



ST PAUL'S SECONDARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE POLICY

The term 'guidance' is synonymous with the terms 'guidance counselling' and 'guidance and counselling'.

Guidance 'refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, that assists students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives' – Department of Education & Science 2005.

These learning experiences are designed to assist students to make changes consequent on these choices. These choices may be categorised into 4 separate but interlinked areas:

- Moral and Spiritual
- Personal and Social
- Educational
- Career

Rationale and Context:

Section 9 of the Education Act (1998), subsection C, states that schools must 'ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices' and subsection (d) obliges schools to 'promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students'. Paragraph 4 of DES Circular 0009/2012 sets the context for the provision of guidance in schools. It states that schools have 'autonomy' to 'allocate and manage staff' for the 'provision of guidance to students'. However, in the context of Budget 2012 when the ex-quota guidance hours were withdrawn from schools, resources now have to be deployed differently in order to achieve the outcomes desired for students.

Good guidance is essentially holistic.

The aims of the Mission Statement of St. Paul's Secondary School particularly relevant to guidance are:

- To nurture the academic and personal development of each individual in a caring and safe environment within our school community.
- To strive as a Catholic School to apply the core values of the gospel through all aspects of school life.
- To enhance the self-esteem of each individual in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Furthermore, the school ethos has as one of its aims (relevant in this context):

‘It is our wish that our pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence and with life-skills and attitudes which will enable them to lead lives satisfying to themselves and lives which may contribute to the betterment of society’.

The context for guidance in this school is that of a Faith School. The ethos and aims of St. Paul’s Secondary School’s Mission Statement are synonymous with the aims of the Guidance Programme.

Whole School Approach:

St. Paul’s Secondary School operates a whole school approach to guidance. While the guidance counsellor has primary responsibility for the design and delivery of the school’s guidance counselling programme, other members of staff have important and worthwhile contributions to make to the delivery of guidance.

A whole school approach to guidance in St. Paul’s Secondary School refers to the role of School Management, Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Tutors (where available) Guidance Counsellor, Subject Teachers, Parents, Students and Local Community.

The Board of Management and School Management team have a responsibility to ensure that provision and practice of guidance in the school is of a very high standard.

The Year Head of the year group plays a key role. He/she is the first point of contact between home and school. The Year Head is responsible for classroom demeanour, integration into school life and holistic development of each pupil in his/her care.

This is achieved through:

- Daily interaction with each student.
- Liaison with teachers of each pupil.
- Meetings with students.
- Availability to parents throughout the year.
- Meetings with Principal.
- Provision of reports for parents twice a year and in addition, on a needs basis.
- Attendance at assemblies.

The Guidance Counsellor has a professional role in each of the main areas of guidance. However, he does depend on the help and support of colleagues on the school staff. Counsellors liaise with SEN teachers, subject teachers, Principal, Deputy Principal, SPHE teachers and RE teachers.

Those teachers involved in extra-curricular activities, pastoral care and RE, have a particular relationship with the student body and play an important role in their personal, social, moral and educational development.

All staff members may consult with Guidance Counsellor on the needs of an individual student and may refer a student to the Guidance Counsellor. The Principal must be kept informed of any referral.

Parents have huge direct/indirect influence on the choices made by their son(s)/daughter(s). Parents have a major influence on the environment in which the young person lives, including values, attitudes and lifestyle. Parents can participate in the guidance process through:

- Support for school ethos, mission statement.
- Attendance at information evenings and other meetings at school.
- Contact with Year Head.
- Contact with Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Contact with Guidance Counsellor.
- Assistance in 'mock interviews'.
- The Parents' Association.

Students (through the students' council) can help to identify and establish the priorities of the guidance programme.

The local community participates through its agencies, organisations, institutions, which provide young people with resources for spiritual and moral development, career exploration, information and other forms of assistance and support.

Support refers to the support provided to parents, teachers, school principal, Board of Management and referral agencies in assisting the personal, social, career and educational development of students. Support can include advocacy on behalf of the student. Support also refers to assistance provided in the development of TYP, LCVP and SPHE programmes.

Information – assisting students to acquire, interpret and use information relevant to their personal, social, educational and career development. The Guidance Counsellor needs to know:

- a) The requirements of students, parents, teachers.
- b) The sources of useful information.
- c) Systems for acquiring, storing and disseminating information.

Referrals can be either of two types:

- a) The Guidance Counsellor referring a student to other qualified professionals inside/outside of school when a student is manifesting significant problems. Procedure for referral is through the Principal after due consultation with parents.
- b) Referral of an individual student, who is challenged personally, socially or emotionally, to the Guidance Counsellor.

Role of Guidance Counsellor:

Guidance Counsellors are trained to undertake the following tasks within the school guidance programme:

COUNSELLING, SPECIFIC CAREER EDUCATION, ASSESSMENT, SUPPORT, INFORMATION, REFERRALS, ADVICE, EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Counselling can be 'group' or 'individual' counselling. Counselling can be personal, educational, career or a combination of all three. Counselling can be part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis.

