

Guidance & Counselling Plan

Ireland has long acknowledged the valuable contribution that education and guidance counsellors play in helping young people achieve their potential (e.g. National Guidance Forum 2007). The Department of Education established the National Centre for Guidance in Education in 1996 to 'support and develop guidance across the education spectrum and to inform the policy of the Department in the field of guidance' (NGF 2007, P. 18). The DES, in interpreting the Education Act (Ireland, 1998) sees guidance as a whole school responsibility. With guidance counsellors having a broad role which includes providing counselling support to students, promoting educational disadvantage and the prevention of early school leaving and poor educational attainment (Department of Education and Science, 2005).

Section 9c of the Education Act, (Ireland, 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 and career choices'.

In 2005 the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science published detailed guidelines for second level schools on the implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance (Ireland, 2005b).

The Inspectorate noted that the provision of guidance was a statutory requirement for schools under the Education Act 1998 and encouraged schools to develop a comprehensive guidance plan, taking into account the needs of students, available resources and contextual factors. This Guidance Plan is the Midleton College response to the DES recommendation.

1. General Comments

The Guidance plan reflects Midleton College's respect for the individual in its student centred holistic approach. The enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of individual potential - academic, personal, social and emotional leading to greater personal autonomy for all students are its central goals.

This plan is a non-rigid template and reflects the uniqueness of Midleton College in its own particular context and circumstances. This Guidance plan refers to the subject 'guidance' as it is delivered to our students, cognisant of their needs and mindful of the available resources.

What is guidance in schools?

The word guidance is used to describe the activities provided by the guidance and counselling services, identified under support services in paragraph 2 of the Education Act 1998.

Guidance counselling and Guidance and Counselling refer to a range of facilitative experiences provided by the College in a developmental sequence. They are designed to empower students to manage their own learning and career choices. They are also designed to enable students to integrate,

to make best use of educational resources, to develop knowledge and competencies regarding self-awareness, the world of work, making decisions and transitions. The guidance programme can be sub-divided into three distinct but interlinked categories:

- (i) Personal and Social Guidance and Counselling
- (ii) Educational Guidance and Counselling
- (iii) Vocational Guidance and Counselling

Specific Guidance activities that assist students make informed choices include:

1. Individual or small group counselling
2. Assessment using psychometric instruments and inventories
3. Career information (classroom, individual vocational guidance interviews, attendance at career event, etc.)
4. Careers Library resourcing
5. Use of information technology including exploring career related websites, drafting CVs , building personal profiles, using Interest tests etc.
6. Personal and social developmental programmes
7. Working with parents
8. Referrals to relevant professionals
9. Linking with outside agencies

Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme. It can be provided on an individual or group basis, as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis.

Aim of the subject plan

1. Provide a framework for the delivery of the school's guidance programme.
2. Ensure a structured response to students' personal, social educational and vocational guidance needs.
3. The plan is inclusive, providing for the junior cycle, senior cycle, minority groups, in-coming students, special education needs etc., of all students in the school community.
4. The plan will include reference to all guidance activities such as classroom programmes, parent information sessions, Vocational Guidance Interviews, Information days, meeting with staff members, pastoral care team and management, contact with support agencies, personal counselling and any other relevant topic as the plan evolves.

Objectives of the Guidance Subject

To provide students the following within the available resources;

1. Clear information concerning subject choices. This includes information about the consequences of subject choices and level taken for future educational, training and career options.
2. Opportunities to explore their interests and subject choices and how these link to further education, training and career areas.
3. An awareness of the content and the syllabus demands of particular subjects.
4. Assistance in the choice of educational programmes offered by the school.
5. Assistance in identifying their own most effective learning styles and in developing effective study and note-taking skills, examination techniques and time management skills.

6. Objective assessments of their aptitudes and career interests and feedback on these assessments.
7. Guidance on the educational, vocational and career options available, including career progression routes and lifelong learning opportunities.
8. Encouragement to explore a wide range of educational and career choices, including non-traditional careers.
9. The integration, as far as is practicable, of career themes and information into relevant aspects of the curriculum.
10. Opportunities to develop information-seeking skills, including the use of ICT, with particular reference to career exploration and planning.
11. Guidance in developing individual career plans based on the individual's achievements, ambitions, interests and personal circumstances.

Guidance Counsellor and Subject Co-Ordinator

Ms. Mariel Twomey

Role of Subject Co-Ordinator

The delivery of a comprehensive Guidance Programme is the responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor but **a whole school approach is essential to realise this objective.** Guidance planning is to be considered a process, to evolve over time, reflecting the needs of all students, available resources and contextual factors.

