



St. Columba's College

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# Guidance & Counselling Department

## *Guide to Pupils & Parents*

### **Introduction:**

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 College 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 two team members, each with specific roles within the areas of guidance. Mr O'Shaughnessy, the Head of Careers, manages pupils' applications to third level institutions as well as advising on future career direction. He is also in charge of psychometric testing. Mrs Owens, the College Counsellor, oversees the emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of members of the St Columba's community. Each member is available to both pupils and parents in an informal or formal setting. Appointments can be made to meet them via email or a "drop in" system, available for pupils during certain school hours. Pupils may also be referred to the College Counsellor 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 career 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 common concerns 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 Firefly platform is the main resource area for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils when making career decisions. This area contains a large collection of documents, timetables, videos and links to important websites. There is also a small Careers section in the library. We additionally 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 Counsellor and Head of Careers play a very important role in co-ordinating the School Guidance Policy. However, all staff members are an integral part of 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 College 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 College Counsellor works closely with Housemasters / Housemistresses, Form Teachers, Matron, Subject Teachers, Sub Warden and Warden. The Head of Careers and College Counsellor report to the Warden on a regular basis.

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

The Guidance Counselling Team provides for a range of activities giving 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, 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 College Counsellor. Referral to any external counsellor or educational psychologist will only be made after consultation with the Warden, Housemaster and parents. Group counselling may also be used for any pupils that may experience difficulties adjusting to the new school environment.

## *Form II*

There is no specific guidance programme for Form II pupils but the Guidance Department is involved in individual issues as required. Counselling services are, as always, available to the pupils throughout Form II as outlined previously.

## *Form III*

Psychometric testing takes place during Form III, and each pupil completes a Cambridge Profile (a comprehensive aptitude test). Pupils subsequently have an individual follow up meeting on the results of their assessments so that they can be understood and used effectively. The Junior Certificate is very important for pupils who intend to apply to UCAS in 5th / 6th form and is essential for a UK university's assessment of a candidate's ability. The Guidance Department holds a Study Skills Seminar for all Form III pupils in this important year and the team also provides information on subject choice for Transition Year later in the year. Any pupil may visit the Head of Careers for information on any aspect of career development.

## *Form IV*

In Form IV, a Careers Convention is held in the Trinity term. This involves Old Columbans or friends of the College who meet TY pupils and discuss their careers. The Head of Careers is also available to aid in the subject selection required for V and VI Forms. To this end, a Subject Choice Seminar takes place in the second term.

## *Form V*

At this stage, pupils begin to consider the possible pathway they may take in further education. All pupils are introduced to the CAO, UCAS and European 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 2017, pupils complete the Career Decision Maker. They are met on an individual basis by a member of the Guidance Department, 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 (or European) applications. Each pupil is also assigned an Academic Tutor to aid in his / her career decisions and academic progress. Typically, this teacher will represent the area of study the pupil is interested in studying in further education. A study skills workshop for Form V was introduced in 2014 and has proved very successful.

## *Form VI*

All pupils are encouraged to meet the Head of Careers and their Academic Tutor on a frequent basis. This ensures that they are well guided towards the courses and universities that suit them best. It is the responsibility of the head of Careers to facilitate the pupils' application through the UCAS / CAO / European and USA systems. Personal statements are prepared in consultation with Academic Tutors and Mr Brett. The Guidance Department provides advice and information for Housemasters in the provision of Pupil References or any other application requirements. All applications are tracked and any issues are highlighted and dealt with. Any pupil invited for interview in any university is provided with guidance and practice. Information on GAP Year Programmes is available to

all pupils, and a number of organisations are invited to speak to the form. The Head of Careers (or member of the Department) is available when pupils obtain their Leaving Certificate Examination results in August and may also aid in any past pupil's application to university (especially UCAS) after completing their education in the College. Of course, the Guidance Department is 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 College 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 Counsellor at any mutually suitable time or drop in at the assigned times.

### **Referral Policy:**

In some incidences, pupils may need to be referred to outside agencies or counsellors if the College Counsellor feels it is necessary to fully resolve the pupil's issue. This referral process will be done on consultation with the pupil, his / her parents, the Matron and the Warden. A list of outside agencies is kept for consultation. The Counsellor has built a strong relationship with the nearby *Tibradden Centre* over the past year and they come recommended.

### **Child Protection:**

The Guidance Policy is formed within the framework of the school's Child Protection Policy. In the event of a child protection issue coming to the fore, the Counsellor will liaise with both the Warden and the Designated Child Protection Officer, as set out in our Child Protection Policy.

**Cúram Team:**

The formation of a Cúram (or Care) Team was first proposed within the Anti-Bullying Policy review in 2014. The team, which includes the College Counsellor, work to support pupils involved in incidents of bullying. Please refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy for further information on the roles, structure and responsibilities of the Cúram Team.

**Guidance & Counselling Team Members:**

*Head of Careers:*

Mr. Michael O'Shaughnessy

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*College Counsellor:*

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