

**The Guidance and Counselling Service**

**In St. Ailbe's School.**

## Aims of the Guidance and Counselling Service

Bearing in mind the school's mission statement the Guidance and Counselling service in St. Ailbe's refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students to make transitions consequent on those choices. These choices may be categorised into three separate but interlinked areas:

- personal and social
- educational
- career

Guidance provision by Mr. Carroll involves a range of guidance and counselling activities and services which aim to “ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance” as set out in the Education Act 1998.

### Guidance Activities that Assist Students to Make Choices Include:

**Counselling** – In St. Ailbe's School students are helped to explore their thoughts and feelings, and the choices open to them; giving care and support to students learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up.

**Assessment** –students are helped to obtain a better self-understanding through the use of psychometric tests and other inventories.

**Information** – students are provided with objectives and factual data on education and training opportunities, occupations, labour market information, entitlements etc..

**Advice** – making suggestions based on the advisor’s own knowledge and experience.

**Educational Development Programmes** – facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills relating to studying, examination performance, choices of subjects and levels.

**Personal and Social Development Programmes** – facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills relating to a student’s personal and social development, self-awareness, decision-making and planning.

**Referral** – this includes two types of activity:

- i) referral of an individual student by the guidance counsellor to other Professionals outside the school, e.g. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

- ii) referral of an individual student to the guidance counsellor by teachers, Board of Management, School Management, and parents. The voluntary participation in counselling of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

### **Guidance Activities That Assist Students to Make Transitions**

#### **Include:**

- Careers education/career transition programmes – enabling students to make transitions to further and higher education, training and employment.
- Placement – work experience, work shadowing, and preparing students for employment.
- Follow-up – following up former students regarding progression routes and destinations.
- Other Guidance Activities that Support the Achievement of the Aims of the School Guidance Programme include:
- Consultation with parents, school staff and students

- Feedback – giving feedback to school management and staff on the needs of individual students, groups and the school as an organisation, and how the school guidance programme has supported students' choices and transitions.
- Networking – establishing links with employers, relevant agencies and institutions to enhance guidance work with students.
- Promoting Change – assisting curriculum development in the school.
- Managing, organising and co-ordinating – guidance activities into a coherent programme.

The nature and range of guidance activities are based on the premise that guidance is both a whole school concern and a specialist area within education.

## **Principles Underpinning the Programme:**

The school guidance programme

- is accessible
- recognises that guidance is a specialist area within education
- recognises that guidance is a whole school concern
- is impartial
- is student centred
- is transparent
- is balanced
- is inclusive
- is responsive
- respects confidentiality in counselling and assessment activities
- empowers participants to take responsibility for their own developments
- promotes equal opportunities
- deploys and makes full use of available resources
- is reviewed on an ongoing basis

Mr. Carroll, Guidance Counsellor, because of his specialist training has a professional role in each of the main areas of guidance: personal and social, educational, and career. In addition Mr. Carroll has a role in collaborating with school management in the development and review of

the school guidance plan and the integration of guidance into the curriculum.

Subject teachers have a role in providing support to students and information and advice relating to their subject disciplines and related careers. Some teachers have additional formal responsibilities through management, pastoral care roles, co-ordination roles and through participation in programmes such as SPHE. Individual teachers may be sought out by students on an informal basis for advice and information. All teachers may consult with our guidance counsellor on the needs of an individual student and/or refer the student to the guidance counsellor when specialist competence is required with due regard to confidentiality.

Parents have the most influence, directly or indirectly, on the choices made by young people. Parents have a major influence on the environment in which the young person lives including values, attitudes and lifestyle. Parents have an important part to play in supporting the programme. Parents can also participate in the guidance process through

- (i) consultation with the guidance counsellor and other school staff
- (ii) attendance at relevant information and other meetings at school

- (iii) providing personal assistance and advice to the school guidance programme e.g. in relation to work experience placement, specific information which may impact on a student's overall performance.

### **The Role of the Guidance Counsellor**

The guidance counsellor is professionally trained to undertake the following tasks with the school guidance programme:

**Counselling:** empowering students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviours and resolve issues in their lives. Such activity may be personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or it may involve combinations of each. Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crises.

Counselling on an individual basis is part of the support structure that the school provides the student.

**Support:** the guidance counsellor provides support to parents, teachers, the school principal, Board of Management and referral agencies in

assisting the personal and social career and educational development of the student. Such support may include advocacy on behalf of a student.

**Assessment:** The guidance counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other relevant objectives of the school guidance programme. Such objectives may be related to career and educational planning, personal decision making and development of self awareness.

**Information:** Assisting students to acquire, interpret and use information relevant to their personal and social, educational and career development.

**Classroom Guidance Activities:** this provides classroom based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school guidance programme. Such experiences include information giving, information and communication technologies (ICT), skills development (planning, decision-making, study skills, communication, values clarification), and vocational preparation

**Referrals:** In some instances, the guidance needs of young people may require referral to professionals outside the school, e.g. NEPS, following standard procedures. The guidance counsellor also provides support for students referred by teachers, parents, and school management. The voluntary participation by the individual concerned is respected.

**Professional Development:** The guidance counsellor keeps abreast of on-going changes in the fields of training, education, work and child welfare. The Board of Management and school management facilitate the attendance of the guidance counsellor at relevant events and in-career professional training during the school year. Participation in these events is related to the objectives of the school guidance programme.

### **Objectives of the Guidance and Counselling Service**

Again bearing in mind the school's mission statement as well as the provision of resources, the service's target groups are mainly students at Senior Cycle.

### **The Specific objectives (Guidance Outcomes) are:**

- That courses/programmes for each student are relevant to
  - abilities
  - interests
  - motivation
  - career aspiration

- that a dedicated guidance timetable is provided for each course/programme
- that subject choices (and levels) are relevant to individual needs
- that students acquire clear self-insights and career focus through Aptitude and Career Inventory testing
- that students gain personal insights into various vocational/job areas through work experience placements
- that students visit third level institutions and training facilities
- that students know specifically where they may pursue further education and training which is relevant to each individual's profile.

These objectives are facilitated by the school's provision of programmes/courses such as:

- Fourth Year
- Leaving Certificate Applied
- Leaving certificate Vocational Programme
- Standard Leaving Certificate

Objectives for students at Junior Cycle are more informal and not through dedicated timetabling due to the school's Guidance and Counselling level of resources. However programmes such as:

- Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP)
- SPHE
- CSPE
- HSCL
- SCP

dovetail with the overall aims of the Guidance Counselling provision.

During Third Year students sit aptitude test in order to identify as well as compare and contrast relative strengths and abilities, and to be thus enabled to make decisions regarding Senior Cycle choices, including subjects.

### **Adult Learners**

As the school's age profile of student's changes in order to meet the needs of adults the aims of the Guidance and Counselling Service are mindful of the school's mission statement. Objectives are catered for in an informal way, not through a dedicated timetable, and these objectives include, to a degree of varying success,

- Access to further education and training (e.g. Access Programmes UL)

- Assertiveness skills development
- Interview skills preparation.

Liam Carroll

Guidance Counsellor.