

## Coláiste Éanna

### SCHOOL GUIDANCE POLICY

*Colaiste Eanna is a Catholic School, for boys, in the tradition of Blessed Edmund Rice. As a community, we aim to nurture mutual respect among all members in a safe environment. The personal, social, spiritual and academic development of all is promoted. The school is committed to providing an ordered learning environment, which encourages the school community to realize its full potential.*

#### **Colaiste Eanna Mission Statement**

*The hallmarks of an Edmund Rice school are care, especially for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in any way and action for social and ecological justice.*

#### **Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter, p17.**

This Guidance Policy demonstrates a commitment to provide Pastoral Care and Guidance to the students and teachers in their charge and the intention of Colaiste Eanna to discharge its responsibility under the Education Act (1998), Section (9) Subsection (c) which states that:

.....schools must ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.

#### Objectives

Department of Education and Skills Circular 09/2012 states

*Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses three separate but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance. (Section 1.4, P3): personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance.( Section 1.4,P3)*

Circular 09/2012 goes on to state that...(the need for schools) to ensure that the guidance counsellor has one to one time towards meeting the counselling needs of the students facing emotional difficulties or crisis (Section 4.3)

This commitment is made despite the provisions of Budget 2012 which removed the ex-quota status long held by Career Guidance Counsellors.

Guidance is provided through the school guidance programme. The guidance programme is the specific set of learning experiences, which a school provides in response to the guidance needs of its students. The school guidance plan is the document in which the school, in a systematic way, defines the guidance programme it offers, and states how resources are organised to deliver the programme.

The fundamental purpose of this School Guidance Plan has been to:

- Identify accurately the needs of students
- Define outcomes
- Define the priorities of delivery
- Determine resources

- Address gaps in delivery and/or resources
- Review and Evaluate

#### POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND RECENT INITIATIVES/STUDIES

This School Guidance Policy is part of the Coláiste Éanna Whole School Development Planning and intersects, links and overlaps with elements of the Pastoral Care, SPHE, RE, Anti-Bullying, Code of Behaviour, Substance Abuse, Child Protection, Relationships and Sexuality Education Policies.

This School Guidance Policy is aware of and informed by the legislative requirements of:

The Education Act (1998)

The Education Welfare Act (2000)

The Equal Status Act (2000)

#### ESTABLISHED FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME INCLUDE:

Aims of the guidance programme linked to school mission and aims.

Guidance Curriculum/Syllabus (first to sixth year).

Substance misuse policy.

Anti-bullying policy.

SPHE (see school planning folder)

RSE (see school planning folder)

Child protection policy

Student appointment procedures

Pastoral Care (see school planning folder)

Psychometric testing procedures.

Subject choice procedures.

Confidentiality policy.

Student information and records.

Other policies.

#### BALANCING THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

In this school much of the balance which exists between the Junior and Senior Guidance Programme is dependent on strong professional/personal links with School Management, Staff, Parents and Students alike.

##### Principal

The Principal deals with the Board of Management (BOM) in regard to students' welfare and discipline. Referrals from the Year Heads go through the Principal to the BOM.

He/ She maintains regular contact with Teachers, students and parents as and when necessary. The Principal oversees the Whole School Programme of which Guidance Counselling is an important component.

### Deputy Principal

The deputy principal (DP) is involved in the welfare of all students throughout their years in Coláiste Éanna. The DP monitors the progress and welfare of each student- from first year to graduation. The DP works with the principal, year heads, guidance counsellor, subject coordinators and teachers and suggest/ supports /makes interventions where necessary.

Meeting the academic and pastoral needs of each student is an important part of the deputy principal's role.

### The Year Head

The year head keeps an eye on the overall progress of his/her students e.g. journal, general demeanour, liaises with parents, subject teachers, learning support groups and guidance counsellor. The 1<sup>st</sup>. year head oversees the transition of students from primary to secondary level helping them to settle in especially those who are struggling in trying to make adjustment. All this is carried in a structured, disciplined and pastoral way.

### Tutor

The role of tutor demands greater contact/ understanding of the students and their behaviour than is demanded of the subject teacher. It allows a better chance of relating to students and may prove helpful to a student coping with difficulties as they arise. The tutor works in close collaboration with the year head.

### Learning Support

This department supports students with learning difficulties. All incoming students to Coláiste Éanna sit standardised literacy and numerical assessments and the results indicate students who may be eligible to attend. In addition, where teachers observe difficulties they liaise with the learning support teacher. It is our policy to bring every child to their full literacy potential in order to assist their learning throughout the curriculum. We believe that early intervention is the key to improvement and success.

