



St. Columba's College

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# Guidance & Counselling Department

## Guidance Plan

### Introduction:

The Education Act 1998 states that a school “shall use its available resources to ... ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational needs and career choices”... and to “promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students...in consultation with their parents having regard to the characteristics spirit of the school”. The Guidance & Counselling Department in St. Columba’s College aims to aid in both the *Personal Development* and *Career Development* of each pupil, throughout their St. Columba’s years, thus allowing them make a smooth and healthy transition from the world of secondary education to the world of work or to further education. Our objectives are established by the good practice outlined by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. We see guidance as a continuous developmental process which begins prior to the entry of the pupil to St. Columba’s Colleges and continues throughout the pupil’s life in the school. Above all else, the needs of the pupil are central to any Guidance practice.

The Guidance & Counselling Department consists of four team members, each with specific roles within the areas of personal or career guidance. Each member is available to both pupils and parent in both an informal or formal structure. Appointments can be made to meet any member of the department, contactable via the details outlined later or a “drop in” system is also available for pupils during certain school hours. Pupils may also be referred to a member of the team by the Warden, Sub - Warden, Matron, Housemasters or parents.

### Roles of the Guidance & Counselling Department:

The Guidance & Counselling Department has four distinct roles: These are:

1. **Individual Counselling** – This area includes both personal and careers counselling. It aims to support pupils in their personal development, help them solve any problems they may have within learning, study, subject choice, progression and behaviour. Further detail on both Personal and Careers Counselling is outlined below.
2. **Group Counselling** – This service is available to pupils who may share a common purpose including, but not limited to, social skills, sexual health, bereavement, depression, exam pressure, difficulty adjusting to boarding etc.

3. **Psychometric Testing** – This includes both cognitive and career based tests. These are used to acquire information for self understanding and to enable adequate monitoring of academic progress. Aptitude tests, interest inventories and examination performance can help in problem solving, decision-making and planning for the future.
4. **Provision of Information** – Information is essential for effective decision making. The Masterman Library is the main resource area for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils when making career decisions. This area includes a large collection of books, leaflets, prospectuses and videos. We also aim to provide lectures on various aspects of careers, seminars, excursions and occupational visits.

### **Whole School Approach to Guidance:**

In St. Columba's College, it has been recognised that all staff have a vital part to play in pupil care. The Guidance Counsellor plays a very important role in co-ordinating the School Guidance Policy. However, all staff members play a role in the delivery of the School Guidance Programme. Through the Pastoral Care structures, House and teaching staff meet pupils on an individual basis in the course of the year. From time to time staff members may refer pupils to the Guidance Counsellor. Referrals on an emergency basis by staff members are also provided for. Pupils relate to different teachers in different ways and are encouraged to talk to any teacher they feel comfortable with if they need to. There is a pastoral care approach to deal with issues such as bullying, school attendance/punctuality, behaviour and progress in school. The Guidance Counsellor works closely with Housemasters / Housemistresses, Form Teachers, Matron, Subject Teachers, Sub Warden and Warden. On a regular basis the Guidance Counsellor reports to the Warden.

### **Careers & Educational Counselling:**

The Guidance Counselling Team provides for a range of activities aimed at providing information and advice to pupils at all stages of their St. Columba's experience. This allows for pupils to make informed and intelligent decisions for their future education or work. The following section outlines the Careers & Educational structures available at each form.

#### *Form I*

Pupils are initially tested on their ability, using the Common Entrance Exam. Any pupil with specific learning or personal difficulties is met on an individual basis and, along with the Learning Support Team if required, and procedures for future approaches are formulated for that individual pupil. Referral of individual pupils may also be used by Subject Teachers or House staff to the Guidance Counsellor. Referral to any external counsellor or educational psychologist will only be made with consultation with the Warden, Housemaster and Parents. Group counselling for any pupils that may experience difficulties adjusting to the new school environment may also be used.

## *Form II*

Each pupil completes the AH4 General Intelligence Test. This psychometric instrument measures Verbal, Mathematical and Spatial Intelligence and is used to see how pupils' ability is reflected in their school work and exam performance. Any issues are dealt with on an individual basis. Counselling services are, as always, available to the pupils throughout Form II as outlined previously.

## *Form III*

The Junior Certificate is a very important set of State Examinations, and for pupils applying to UCAS in later forms, is essential for a UK university's assessment of a candidate's ability. The Guidance Department provide for a Study Skills Seminar for all Form III pupils in this important year and the team also provide information on subject choice for Transition Year later in the year. Any pupil may visit the Guidance Counsellor or any of the Guidance Team for information on any aspect of career development.

