

SCHOOL GUIDANCE POLICY

Banagher College, Colaiste na Sionna.

Introduction

Banagher College is an amalgamated school, the two schools La Sainte Union Convent and St. Rynaghs Community College amalgamated in September 2007. It is a mixed Community College of around 500 pupils. The school offers one PLC course in secretarial studies currently. We moved into our new school in Sept 2010.

We offer students JCSP, LCA, TY and LCVP. We have a newly appointed Chaplain. The school has two Guidance Counsellors who are in separate buildings but who are working as a team.

Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 states that a school:

'shall use its available resources toensure 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 characteristics 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 students at all stages of their school life.

OBJECTIVES

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 Banagher College, Colaiste na Sionna and concludes after the student has left the school.

AIM OF 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 (timetable permitting); skills development (e.g. planning, decision making, study skills, communications and values) and vocational preparation.

Other existing programmes which address *Guidance Issues* include:

- Pastoral Care
- Social, Personal and Health Education
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Religious Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education

- The School Tutor/Year Head Programme
- Transition year Programmes which include:
 1. Educational skills (preparation for Leaving Certificate subject choice)
 2. Offaly Outreach Project (Careers and Third Level Courses)
 3. Information and communications technology (eg. ECDL)
 4. Religion and Personal Studies
 5. Work experience
 6. Other TY options; e.g. Entrepreneurship/Working with people with disabilities.
- Other Main stream subjects.

Planning and Organising Workplace Learning: this may involve work experience, work shadowing, visits to work places, colleges and higher education institutes, career preparation etc.

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; Tutor; Year Head; 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.

Referral includes two types of activity:

- Referral of an individual student by the *Guidance Counsellor* to other professionals outside the school, e.g. NEPS
- Referral of an individual student to the *Guidance Counsellor* by self, other students, teachers, school management and parents. The voluntary participation of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION:

Information is an important component in guidance. As information is continually changing Information Technology has a vital role to play in providing up-to-date information on career issues and for application to the CAO and UCAS systems.

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 Guidance 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 Banagher College, Colaiste na Sionna it has been recognised for many years that all staff has 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 particularly effective.

Through the Pastoral Care structure, staff meet students as part of their tutor time every morning and help deal with issues that may arise for the students. 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 pastoral/caring role.

There is a pastoral care approach to deal with issues such as bullying, school attendance/punctuality, behaviour and progress in school (see relevant school policies).

The Guidance Counsellor plays a very important role in co-coordinating the school guidance programme. The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the school's Student Support team and works with Tutors, Year Heads, Subject Teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal. On a regular basis the Guidance Counsellor reports to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

A student support meeting is held weekly. The Support Team includes the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Learning Support Teacher, a Year Head, Guidance Counsellors and a subject teacher. This team provides a collaborative approach to Pastoral Care in the school.

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

A 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.

REVIEW

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

THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR AT BANAGHER COLLEGE, COLAISTE NA SIONNA.

The Guidance Counsellor is seen as the central person responsible for the continuous developmental guidance process which begins on entry of the student to Banagher College, Colaiste na Sionna 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, Tutor, Learning Support teacher, Subject

teachers, SNA's, and parents as appropriate.

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 include

- Publicising to the students and at parents' meetings the role of the Guidance Counsellor and the counsellor's availability to individual students for consultation at any time, 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 and is also a member of the Student Support Committee of the school.
- Every student in Fifth and Sixth Year 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 in Third Year 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 an Educational Skills course to all Transition Year students in rotation. The topics covered include interest inventories, preparation for subject choice for the Leaving Certificate, information on the education system and an explanation of the wide variety of 3rd 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 Fifth Year which is timetabled for one period a week and is assisted by the teaching staff of the LCVP programme 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, and study skills.
- Personal and career related matters. Follow up meetings and telephone conversations also take place between the Counsellor, students and parents as required.
 - The *Guidance Counsellor* takes responsibility for advising the students on the completion of UCAS applications to the British third level system.

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING

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

- Liaising with the Principal and Year Heads concerning pupils who require intervention.
- Offering those pupils counselling with regard to study techniques, educational planning and personal organisation.
- Providing guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progress through meetings, e.g. prior to Transition Year, prior to the Leaving Certificate course and a few months before the Leaving Certificate examinations.
- Being available to pupils who have left the school to offer advice after the Leaving Certificate results have been issued, i.e. at the beginning of the new school term.
- Liaise with the Learning Support department to identify students requiring further attention.

COUNSELLING - CONFIDENTIALITY

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

- Personal problems
- Family problems
- Relationship problems
- Coping skills
- Motivation
- Making Choices
- Transition to 3rd 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 their son/daughter. Students are encouraged to discuss their problem with their parent/guardian 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 counselor and the student UNLESS the counsellor feels there is a danger to themselves (including eating disorders) or anyone else. Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse (Child Protection Guidelines definition applies here).

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

Claire Kenny and Lily Kinahan.
Guidance Counsellors.

Nov 08.

Reviewed September 2009

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