

## **Policy on Guidance and Counselling**

### **Formation of Policy:**

The Principal, Deputy Principals and the Guidance Department formulate the policy

Under the terms of the Education Act 1998, all schools are required to “ensure that all students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in educational and career choices” (Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998). Guidance refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist pupils to make choices about their lives and to make transitions as a result of these choices. The main role of the guidance service in schools is to assist students in their development of three separate, but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance (Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools, Sept 2006, p.5).

### **Personal Counselling:**

Aims to help the students understand their personal reality in a safe and supportive environment so that she will be able to realise their potential. It is offered on an individual or group basis. Counselling aims to assist students explore their thoughts and feelings, in a caring way appropriate to the individual’s needs, while they are learning to manage the various challenges and developments associated with growing and changing. Great emphasis is placed on raising and enhancing pupils’ self-esteem.

Counselling can only be effective when student feels secure and understood and where confidentiality is guaranteed except in cases where students may be at risk or where there is on-going neglect or abuse. Individual counselling however, can only take place at the request of the student and whereby she is willing to participate.

### **Educational Guidance:**

Is developmental in nature and involves empowering students in the area of subject choice/level, study and examination skills and involves consulting parents about related matters.

### **Career Guidance:**

Involves empowering students to recognise their talents and abilities and to enable them to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own futures.

### **Aims:**

- To support for students regarding personal, educational and vocational needs.
- To provide students with information on subject choice for junior and senior cycle and to encourage them to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on these choices.
- To encourage students to develop self-awareness and an acceptance of their individual strengths and weaknesses, to explore opportunities, grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves.
- To equip students with the necessary skills and relevant knowledge that contribute to effective learning in school and will enable them to make important decisions about their futures.

- To provide an information evening for First Year and Third/TY parents on Junior and Senior Subject Options so as to keep them involved and informed of its importance and relevance for their child's future.
- To encourage students to consult the Guidance Counsellor and staff with regard to personal and educational concerns.

### **Implementation of the Guidance Policy:**

- The Guidance Department provides a counselling service to students for their personal, social, educational and vocational needs by appointment or in some cases as a result of referral from management or colleagues.
- Provide a counselling service to students for their personal, social, educational and vocational needs.
- Actively promotes College Awareness Week in late November and uses this as a platform to invite guest speakers in to talk with senior students as well as to promote the high level of uptake from our students in accessing third level education.
- Every two years the MSC Career & College Expo takes place, this event alternates with Mock Interviews. During this event students and their parents can interact with Universities, Institutes of Technology, Further Education & Training, Agricultural Colleges and other providers of education, training and work. Local businesses are also invited to attend as they provide students with invaluable advice and support.
- Prepare, facilitate and evaluate Mock Interview utilising professional people from within the school and local communities.
- Provide students with access to career-related literature including prospectus' and actively encourage them to use Internet sources for research purposes.
- The Guidance Department organises visits from third level colleges, Further Education & Training providers and Athlone Training Centre-Apprenticeships to school.
- While students are encouraged to attend College Open Days independently we take students to at Moate Business College on their Annual Open Day. On occasion we plan visits to career-related events and to local businesses such as Athlone Extrusions.
- Noticeboards outside the Guidance Counsellors' offices are used provide information for students relevant to colleges, wellbeing and career events such as Open Days.
- Provide information for students on Higher and Further Education Routes and Pathways, Apprenticeships, SUSI Grants, Access Programmes, Language Exemptions, Scholarships and Bursaries, Transition to Third Level, Independent Living and the Working World.
- Organise Study Skill Seminars for Exam Students.
- Network using Social Media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to connect with Colleges, Parents, Students and the wider community.
- Create awareness for the work being done in school in Guidance particularly in forums such as the MCS website and plasma screens, MCS Newslink, webtext facility and in the local newspapers.

### **Tests Administered:**

Incoming First Year Students: GL Assessment's CAT 4 Level E which assesses 4 Key Skills, Verbal, Non-Verbal, Numerical and Spatial Reasoning Skills.

Junior and Senior Students: WIAT III (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test) had recently replaced the old WRAT 4 (Wide Range Achievement Test, Fourth Edition) Assessment to test students who may qualify for RACE (Reasonable Accommodations at the Certified Examinations).

Transition Year: the Guidance Department supports students in selecting subjects insofar as is possible that marry with students' interests and aptitude. With this in mind during TY students would have been assessed in the past with GL Assessment's CAT4 Level G online aptitude tests. In 2020 this test will be replaced with a more comprehensive preparation for senior cycle subject choice. Moate Community School is introducing *My Future Choice* (formally COA- Cambridge Occupational Analysts) *My Aptitude* and *My Eirquest* online tests. The assessment endeavours to provide an objective assessment of students' academic potential. Student reports will:

1. Assess student aptitude/ability across a range of skills including Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning, Abstract Reasoning, 2D Spatial Reasoning, 3D Spatial Reasoning, Arithmetic Calculation, Spelling and Working Quickly and Accurately.
2. My Eirquest matches students;' interests and abilities with appropriate career areas and encourages students to make sound and well-researched decisions.

Fifth Year Students: CTC Consult Pearson- Career Interest Inventory

Leaving Certificate Students: are encouraged to do *centrigradeonline* newly referred to as *MyUniChoices from MyFuture Choice Ireland* to assist them with making their CAO/UCAS/Eunicas Applications but this is optional for them.

- Liaise with other departments within the school such as Special Education, Pastoral Care, Referral, TY Co-ordinator and LCVP
- In Transition Year students sample subjects on the senior cycle curriculum which provides them with an insight into the subject areas without encroaching on materials to be studied in fifth and sixth year.

### **Monitoring Procedures:**

- Weekly Guidance Department Meetings with Guidance Team including School Principal and Deputy Principal.
- Liaising with Pastoral Care, Referral and Special Education Department.
- Feedback from teachers, parents and students.

### **Success Criteria:**

- Guidance-related events are reviewed such as Mock Interviews, Study Skills Seminars, Career Evenings, College Awareness Week and Information Evenings for Parents.

Ratified November 2020

- Feedback from Students:

We invite students to provide feedback on their experience of the Guidance Service and regarding college talks and invited speakers, their experience of the one-to-one meetings and the Guidance service in general.

Handouts are provided at each college talk for students to take notes and to offer feedback about the learning and to ask specific questions.

**Review Procedures:**

This policy is reviewed by the School Guidance Team annually.

End of Year Report to the Board of Management informing them of the work and events that took place on an annual basis.

Tracking students' achievements and choices after school in conversation with them. This enables us, insofar as possible, to ascertain the numbers of students accessing third level in Ireland and abroad, Further Education & Training, Apprenticeships and work. This allows us to gauge how our students are doing in relation to the national average.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the BOM: \_\_\_\_\_