2. Guidance Curriculum

The Guidance curriculum may be divided into two overlapping delivery components:

1. Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance Curriculum is delivered using two forms of intervention employing a number of methodologies:

- a. Individual contact of a counselling nature and educational/vocational guidance.
- b. Classroom guidance delivered in regular weekly classes/rotating modules/team teaching/class group, which is pre-determined and reviewed on a yearly basis. Also a yearly group intervention when required.

Guidance Counsellors' timetables will vary from year to year depending on resources and review.

2. Informal Guidance

The Informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with other teaching staff/management to promote cross curricular links and to enhance the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of a quality 'Student Support Plan'. Meetings with Parents/Guardians, the Pastoral Care Team and relevant outside agencies form an integral part of Informal Guidance.

Grouping of Students for Timetabled Guidance Classes

Students participate in the Guidance programme in their year group or in their smaller class groups. Middleton College students are mixed ability groups for all 'career' classes.

Year Group Contact/Class Organisation

Year Group	Organisation
1	Year group interventions
2	Year group contact interventions as required.
3.	Year group contact interventions as required.
4	1 period per week for TY.
5	1 class period every 3 rd week with each class.
6	Year group interventions throughout year; 1 class period every 4 th week with each class.

Study skill seminars are organised for year groups.

Individual Consultations

A 'drop-in and make an appointment system' operates. The Guidance Counsellor has a visible presence in the school community. Many interviews are informal and brief. All students are asked to get permission from their subject teacher to be out of class in advance of an appointment. An official Middleton College Guidance Counselling Slip is used.

Appointments are arranged on the understanding that the subject teacher at that time will give the student permission to attend. The class teacher has the right to refuse a student to leave for an appointment as they are required to account for the student attending the Guidance Counsellor.

A student from 1st-6th form can make an appointment for guidance or counselling or they can be referred by a teacher, principal or pastoral care team.

Self-Referral

Students can make contact to arrange an appointment by writing their name and class on a piece of paper and putting it under the door of the Guidance & Counselling Office if the Guidance Counsellor is not there to give them an appointment.

For 6th Year students, individual prescribed appointments take place between September and December. This is repeated in January to ensure all students who require it are registered for CAO. Therefore all 6th Year students receive at least two individual appointments.

For 5th Year students, individual prescribed appointments take place between November and March. Therefore all 5th Year students receive at least 1 individual appointment.

Presentations are also made to 3rd Year students on the various options after their Junior Certificate.

Presentations are made to parents on the issue of subject choice and options after completion of the Junior Certificate. There is a night for 1st Year Parents, a night for 3rd Year Parents and a night for 4th Year parents.

The Guidance Counsellor advises and assists students on the completion of UCAS applications to the British third level system.

Links are sustained with local industries, most notably the annual Careers Day held for 4th & 5th Year students where professionals come in to speak to students.

Staff Referrals

Any member of staff can make a referral. A 'Referral Form' is being developed as referrals are usually by word of mouth and there may be no written record of a teacher's concern. The referral form will indicate the area of support (academic, personal/social or careers), and some evidence to support a referral. Evidence could include samples of written work, test results, words a student used in class, visible signs of poor health, change in work rate, class behaviour etc.

Parents/Guardians can also make appointments to visit the Guidance Counsellor. These appointments are made through contacting the main office. The Guidance Counsellor will then arrange a time with parents.

A brief written record is kept of formal appointments with all students.

Students attending for more than one session with the Guidance Counsellor may need to get agreement/permission from the Principal, depending on the student's personal situation.

Programme plan for Senior Cycle

5th Year

Organisation

- Formal class contact with class groups and contact by arrangement with groups.
- Prescribed individual academic review/career sessions.

Syllabus

- Goal setting/Motivation theories
- Interest inventories/Career profiling
- Study and time management
- Research skills... use of the internet
- CAO www.cao.ie
- UCAS www.ucas.com
- CV preparation
- Personal statement preparation
- Interview preparation
- Visits from colleges/careers areas/other related areas
- Careers Options Exhibitions
- Students are encouraged to attend career talks/presentations/seminars/open days
- Mock Interviews

6th Year

Organisation

- Small 'special interest' group meetings for UCAS applicants, HPAT applicants, applicants not considering the CAO application system, etc.
- Prescribed individual meeting, from October until December.
- Additional individual sessions by appointment.
- RDS Higher Options Conference.

Syllabus

An integral part of the programme is the involvement of guest speakers, attendance at career seminars, open days, etc.