Specific Career Education provides the necessary knowledge, skills and concepts to enable students to make the transition to higher/further education, training or work. It includes preparation of Curriculum Vitae and other data for employment – including interview preparation.

Assessment refers to helping students obtain a better self-understanding through the use of psychometric tests and school examination performance; or educationally, in the school environment to the Guidance Counsellor by teachers, school management or parents.

Advice refers to making suggestions based on Guidance Counsellor's own professional and personal knowledge and experience.

Educational Development Programmes provide transfer of knowledge and skills relating to study skills, examination performance as well as choice of subjects and levels.

Professional Development:

The Guidance Counsellor should keep abreast of on-going changes in the fields of training education, work and child welfare. .

Evaluation:

Self-Appraisal allows the Guidance Counsellor ascertain whether his/her targets are achieved and to identify on-going targets.

Record Keeping:

The Guidance Counsellor keeps comprehensive records of every personal interview which is had with each student. These records are stored safely.

Structure of the Department of Guidance and Counselling:

The school has a part-time Guidance Counsellor. Since the ex-quota allocation of hours for guidance ceased, the Board of Management has had to privately employ a Guidance Counsellor for 8 hours per week in order that the students have access to Guidance.

Guidance for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Years take the form of developing students' self-awareness of their interests, skills, aptitudes and growth of self-awareness. SPHE and RE teachers, subject teachers, year head and senior management play a role here. The students are strongly encouraged to work hard at their studies and become involved in extra-curricular activities. Isolation and social withdrawal of any student is monitored and intervention follows. A study skills programme is ran for each of the years – 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year.

Students' needs for access to individual counselling/help can vary a great deal. Students who are coping well with good family support require little help. If problems arise, they can be in the following areas:

- Academic Performance which does not match ability.
- Disruptive or antisocial behaviour inside or outside the classroom.
- Problems of anxiety, stress, depression.

The Year Head and Principal play a huge role in helping students particularly juniors who present with the above problems. The role is one of talking through with the students whatever appears to impede their performance or causing distress. The aim is to provide moral support to clarify issues involved and help the student to learn better coping techniques so that they become happier within themselves and capable of achieving within their abilities.

Where problems are acute, the co-operation of parents will be needed and a referral may need to be made to outside professionals/agencies.

Transition Year is compulsory for all students. The Guidance Counsellor is timetabled to take TYs in the classroom situation.

Students spend two weeks in the year on Work Experience. They are prepared for Work Experience and write a diary during work experience.

During the Transition Year Guidance Programme – the Guidance Counsellor

- 1) Develops the students' knowledge of the subject requirements of the different career areas.
- 2) Provides students with information concerning the skills and knowledge they will acquire from taking different subjects.
- 3) Assists students in identifying subjects that match their interests, skills and aptitudes. This is helped by psychometric testing.

The local community and the community in Galway support the students through offering work experience. Parents also frequently offer work experience.

For Fifth Year, the Guidance Counsellor is timetabled to meet with each group in the classroom situation and also meets each student individually. The Guidance Counsellor, with the help of Psychometric Assessment, Career Inventories, ICT, Programme Co-Ordinators:

- Reviews students' self- awareness of interests, skills and aptitudes.
- Develops students' research skills.
- Enhances and develops students' verbal and written communication skills.
- Assists students in identifying core skills, knowledge, aptitudes required for certain jobs.

A study skills programme is also ran for 5th Year and 6th Year students.

Those students taking LCVP undergo further work experience during 5th year. The LCVP co-ordinator prepares and briefs the students for this work experience. The students complete a Work Experience report.

Career talks by visiting speakers are held throughout 5th and 6th Year.

In 6th Year:

- Open Days to Universities and Colleges are attended by students.
- UCAS forms explained and applications are made.
- CAO forms explained and applications made online.
- Useful website addresses distributed.
- Visiting lecturers from Universities, Colleges address 6th Years.
- PLC College applications explained.
- Interviews given to parents when requested.
- Careers Notice Board.
- CV preparation.
- Individual interviews with students.
- Students with learning difficulties assessed and special submissions made through CAO for special consideration in the Leaving Cert and access to 3rd level (DARE).
- Responses made to telephone calls, queries, emails on a daily basis.
- Advice given to parents/students in August.
- Grants, scholarships explained and applied for.
- A file is created and maintained on each student.

Conclusion:

The guidance offered within St. Paul's is holistic. A combination of staff guide the students needs' in a very comprehensive and holistic way. The Guidance Counsellor, SEN Department, Year Heads, SPHE/RE Teachers and Senior Management serve the students and their parents very well.

The partners in education all work together. Colleagues are supportive of the guidance programme and contribute very valuable information and advice regarding students.

Monitoring and Review:

The Guidance provision in the school is monitored on an on-going basis. The Board of Management is often made aware of the guidance provision in the school.

It is reviewed regularly.

Signed: _____

Date: _____