Students entering Coláiste Éanna whose needs have been diagnosed during their time in Primary School are allocated resource teaching time in accordance with the recommendations indicated in their report. As learning support or resource teaching is provided by withdrawing students from main stream classes great care is taken in the allocation of these periods to their timetables.

Students usually attend lesson in pairs or small groups with their teacher. During these lessons they follow literacy and/or numeracy programmes as required. It may also be appropriate to offer students time to work on the development of their social skills.

Coláiste Éanna has begun the process of constructing planning documents for individual students.

Lessons with students in third year and Senior Cycle focus on curriculum support. Working in their small groups students are prepared for their formal exam experience. Planning and using study timetables, revision methods and practicing exam techniques are all part of the support programme.

Students who are eligible for Reasonable Accommodations in their certificate exams are prepared in the use of assistive technology where appropriate. The department liaises with parents and outside agencies such as the State Examinations Commission, when applying for Reasonable Accommodations in certificate exams, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and others.

### Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. (L.C.V.P.)

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (L.C.V.P.) was introduced in 1994, in response to the challenge placed on Ireland's educational system by a changing work and business environment. The programme combines the academic strength of the Leaving Certificate (established) with a new and dynamic focus on self-directed learning, enterprise, work and the community. This two year programme is part of an expanded

provision that aims to cater for the diversity of participants, needs at senior cycle. Throughout the programme students are encouraged to be innovative and enterprising, take responsibility for their own learning, adapt to changing circumstances, evaluate data and devise solutions to problems, communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively, work with others as part of a team, investigate local and business and community enterprises, and learn from the experiences of others. These skills and qualities are relevant to the needs of those preparing for further education, seeking employment or planning to start their own business. Active teaching and learning methodologies, such as work-shadowing placements, career investigations, recorded video interviews, business and community visits, are key parts of the programme. Guidance Counsellor is available to help students with their projects.

### Special Needs Assistant

Special needs assistants provide particular support to our students with their special needs.

### Subject Teachers

In their capacity as teachers, subject teachers interact with students in other than academic areas and by employing a pastoral approach affect student's welfare in a positive way. RSE, extra-curricular programmes, anti-bullying and other school policies are in place to improve the student's well-being. Debating teams, sport coaching and extra curricular activities all improve the quality of relationships within the school.

### Particular aims of the guidance programme in Junior cycle.

- Self-esteem and motivation
- Guidance support for school attendance strategies.
- Exploration of personal/career issues.
- Raising awareness of the consequence of early school leaving.
- Raising awareness of the options open to students after completing the Leaving Certificate; Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.
- Study skills and examination techniques.
- Exploration of Multiple Intelligence
- Transition of students from primary to secondary school; from junior to senior school; potential school leavers.

### First Years

Incoming First Years.

Term 1 (February) - before students come to school.

Guidance Counsellor contacts Principals of all Primary schools (by letter preceded by a phone call) to ask for relevant information on any students who may be in need of Learning Support, Special needs support and support for EAL students. This information is in addition to the results of standardised tests sent by the primary schools as per circular 56/2012.

This often requires follow up requests and discussions with Principals and in some cases with parents in order to get copies of psychological reports or other relevant tests. These are assembled by the guidance counsellor and passed on to the principal.

Term 2/early term 3.

Assessment session on a Saturday morning is organised, along with the help of the main special needs teacher, for incoming students. A letter is posted to the parents of each individual student informing them of the time and date. A text message is sent closer to the date to confirm attendance at assessment.

Tests:

AH2, AH3 and GR 2 tests are administered. AH2 and AH3 are sent to ERC for machine correction.

Term 3. School visits.

When these results are available- the Guidance Counsellor makes an appointment with each primary school to come and meet with the sixth class teachers and, in most cases, with the school principal, plus where applicable home/school liaison person.

At these meetings- the individual student's academic performance as well as personal circumstances are discussed. This information given in confidence, to be shared on a strictly need to know basis with relevant staff.

Induction of new students.

On first day students are shown around the school by various members of staff-Guidance Counsellor not involved

From week one until the end of September , the Guidance Counsellor visits each first year group to help with issues effecting students on transition to secondary, e.g.

Coping with school rules and a discussion on the purpose of rules.

Coping with home-work.

Coping with a wide variety of teachers.

Awareness of others and being inclusive.

Each first year student has an individual meeting with the Guidance Counsellor.

Late September/Early October

Guidance Counsellor holds information meetings with Year Heads of each individual first year group to give them some background information on students and to answer any queries. These meetings are in conjunction with the special needs co-ordinator who outlines which students are getting extra support plus the nature and extent of that support.