- Introduction to Guidance Service in final year.
- UCAS application system
- Writing personal statements and completing application forms.
- Restricted courses for CAO and supplementary Information Requirements.
- Computer-aided career and course research.
- Time management.
- Examination preparation for success not stress.
- New course/updates.
- Grants and Managing finance using 'Flying the Coop'.
- DARE

External

- Presentations by colleges and course personnel
- Past pupils
- Events organised by the parents association

Testing

Career Interest Inventory along with some on-line profiling, may be used depending on the time available. The Career Portal Introduction to Personal and Work Values may also be used.

Protocol for meetings

1. Meetings with students
2. Meetings with parents/guardians
3. Meetings with members of the teaching staff
4. Meetings with Pastoral Care team

Most meetings are brief and informal – a quick check.

1a. A formal meeting, which can take up to 40 minutes, initiated by a referral or a student's own request are by appointment. The Guidance Counsellor may approach a student informally as a result of a referral and check if the student is interested and will to come to a formal appointment. The Guidance Counsellor may request to meet a student in the presence of another staff member. Similarly a student may wish to be accompanied by another staff member or a friend, for an initial appointment.

1b. A prescribed academic review/career interview

2. Parents/Guardians make appointments with the Guidance Counsellor by telephoning the school. Appointments are usually conducted during the school day, but, may in certain circumstances be arranged outside of school hours, in the family home or a neutral venue. All parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation is necessary. On occasion, the Guidance Counsellor may request another staff member e.g. Year Head, Subject Teacher or/and management to be present at these meetings. The student is always invited in for the whole or part of these meetings with the agreement of all parties involved and if it's appropriate in the circumstance. This gives the student a sense of accountability, responsibility, ownership and inclusion in the meeting outcomes.

Brief notes are kept of all informal meetings by the Guidance Counsellor.

3. Informal meetings with staff are a daily occurrence. Formal meetings with Learning Support teachers, SPHE teachers, and other teaching groups are minuted and kept in 'subject' folder. Meetings about individual students are not records, unless there is evidence of a specific difficulty, requiring investigation.

The Guidance Counsellor links with Staff and outside agencies

Record Keeping Policy & Procedures

Two types of records will be kept.

1. Brief records of pertinent details from Careers/Vocational Guidance interviews.
2. Summarized reference records of Personal Counselling sessions.

- Student guidance related records are kept for 6 years.
- The detailed records of personal counselling sessions will contain actual words and phrases used by the student.
- To ensure accuracy, every effort will be made by the Guidance Counsellor, to write up notes as soon as possible after the session.
- Notes kept will be brief.
- Notes may incorporate author's shorthand.

Reporting Procedures

In all contact with students there is strict adherence to every aspect of the Child Protection Guidelines (Children First and Midleton College Child Protection Policy). In the case of disclosure of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, the School Principal as the Designated Liaison Person is informed as soon

as possible, and a brief report using the student's own words is completed. The matter is not investigated by the Guidance Counsellor. However some questioning could be necessary to determine the level of current threat or danger for the student.

Students are made aware at the initial stage of contact that 'confidentiality' has limits. In certain circumstances, where the Guidance Counsellor has enough evidence that a student maybe in danger and the matter will need to be reported, the Guidance Counsellor is obliged to make it clear to the student what the next stage in the process will be and if possible, the student will be kept informed of the school's decision.

If there is evidence that a disclosure is critical to the student's immediate welfare, their Parent/Guardian will be informed immediately, and recommendations can be made to seek medical or other professional advice.

The HSE Duty Social Worker may also need to be informed by the Principal (DLP), using a phone contact, which is followed by a specific reporting form, depending on the individual circumstances.

All of the above is done with the knowledge of the student. While every effort will be made to get a student's consent to reporting our welfare concern to the relevant persons, it may not always be possible. When the Guidance Counsellor has enough evidence that a student disclosure is significant, the child protection guidelines are followed and the Principal is informed.

Continuing Professional Development

- Supervision provided by DES
- Attendance at IGC in-service
- Attendance at DES approved in-service
- Membership of relevant professional organizations
- Attendance at courses provided by related professional groups
- Attendance at National and International Education related Conferences

To maintain Chartered Membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors a qualified member must complete 10 hours of in-service training annually (IGC Constitution and Code of Ethics 2004).

In-Career development is essential to the day-to-day work of the Guidance Counsellor. Regular attendance at local IGC meetings and Counselling Supervision is facilitated by the school through sensitive timetabling.