportive of pastoral teams and policies which attempt comprehensively to deal with in-school issues e.g. anti-bullying, substance abuse, crisis response, bereavement, child protection etc.

REFERRAL

Referral is, in essence, a two way process. The SGC may refer and he/she in turn may be the recipient of referrals. Referrals may come to the SGC from parents, staff, principal or deputy-principal. Students who are referred to the SGC cannot be forced to attend and their choice must be respected. If, however, a student is referred and comes to the SGC their presence will be acknowledged and welcomed.

The SGC, in consultation with the relevant parties - parents, principal, relevant staff -, may also refer a student to an external, appropriately qualified professional. A legitimate referral (one made with the received permission of the necessary people e.g. parents) may occur after the SGC has made an informed decision that the student's situation requires assistance beyond the SGC's professional training. Assistance for students may be sought for problems such as learning difficulties, substance abuse, addiction, bereavement and personal crisis from agencies such as the student's GP, the NEHB, NEPS, Educational Welfare Officer and the Junior Liaison Officer of the Gardaí.

* Parents must be informed of and permission sought for a referral by the SGC to an external agency e.g. Health Board, Educational Psychologist etc. c.f Appendix 1

ASSESSMENT

Psychological and educational assessments/tests are useful insofar as they provide information for the SGC and others for whom it is relevant. Judicious use of test information is helpful in predicting academic and occupational performance, classifying ability, assessing remediation requirements and levels of achievement. Assessment results are important. Yet, their dissemination is of equal or greater importance. In returning the results of a student's assessment, the SGC must be aware of the confidentiality and sensitivities of the student and the manner in which the SGC shares the information with the student.

Tests may include: Personality tests, Aptitude tests, Interest inventories, Problem checklist, General ability tests, Performance tests, School exam results and Public exam results.

RECORD KEEPING

Records of counselling sessions should be kept to a minimum. It is also advisable for the SGC to use one's own personal notation if records are to be kept.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

The SGC is mindful of his/her obligations to management, staff and students alike and recognises that he/she is responsible for the school guidance service throughout the school. The counsellor discusses with and informs both staff and students of information that is relevant and pertinent to their situations.

MULTICULTURAL GUIDANCE COUNSELLING

Multi culture is a facet of modern school life. The SGC will encounter multi culture on a daily basis and must be aware of that. The SGC operates from his/her own cultural background and recognises that each student he/she encounters, is operating from and in his own cultural network. The SGC best serves his/her students if he/she recognises that multi culture is not a narrow ethnic or racial band. Multi culture, rather, is finely woven through society in strands e.g. gender, age, physical and mental disability, religious belief or socio-economic grouping. For the SGC awareness of, acceptance of and a willingness to learn more about different cultures informs his/her counselling.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

With regard to the school guidance service, each class should be visited at the beginning of the school year to inform them or remind them of the school guidance service. Particular attention

should be paid by the SGC in introducing the elements of the service to the first year classes. It is important that the availability of the service is made known to them, as it will be a new educational resource to incoming first years. Students are to be informed or reminded of the procedure of using a guidance slip to leave class.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

It is important that parents are made to feel free and welcome to come and visit the guidance counsellor. An appointment system is the best operational mode in this way. Alternatively, a phone call from parents over a concern can be accommodated quickly. Also, as part of overall school information dissemination e.g. school notices, parent-teacher meetings, open nights, enrolment days etc. information regarding guidance and counselling is made available as required.

INFORMATION FOR STAFF MEMBERS

Transparency is the key word for the SGC in dealing with colleagues. Particularly with regard to students who have educational, physical, social, behavioural problems. Bearing in mind the SGC's obligation to confidentiality he/she should consciously and freely make available all relevant information about students to his/her colleagues. Information and new developments in guidance are to be shared with and made available to staff members. Enquiries are to be encouraged and a sense of inclusivity fostered.

December 1st 2004

APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF PERMISSION

I THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OFCLASS/YEAR
HAVING CONFERRED WITHGIVE PERMISSION TO MY/OUR SON
.....TO ATTEND/ MEET WITH.....

Parent/Guardian.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 2

COUNSELLING APPOINTMENT

I.....THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OF.....CLASS/YEAR.....

GIVE PERMISSION TO MY/OUR SON TO MEET WITH THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR FOR
COUNSELLING.

Parent/Guardian.....

Date.....