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Guidance Policy

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## School Mission Statement

At St. Dominic's College, we are committed to enabling each student to develop her potential, both in the academic and non-academic fields. We encourage the development of a healthy self-image, whilst teaching the student to respect the backgrounds, traditions, and beliefs of all those with whom she comes into contact. We provide an environment in which the student is encouraged to take responsibility for her own work, whilst participating in school activities as part of the community.

## Rationale:

As outlined in our mission statement, *“we are committed to enabling each and every student develop her potential academically and to participate in all areas of school life.”* One of the ways we encourage this is through our understanding of the concept of Whole School Guidance. Additionally, section 9c of the Education Act 1998 requires all schools to “*ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”*. To comply with this legislative requirement and realise our mission statement St. Dominic’s College recognises that the engagement of the school in whole school guidance planning will assist in broadening the concept of guidance beyond the guidance counsellor. It will encourage the exploration of the guidance programme, identify areas for improvement, and promote greater guidance awareness for all students.

*“Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance”.* (NCGE 2004)

## St. Dominic's has a comprehensive school guidance programme.

**Aim of the Programme**

The aim of the programme is to provide for the educational, vocational,

personal and social development of all students. *‘We encourage our students to emerge as mature young women who are strong in faith and who are confident, caring and capable of making decisions that enrich their own lives and contribute to the lives of others’.1*

1 Responsible, Connected, Aware

**Indicators of Wellbeing** are being active, responsible,connected, resilient, respected and aware

# Content of the Programme

The school guidance programme includes the following:

### Counselling:

2 Counselling helps students explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them. It gives care and support to students learning to cope 3 with the many aspects of this transitional period and school life and indeed with their individual personal circumstances.

Students are living and studying through a pandemic which may influence their personal and social development. Personal Counselling now more than ever is paramount in helping students navigate the anxiety and uncertainty that the pandemic has brought to their lives.

An appointment system is in use for students who wish to attend counselling sessions. Those who attend will receive a stamp in their journal indicating the time they arrive and leave the appointment. This helps other staff members monitor the movement of students when they attend during their class periods.

### Guidance and Vocational Preparation Programmes:

These assist students with decision-making, problem-solving, behavioural change and skills for coping with ever-changing circumstances in their personal, educational and career development.4 They include classroom guidance activities (they may also include inset ‘*Career Guidance’* talks) which provide classroom-based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school Guidance Programme. Such experiences include information giving; ICT; skills development (e.g., planning, decision making, study skills, communications, values clarification) and vocational preparation. 5

### Other existing programmes which address Guidance Issues include:

* Student Support Care Team -SSCT meetings
* Social, Personal and Health Education
* Relationships and Sexuality Education
* Religious Education / Philosophy/ Liturgical events/International Kindness Day
* Civic, Social and Political Education
* The School Assembly Programme
* Mental Health Talks
* Career Information evenings
* Outreach Programmes (St. Vincent de Paul, Trocaire, The Transition Year Community Care week, An GAISCE Awards, Eco Team, annual Emmanuel concert.
* RESPECT
* Big Sister/little Sister Programme.
* Transition to secondary school Programme.
* Peer to Peer 
* The Fuse Programme –Students are taught to recognise, respond and report bullying.
* TY Programme.
* Transition Year Programmes which include: -Educational skills( preparation for Leaving Certificate subject choice and Work Experience(preparation and de-briefing)
* A Wellbeing Junior Cycle Programme delivered to all classes.This involves a specific six

weeks "Forbairt" programme which was developed to ease the transition for 1st years into our school. It includes lessons on Orientation, Friendship, Growth Mindset and Multiple Intelligences, Study Skills, Homework and Ethos

### Assessment:

The Guidance and Learning Support departments use standardised tests to provide information, which is helpful in predicting academic performance, 6 assessing learning support requirements. Aptitude tests, interest inventories and examination performance 7 can help in decision-making 8 and planning for the future. School assessment and public examination results will supplement this information. At present we use the Cognitive Abilities Test 3 and the New Group Reading Test(NGRT) with first years and the right careers4me test is available to fifth years. We use the WIATT 111 for spelling and grammar waivers in Race applications. We use the Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching(MALT) for screening, monitoring and tracking progress as well as for individual diagnostic profiling.

