



**CBS Roscommon - Mean Scoil Na Braíthre**  
**SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLAN**  
**2016 - 2017**

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## INTRODUCTION

The school guidance plan is an area of strategic planning that has in recent times moved centre stage in the lives of guidance Counsellors. Irish Educational Legislation, Department of Education and Science Circulars, Workshops organised by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), and Guidelines from the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) have all placed emphasis on schools having a School Guidance Plan.

Section 9(c) of the Education Act states that a school shall use its available resources to *...ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational needs and career choices...*

*(d) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students...in consultation with their parents having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.* (Government of Ireland, 1998)

The School Guidance Plan reflects this respect for the individual in its student centred holistic approach. The enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of each student's potential – academic, personal, social and emotional – leading to greater personal autonomy for all students are its central goal. The adolescents of today face many challenges. Recognising these challenges and the ongoing changes posed by society, the Guidance Counsellor endeavours to encourage a love for learning, and an awareness of the need for Life Long learning. The aim is to provide each student with activities and experiences which will enable each individual to develop their own self-esteem, so that they may become what they are capable of. Guidance is now regarded as a core element of the school's overall programme, therefore a Guidance and Counselling programme should reflect the needs of students at all stages of their school life. This plan's objectives are conditioned by the good practice disseminated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and National Centre for Guidance in Education. Guidance is seen as a continual development process which begins prior to the entry of students to second level and concludes after the student has left the school. As students progress through the school, the

Guidance Counsellor aims to meet their needs and the range of activities offered are planned so as to meet the needs of the students. Through the range of activities offered, it is hoped that all students become aware of their abilities and talents, broaden and develop their interests, become aware of the value of education and what it can offer. It is hoped that they will make wise and well-informed choices and decisions about the direction they would like to go with their lives.

## **1. The School Guidance Programme**

### **1.1. School Profile**

The School Guidance and Counselling Programme outlined in this paper is for CBS Roscommon Roll Number: 65080P.

The school has an enrolment of approximately 370 boys.

CBS Roscommon is a boy's voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). Guidance and Counselling is an integral part of this school's life and the aim and content of this programme is to profile for the personal, social, educational and vocational development needs of all students attending the school.

### **1.2. Aims of the Guidance and Counselling Service**

- To meet the social, personal, educational and vocational needs of each student within the school
- To act as the administrator of all guidance and counselling services that operate within the school
- To assist each student in realising, accepting and developing his own unique talents, skills, aptitudes and abilities
- To assist each student in making realistic, appropriate and informed career choices
- To provide an integrative model of counselling based on sound theoretical theory to any student who wishes to avail of such a service

### **1.3. Personnel involved in planning the Guidance Programme**

Guidance is regarded as a core element of the school's overall programme. This guidance programme seeks to respond to the needs of the students at all stages of their education in the school. The guidance programme is a whole school initiative, intrinsically linked with every aspect of the school. However, in effect; the Guidance Counsellor consults with key personnel in the development, implementation and evaluation of the programme;

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Year Heads

- Class Tutors
- S.P.H.E. Co-ordinator (Social Personal Health Education)
- T.Y. Co-ordinator (Transition Year)
- Programmes Coordinator/L.C.V.P. Co-ordinator (Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme)
- Resource Teacher
- Learning Support Teacher
- Work Experience Co-ordinator
- Parent's Association
- Student Council
- Past Pupils
- N.E.P.S.
- N.E.W.B.
- B.O.M.
- Outside Agencies (when required)
- Local community

#### **1.4. Personal and Social Guidance**

Counselling at post-primary level aims to address certain areas within an adolescent's development including addressing and resolving specific problems, coping with crisis, improving relationships, self-esteem, dealing with conflict, developing coping strategies and exploring thoughts and feelings. The function of the Guidance Counsellor is to act as a catalyst that assists their students/clients to develop the skills and self-awareness necessary to deal with issues that confront them in their daily lives. The guidance service is available to all members of the school community including parents and staff although priority will always be given to students. Individual, group and peer counselling are also incorporated into the School Guidance and Counselling service. In addition, we offer one-to-one guidance and counselling to all students on request or by referral. This service is also available to all past pupils, although this depends on time and resources. A counselling service is provided where students can explore issues of concern to them, and this service is provided in a caring, confidential, non-judgemental and objective manner.

We aim to develop each student's interpersonal skills, and it is hoped that they will become responsible and independent members of society and will contribute to that society by becoming proactive citizens, caring for their community and society. We also hope they will become more conscious of the environment and the invaluable contribution that they can make towards its preservation.