## *Form IV*

The career guidance provided throughout this year is formulated around an eight week Careers Module in which each pupil participates in. This module aims to aid in the pupils self - understanding, in CV preparation, interview techniques, study skills and time management skills. Pupils are also required to complete a Careers Project, in which pupils research a number of career areas. The use of psychometric instruments is also used during Form IV, and each pupil completes a Centigrade Profile (a comprehensive aptitude test) and the Eirquest Questionnaire (an Interest Inventory). AH4 tests may also be provided where necessary. Each pupil has an individual follow up meeting on the results of their assessments so that they can be understood and used effectively. In Form IV, a Careers Convention is held early in the Hilary term. This involves parents of pupils in the form, some staff members or friends of the College. The Guidance Counsellor is also available to aid in the subject choices required for V and VI Forms.

## *Form V*

At this stage, pupils begin to consider the possible pathway they may take in further education or working life. All pupils are introduced to the CAO and UCAS application procedures. Each pupil will receive the UCAS Handbook, a publication prepared by the Guidance Team, which will aid in the application procedure. In the Michaelmas Term, pupils complete the Centigrade Questionnaire, a comprehensive Interest Inventory, which not only outlines the interests of individual pupils, but also targets these interests to possible courses of study. A seminar on Interview skills and CV preparation is organised and pupils are able to organise individual interviews and CV assessments with an external professional. Pupils have an option to record their interview on DVD. All pupils are met on an individual basis by a member of the Guidance Team, and pupils interested in applying to UCAS are met by the UCAS Co-ordinator. Pupils also begin to prepare their personal statements for their UCAS application. Each pupil is also assigned an Academic Mentor to aid in their career decisions and academic progress. Typically, this teacher will represent the area of study the pupil is interested in studying in further education.

## Form VI

All pupils are encouraged to meet the Guidance Counsellor and their Academic Mentor on a frequent basis. This ensures that pupils are well guided towards the courses and universities that suit them best. It is the responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor to co-ordinate the activities of the Academic Mentors. The UCAS Co-ordinator facilitates the pupils' application through the UCAS and CAO system. Personal statements are prepared in consultation with the Guidance Team and Academic Mentors. The Guidance Team provide advice and information for Housemasters in the provision of effectual Pupil References required by the UCAS application procedure. All applications are tracked by the Guidance Counsellor and the UCAS Co-ordinator and any issues are highlighted and dealt with. Any pupil attending for interview in any university is provided with advice and guidance on the interview process and CV preparation. Information on GAP Year Programmes is provided to all pupils, and a number of organisations are invited to speak to the form. The Guidance Counsellor is available when pupils obtain their Leaving Certificate Examination results in August and may also aid in any past pupil's application to UCAS after completing their education in the College. Of course, the Guidance Team are available to the pupils for any concern or issue they may face during their final year in St. Columba's.

### **Personal Counselling:**

All pupils have the opportunity to meet the Guidance Counsellor for counselling. Counselling helps pupils explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them. It gives care and support to pupils learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up and school life and with their individual personal circumstances. Individual may be referred by the School Matron, House staff, the Warden or Sub - Warden. But of course pupils are able to self refer at any time and can arrange to meet the Guidance Counsellor at any mutually suitable time or drop in at the assigned times.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

The Guidance Counsellor is specially trained in both individual and group counselling and psychotherapy. The use of the counselling service can help pupils with personal problems, family problems, relationship problems, coping skills, motivation, making choices and with the transition to 3rd level education and the adult world. Pupils can self refer or be referred by parents, the Warden, Housemasters or individual teachers. Parents may organise for the counsellor to help their son/daughter in a particular area for growth. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their problem with their parent/guardian where appropriate. At the beginning of the counselling contract pupils are always informed that what is said in the counselling session is *strictly confidential* between the counsellor and the pupil but, in some extreme cases, the counsellor may feel that the pupil may be a danger to themselves or someone else, and the help of Housemasters, parents or external organisations may be required. Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse (under Child Protection Guidelines). The Guidance Counsellor receives professional support by means of regular meetings with a trained counselling supervisor.

## **Guidance Plan Review:**

The Guidance Plan is an ongoing and ever evolving document, which is regularly amended according to the changing guidance needs of the pupils in the school. As mentioned previously, Guidance requires a whole school approach. For this reason, it is planned that further discussions will take place with all elements of the school community, including pupils, to allow for the Guidance Team to assess the effectiveness of the current plan and to formulate strategies for the future.

## **Guidance & Counselling Team Members:**

### *Guidance Counsellor:*

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### *UCAS & CAO Applications Co-ordinator:*

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