Outline information will already have been given at an earlier staff meeting-to indicate any circumstances or needs which are deemed important to communicate to all teachers from the start (codes are used to aid confidentiality.)

The Guidance Counsellor does not have any further structured contact with first years but visits the classes briefly on an ad hoc basis to keep in touch with students. The Guidance Counsellor, where possible, liases with the year head regarding the welfare of students. Regular contact with the special needs teacher is maintained to keep in touch with the students in question.

Information evening for parents/guardians of 1<sup>st</sup> year students:

This meeting is held at the end of September or early October. The principal, deputy principal, year head and guidance counsellor are present. The role of guidance counsellor is explained and general information on the school day and year is given. Topics such as homework, school rules, the proper use of the school journal and extra-curricular activities are also discussed.

Second Year.

1. Maintain contact with students as in first year.
2. Continue to work on all aspects of the work begun in first year
3. Be prepared to assist in dealing with disruptive students –especially now that students know their way around and do not have the pressure of exams ( collaboration with year head and other teachers here)
4. Encourage students not to waste this year but to use it to take the pressure off the exams i.e.third year, by working well this year (study skills review.)

### Third Year.

No formal classes are timetabled but the Guidance Counsellor undertakes the following activities:

#### Term 1.

The third years are visited upon their return to school at the end of August or very early in September and at various times throughout the year. They are reminded about making appointments to see the guidance counsellor. They are told about choices for senior cycle-to explain about DATS and Interest Inventories. The student fills in a guidance sheet that gives an overview of their interest, achievements as well as their hopes for the future.

One or two classes are taken with each 3<sup>rd</sup> year group to talk about study skills and time management.

#### Term 2.

Dats are carried out in mid/late January, sometimes all together, sometimes in two groups depending on how many students there are in third year. The sheets are prepared with each class, in advance, to ensure that they understand the whole process.

Staff are consulted, in advance, and times are chosen to cause least disruption.

Tests are sent to ERC for machine correction.

Interest Inventory are also done in class. Individual interviews are done in the February/March period with each third year to look at what they do next. Priority is given to those who are definitely going on to fifth year to allow more time to discuss subject choice and possible future careers.

#### Term 3.

Subject choices are explained to the students and the concept of open choice at the start of the process. It is also explained to them why they may not get all the subjects they request because of blocking. The guidance counsellor helps the deputy principal in devising “trial blocks,”i.e. various combination of subject options that seem to suit student needs and be workable in terms of staffing and time-tabling.

A subject seminar is held during this term where each student receives a booklet on the course contents of each subject for senior cycle. There are normally two sessions for this seminar as it is hoped to keep the numbers to around 45 students.

At this time, some students become quite anxious and return frequently to advice about their choices.

### Information evening for the parents/guardians of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.

This meeting is usually held at the end of September. The principal, deputy principal, year head and guidance counsellor are present. The role of the guidance counsellor is explained again to the assembly. Topics such as homework, study, school rules, house and mock exams are discussed.

### Transition Year-Guidance Counselling

The guidance counsellor provides one class a week (timetabled) to the transition year students. Within these classes a number of guidance counselling issues are unpacked such as: career exploration, curriculum vitae preparation, the world of work, completing application forms, interview skills etc. A work experience module is provided to transition year students for two by two week interlude during the year.

#### Fifth Year.

##### Term 1.

The guidance counsellor takes fifth years once in the first term for up-dating with regard to what each student is doing and to ascertain where problems may exist. They do an inventory to indicate how they rate job satisfaction. Those who have not done T.Y. are required to do a career investigation.

##### Term 2.

The guidance counsellor takes classes with each class group to discuss and support with study skills-they are advised to go to the guidance counsellor if they have particular problems.

##### Term 3.

Guidance counsellor takes several classes with fifth years to explain what is available for them after school-the types of schemes, courses, levels of application and systems of application.

The students are also seen individually to help them through self-awareness exercises and to advise them on career and job possibilities.

Guest speakers are invited in from the various universities and I.T. colleges to speak to the 5<sup>th</sup> years about courses offered.

#### Sixth Year Students.

The school guidance counsellor attends year heads/teachers meetings and meets the sixth years on a one to one basis throughout the year covering educational, personal and career issues. Guest speakers are invited into the school during the year in relation to careers and course opportunities. The guidance counsellor supplies a listing of career events, college open days for the forthcoming year in September. Sixth year students and the school guidance counsellor attend the Higher Options Exhibition which showcases Irish and UK colleges and courses.