### Consultation:

Students; Subject teachers; Class Tutors; Year heads; Learning Support; Chaplain Guidance Counsellor; School Management and Parents are all involved in the consultation process. 9

### Referral:

When necessary and appropriate students are referred to qualified professionals outside the school. Referral includes two types of activity: 10

* + The principal will refer individual students to NEPS on the advice of the Guidance Counsellor. 11
  + Referral of an individual student to the Guidance Counsellor by self, other students, teachers, school management and parents. Our SCCT team is a source of referral for many of our students. 12

### Provision of Information:

Data Protection and GDPR policies are observed by the Guidance Office as information is an important component in guidance. All records will be kept in accordance with the ‘Freedom of Information Act’ and the ‘Data Protection Act’. Appropriate coding of information will take place to protect students. 13

1. Aware
2. Active
3. Aware
4. Respected
5. Connected
6. Connected
7. Respected
8. Aware

# Team approach to School Guidance Programme

Guidance here at St. Dominic’s College is very much a ‘Whole School’ activity and an integral part of the School Development Plan. It is recognised that ***all*** staff have a vital part to play in student care. All staff therefore, have a role to play in the delivery of the School Guidance Programme. The team approach has been particularly effective through the Pastoral Care structure. 14 Weekly SSCT Team meetings are held which include the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Teachers. Many staff meet with students on an individual basis during the year. From time to time staff members will refer students to the Guidance Counsellor by way of a referral form. Referrals on an emergency basis by staff members are also provided for, as are referrals to external agencies. Students relate to different teachers in different ways and are encouraged to talk to any teacher they feel comfortable with if they need to. Policies are in place in the school to deal with issues such as bullying and behaviour (see relevant school policies). The Guidance Counsellor plays a very important role in co-ordinating the school guidance programme. The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the school’s team and works with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Chaplain, Subject Teachers, SNAs, tutors and SEN Teachers. On a weekly basis the Guidance Counsellor reports to the Principal.

## Involvement of Parents

As partners in education, opportunities to consult parents are availed of and we endeavour to provide them with information and involve them as much as possible. Information evenings are provided throughout the year. 15 Parent teacher meetings provide an opportunity for parents to bring up issues.

## School Guidance Plan

A School Guidance Plan provides an essential framework for delivery of the school’s Guidance Programme. Successful planning ensures a structured response to the educational, vocational and personal/social needs of the students. 16

## Review

This policy sets out the school’s response to the current needs of the students in the

area of Guidance and Counselling. A programme review takes place and priority targets are addressed on an annual basis.

1. Connected
2. Aware
3. Respected

## The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

The Guidance Counsellor is seen as the co-coordinator of whole school guidance activities and the central person responsible for the continuous developmental guidance process. The three key areas in which the Counsellor has a major role and responsibility are

Career counselling, personal counselling and educational counselling. The Counsellor liaises with school management through meeting the Principal and Deputy Principal on matters affecting the planning of the school’s provision of career, personal and educational counselling, as well as on matters affecting individual students requiring intervention. The Counsellor also interacts with Class Tutors, Year Heads, SNA’s, SEN Teachers, School Chaplain, Subject Teachers, Parents and others as appropriate. The Counsellor works with school management and staff in the operation of the guidance department, contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate programmes, administering tests and interpreting their results, managing information, administering the guidance service and liaising with referral agencies and professionals outside the school.

### Personal Counselling

Personal counselling is available to students on an ongoing basis, resources permitting. The ways in which the Counsellor fulfils this role include the following: -

* + Informing both students and parents on the role of the Guidance Counsellor. Informing the students and parents of the Counsellor’s availability to individual students which is subject to the framework of guidance hours available. 17
  + Students and/or parents are free to request a consultation with the Counsellor.

