



St. Columba's College

ST. COLUMBA'S COLLEGE

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 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 two 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 5th and 6th 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

There are no structured guidance or career based activities for Form II currently. We are assessing the need to reintroduce some form of aptitude testing for Form II in the coming year. Any guidance issues are dealt with on an individual basis, with consultation with the Warden, Matron, The Cúram Team, Housemasters and other individuals. 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). 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, facilitating a Subject Choice Seminar in the second term.

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.

Referral Policy:

In some incidences, pupils may need to be referred to outside agencies (e.g NEPS, An Cuan, Pieta House) or counsellors if the Guidance 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.

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 Guidance Counsellor will liaise with both the Warden and the Designated Child Protection Officer, as set out in our Child Protection Policy.

Anti Bullying Policy Review:

The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is currently being reviewed, with consultation with the Guidance Counsellor. It is envisaged that any changes which affect the role of the Guidance Counsellor will be expressed in this policy in due course. One such change will be a role in the newly formed Cúram Team.

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 Guidance 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:

Guidance Counsellor:

Mr. Humphrey Jones (B.Sc.Ed, SMIGC)

Tel: 01 4956913

Email: hjones@staff.stcolumbas.ie

Website: www.stcolumbas.ie/guidance

UCAS Applications Co-ordinator:

Mr. Michael O'Shaughnessy

Email: mshaughnessy@staff.stcolumbas.ie