#### Information evening for the parents/ guardians of the 6<sup>th</sup> year students

This meeting usually takes place at the end of September. The principal, deputy-principal, year head and guidance counsellor address the assembly. Topics such as homework, study, school rules, house and mock exams are discussed.

#### Staff Meetings

Staff meetings are concerned in the main with student's welfare and provide yet another forum for collaboration between the school guidance counsellor, school management and other staff.

#### Subject Meetings

Improve the quality of teacher interaction and quality of deliverance and content of subject. The school guidance counsellor is notified as and when appropriate as a result of these meetings.

#### Staff Development Days for guidance counsellor

These largely deal with issues concerning staff and students' welfare, improving the quality and well-being for both e.g. Child Protection Act

#### In-Service.

Teachers periodically do in-service seminars e.g. mixed ability teaching, anti-bullying, as well as every subject on the curriculum.

#### Counselling

Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis here in Colaiste Eanna as part of a developmental learning or group process and at moments of personal crisis. At this school, counselling is understood to have as its objectives the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve any difficulties they may be experiencing. Counselling in this school may include: personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or any combination of these. On occasion (as mentioned above) referral is deemed to be the most suitable course of action. Some of the issues which have come to attention in this department in the last number of years include:

- Substance abuse
- Stress
- Gang pressure/involvement
- Bullying
- Death of a family member or friend
- Family separation/divorce
- Sexual abuse
- Fears about making career decisions
- Financial problems
- Peer relationships
- Study skills-personal difficulties
- Transferring from one country/school to another
- Disability issues/Multicultural issues

#### Parent/Teacher Meetings

Each year has a Parent Teacher Meeting. This is an effective method of exchange information on individual students. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students have their parent/teacher meetings during the first term with 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year parent/teacher meetings held in the second term.

#### Careers' and CAO information evening

This event usually takes place in October after school hours.

The guidance counsellor surveys the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students early in September about the areas of interest for their future careers. The information is e-mailed to two past pupils who in turn contact former pupils of the school to find out if they are available to attend the information evening. A guest speaker addresses the students after which they are free to speak to the past pupils who are seated in different rooms and locations around the school. There is usually a very high turn out for this event.

Three guest speakers are invited in to the school to speak to the parents of 6<sup>th</sup> years about the various courses on offer in their respective colleges and universities e.g. I.T.Tallaght, NUI Maynooth and Ballsbridge College of Further Education.

The CAO System of applying to colleges is explained to them.

Volunteers from the Parents' association prepare light refreshments and sandwiches for the guests and staff.

#### On-going planning

In relation to the reports/meetings outlined below-these meetings are currently carried out by means of person to person contact or are the focus of on-going planning and evaluation within the 'Whole School Plan'. Regular staff meetings including Year Head meetings; Subject meetings; Parent/Teacher meetings and feedback thereof in consultation with school management.

#### Development Section/Areas for development.

Priorities identified include:

1. Developing a careers module for second years.
2. Improving the transfer programme for incoming first years.
3. Expanding the counselling referral system for the school
4. Developing a school policy for Open Days for the senior pupils.

#### EVALUATION /PLANS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELLING FUNCTION.

The following areas have been identified by the School Guidance Counselling Service (SGC) as being in need of some re-evaluation and change within Coláiste Éanna. This work is being entered into with the full support/collaboration of School Management Team, SPHE Coordinator, Special Needs Coordinator, Year Heads and Subject Teachers.

1. Transition of students between Primary and Secondary School.
2. Counselling Provision within Coláiste Éanna.
3. Pastoral Care Team/System.

The SGC department currently provides counselling to students under the headings:

Personal and social.  
Educational  
Vocational.

Much of the personal and social counselling is provided within the school to students who are referred by School Management, Year Heads, Class Tutors, Parents or by students themselves. Each student in the school is made aware from first year that they are able to come to the SGC should they need to do so by requesting an appointment directly or by asking another member of staff to refer them.

SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR'S SUPPORT NETWORK

SGC SUPERVISION GROUP/ON-GOING IN-SERVICE TRAINING.

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

IGC, NCGE, NEPS, DES (GUIDANCE), IAPCE, NCCA

ON-GOING EVALUATION OF THE COUNSELLING PROGRAM

In terms of auditing/assessing the School Guidance Counselling service, evaluation is seen as an essential tool which will enable the person in his /her role as guidance counsellor to determine the following:

1. Major strengths of the school guidance service.
2. Issues in greatest need of attention.
3. Short-term goals for improvement
4. Long term goals for improvement.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management, Coláiste Éanna, on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_