

Guidance / Careers' Policy

Introduction

The Provision of Guidance is a statutory requirement under the Education Act, 1998. Part II, section 9: 'A recognised school shall....use its available resources toensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices'.

This Guidance/Careers' Policy seeks to encompass, and achieve a balance between, the following 3 separate but interlinked areas: (i) personal and social development, (ii) educational guidance and (iii) career guidance.

Counselling forms a key part of the school's guidance programme. The Guidance Counsellor is available at all times to assist students in their personal, social, educational and career development. He operates an open-door policy for pupils in need of help or information and shall meet any parent/guardian, by appointment. Moreover, the school has been largely instrumental in the setting up of 'Teen Counselling Ballygall'. This provides a direct, convenient and confidential counselling service for students of the local schools.

The fact that the Guidance Counsellor's position in St Kevin's is currently a part-time one means that the successful implementation of this policy shall require a high degree of involvement on the part of the wider school staff.

Induction of New Pupils

The annual Open-Night removes some of the mystery for prospective students and begins their induction process. The Primary School indoor soccer league that the school organises each year for the 5th classes in our main feeder schools also helps as does the fact that many of our students will have brothers, cousins, friends and neighbours who are current or past pupils of the school.

The process leading up to a student taking his place in one of our 1st Year classes is carefully structured:

- Parents of incoming 1st Years are notified in writing of an induction night in February. All are expected to attend. At this meeting, the Principal deals with the school's ethos and 'Mission Statement'; the Guidance Counsellor introduces himself and spells out his role; the HSCL teacher introduces himself and clarifies the nature of his work in the school; he also deals with the transition from primary to secondary, highlighting ways in which the new pupils can be helped to cope; a Year-Head outlines the school's pastoral care system; the subjects available to the students, not just in 1st Year, but throughout the school, are explained as is the rationale behind the inclusion of the various subjects in the school's curriculum; our reasons for streaming in Junior Cycle are explained as are our justifications for our compulsory

Transition Year. After the meeting, parents have the opportunity to have their son measured for his school uniform.

- Both the incoming student and his parent(s) / guardian(s) must attend on Registration Day. This presents a further opportunity for questions to be asked and reassurances to be given.
- All incoming 1st Years sit assessment tests. These tests are not used to exclude students. Their purpose is to ensure that each new student is put into the class best suited to his ability. The relevant primary school teachers may also be consulted during this process.
- A Non-Reading Intelligence Test [NRT] forms part of the assessment test. This is used to help identify special needs students who are then referred to the Educational Psychologist. Resource hours are sought for those who are shown to qualify for them.
- Parents / guardians of each student receive an information pack containing a book list and other essential information relating to the school's policies, structures and organisation.
- The first day of the new school year is set aside as an orientation day for the new 1st Years. They alone attend on that day and they have an opportunity to meet their new classmates, see their classroom, get to know the layout of the school, receive their timetables and have the pastoral care system and the various school rules and regulations explained to them.
- Early in the new school year, the Home-School Liaison teacher holds a meeting for the parents/guardians of the students in each 1st Year class group. This provides an opportunity for the parents/guardians to draw attention to any problems that their sons might be experiencing.
- This teacher also visits each home to meet the parent(s)/guardian(s). These home visitations are intended to build bonds of trusts between the home and the school.

A Form Teacher is assigned to each class group, as part of the school's pastoral care programme. The Form Teacher seeks to establish a positive and supportive relationship with each student and with the class as a whole. The Form Teacher is particularly sensitive to bullying and any other such problems within the group and he/she tries to ensure that the transition to secondary-school is as smooth as possible.

Junior Cycle

Starting in 1st year, all students have to draw up a study plan and keep a study notebook. This is monitored at the weekly class assembly.

Very early in the school year, the Guidance Counsellor administers the Drumcondra Reasoning Test [DRT] to all the new 1st Years. The findings of these tests are compared with those of the assessment test to help identify those students who may be placed in an inappropriate class.

The DRT is the first of two tests administered by the Guidance Counsellor in Junior Cycle [See below]. The DRT is followed by a one-to-one interviews when the Guidance Counsellor begins to compile a confidential file on each student. Non-confidential information may be passed on to the Principal and/or teachers, where the Guidance Counsellor feels this is in the best interests of the pupil.

The Guidance Counsellor administers the Differential Aptitude Tests [DATS] to all 3rd Years. This is followed by an interview at which the student's strengths and weaknesses are highlighted as an aid to meaningful subject choices being made for 5th Year.

All 3rd Year students, early in that school year, do a study skills course which deals with effective study techniques, note-taking and time management skills. [These courses are repeated in 5th and 6th year].

Every effort is made to encourage and support the efforts of the Social, Personal and Health Education [SPHE] and Religious Education [RE] teachers, an important element of whose work is to foster the personal and social development of all the students.

Transition Year

Such activities as debating, drama, coaching skills and adventure pursuits as well as RE ensure that the focus of much of the Transition Year curriculum is on personal and social development.

The Transition Year curriculum is also designed to help the students select their Leaving Certificate options. This process is facilitated by the teachers providing information on the content and syllabus demands of their particular subject.

Fundraising and other activities on behalf of various charities during Transition Year help make the students more aware of the needs of others.

The one day a week work experience, which is an integral part of the TY programme, is intended to provide students with an opportunity to investigate a career of their choice. This involves preparation, job seeking and ongoing evaluation of the experience.

5th & 6th Year

All students are encouraged to choose their Leaving Certificate subjects only after consultation with (i) their parents (ii) the subject teachers and (iii) the Guidance Counsellor.

Those whose subject choices make them eligible for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme [LCVP] are strongly encouraged to undertake that programme and all its benefits are fully explained to them.

The world of work is central to LCVP and all participants in the programme do one week's work experience during 5th Year.

The focus of the Guidance Counsellor is mainly on career choices during these two years:

- Arranging attendance at College and Post Leaving Certificate [PLC] Open Days.
- Keeping in regular contact with Universities, Institutes of Technology, Private Colleges and various institutions which organise PLC courses, thus ensuring that all students have access to up-to-date and accurate information.
- Inviting speakers to address the students on various careers.
- Helping students to complete CAO and UCAS forms.
- Maintaining and updating a careers' notice board and diary.