18

* + The Counsellor may also initiate consultations with pupils, teachers and parents when particular circumstances arise indicating that a pupil may need counselling on a personal issue which impinges on their school life. 19
  + The Counsellor is consulted by school management and pastoral care personnel on such issues and is also a member of the various Committees in the school. 20

### Career Counselling

The ways in which the Counsellor fulfils this role include:

* + The Counsellor will speak to all students in third year and transition year students and parents prior to them choosing their subjects for the Leaving Certificate. 21
  + In Transition Year the Counsellor organises career talks which cover specific issues such as preparation for work experience, interest inventories,

25 Responsible, Active, Connected, Respected 26 Active, Aware, Connected, Responsible

27 Connected, Aware, Responsible

preparation for subject choice for the Leaving Certificate, information on the education system and an explanation of the wide variety of 3rd level destinations available and the routes by which they are accessed, computer- based career research programmes etc... 22

* The Counsellor co-ordinates the 5th year careers course. Topics which may be covered include a careers project, computer research, part time jobs, study skills, PLC, college and University speakers/presentations and UCAS applications. 23
* The Guidance Counsellor also takes responsibility for advising the students on the completion of UCAS applications to the British third level system along with USA and elsewhere in Europe writing their academic references. 24

### Educational Counselling

The ways in which the Guidance Counsellor fulfils this role include: -

* he Guidance Counsellor carries out diagnostic Cognitive Abilities Testing prior to the student’s entry to the school. The information gathered from these diagnostic tests is used in conjunction with Learning Support and the Pastoral Care Team to initiate support services or request further assessment as soon as possible for the student.
* Liaising with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Tutors, SEN department, School Chaplain, Administration Staff and Subject Teachers concerning pupils who require intervention.
* Offering those pupils counselling regarding study techniques, educational planning and personal organization, in addition to organising ‘Study Skills’ presentations for 3rd and 5th year students.
* Liaise with SEN Teacher to identify students requiring further attention.
* Providing guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progress through meetings, e.g., prior to Transition Year, prior to subject choice for the Leaving Certificate and prior to CAO application deadline.
* Being available to pupils who have left the school to offer advice after the Leaving Certificate results have been issued, i.e., at the beginning of the new school term. 25

2 Respected

3 Resilient

4 Aware

5 Aware, Active

### Counselling – Confidentiality

The Guidance Counsellor is trained in counselling. This is one of the ways in which a counsellor helps students. The counsellor offers students counselling help in many areas including:

* + Personal Problems
  + Family Problems
  + Relationship Problems
  + Coping Skills
  + Motivation
  + Making Choices
  + Transition to 3rd Level and the adult world.

What is said in the counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and

the student **UNLESS** the counsellor feels that the pupil is a danger to themselves (including eating disorders) or anyone else, or at risk.

Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse (Child Protection Guidelines definition applies here).26

The Guidance Counsellor receives professional support by means of regular meetings with a trained counselling supervisor.27

### Ethical considerations and Accountability:

The Guidance Counselling Service is subject to all relevant legal requirements, to the provisions of the 1998 Education Act, to Department of Education and Science Directives, to the school’s Ethos, Religious and Educational Philosophy and the School Plan. The Guidance Counsellor like all other members of staff in the school is entrusted with the care of students in “loco parentis” and accepts the responsibilities of this position, always keeping the student’s welfare to the forefront. The Guidance Counsellor in St Dominic’s College abides by the Institute of Guidance Counsellor’s Code of Ethics and is accountable to the Principal and Board of Management of St Dominic’s College.

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2 Respected

3 Resilient

4 Aware

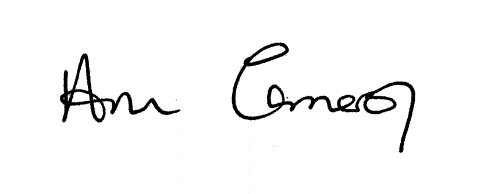
5 Aware, Active

**This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 13 December 2021**

**Signed**



Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date 13 December 2021

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date 13 December 2021

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

**Review Date December 2024**

**This review date of this policy will be December 2024 unless it is deemed necessary to revise it earlier than this date.**