#### **1.4.1. Theoretical Orientation of the Guidance Counsellors**

Counselling facilitates students in crisis by suggesting and exploring a range of coping strategies and interventions in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs and developmental stage. Counselling can only take place in an atmosphere where the young person experiences unconditional positive regard. A student needs to feel secure, accepted, understood and confident that confidentiality is guaranteed except in cases where there is a risk to the student, to others or where there is ongoing abuse or neglect. The Guidance Counsellor of the school must work within the limitations of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors *Code of Ethics*. Article 4.2 states that:

*...Guidance Counsellors take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of information about clients obtained in the course of professional work. They reveal such information only with the client's consent, but with certain exceptions, which include; where concealment would result in danger to the client or others; when required by the Law or designated guidelines; or for purposes of professional consultation or supervision.*

*...It is the duty of Guidance Counsellors to inform clients about legal limits on confidentiality...*

The Guidance Counsellor is also obliged to follow the *Child First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and the Department of Education and Skills *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. One should note that successful counselling can only take place at the request of the student and his willingness to participate. Although a student may be referred to a Guidance Counsellor by a concerned colleague or a worried

parent, after the first meeting it is always the student's choice whether they wish to continue or not. The theoretical orientation of the Guidance Counsellors is eclectic drawing on Rogerian person-centred, C.B.T., Gestalt, choice theory and other solution focused styles of counselling. The Guidance Counsellor argues that no one style of counselling would be sufficient to cover the needs of all students in a school. At all times the student is treated as a person and the development of a relationship is the central tenet within the counselling process.

*Guidance Counsellors respect the dignity, integrity and welfare of their clients. They work in ways which promote clients' control over their own lives, and they respect client's ability to make decisions and engage in personal change in the light of their own beliefs and values.*

The personality and intuition of the Guidance Counsellor are crucial in assisting students that need understanding, encouragement, empathy and advice during difficult stages in their personal lives. The Guidance Counsellor must at all times be sensitive to the development of stages of the students because the changes that occur physically, emotionally, academically and socially can be very demanding and confusing for a young adolescent.

*The teenager's job is a huge one. Moved by the energy released through puberty, the psychological necessity for becoming independent, and social expectations for becoming successful, the adolescent has tremendous pressure while finding a way around a new world. Put this together with the fact that there are no marked paths to follow, and you have to wonder about the scariness that adolescence produces (Satir, V. 1988, p.311).*

The Guidance Counsellor may be the only trusted adult as the young adolescent struggles to cope with their changing relationships with parents, adults and peers.



### **1.4.2. Group Counselling**

The Guidance Counsellor may offer counselling to groups of students, in order to:

- Allow students to support each other and feel less isolated and alone.
- Reach a greater number of students.

The Guidance Counsellor will offer group counselling to certain specific groups for example:

- Students who have experienced the death of a family member.
- Students who have experienced parental separation.

It is suggested that some of the group work may take place through the *Rainbows* organisation. The Guidance Counsellor will work with a group of trained colleagues to facilitate these peer support groups. The Guidance Counsellors will ensure that sufficient numbers of teachers are available for purpose.

### **1.4.3. Referrals**

If the Guidance Counsellor judges their expertise to be inadequate when dealing with a student then he will refer the student to the relevant specialised service as set down in Article 2.2 of the I.G.C.'s Code of Ethics. The student will still be monitored by the Guidance Counsellor and he will co-operate with the specialised service to provide for the needs of the students concerned. The relevant parental permission will be sought by the Guidance Counsellor when they are referring a student to an outside specialised service. The Guidance Counsellors will work to maintain links with the local H.S.E. (Health Service Executive) and other organisations that students may need to be referred to.

### **1.5. Educational Guidance**

Article 1.5 of the I.G.C.'s Code of Ethics states that:

*The relationship with the client is the foremost concern of the Guidance Counsellor, but it does not exist in a social vacuum. For this reason, guidance counsellors have sensible regard for the social context of their work, which includes colleagues.*

Guidance is developmental in nature and begins before a student enters second level. It covers topics such as psychometric testing, subject choice, study skills, examination techniques, transition year programmes, work experience placements etc. The Guidance Counsellor works in co-operation with the Resource and Learning Support Department, Year-head of incoming first years and management to organise, conduct, correct and evaluate first year entrance tests. Each year the Guidance Counsellor will visit the local feeder primary schools and speak to the sixty class teachers in order to try and identify students who will benefit from early intervention from either/or the Resource and Learning Support Department or the Guidance Service.

The Guidance Counsellor may administer psychometric tests, such as, the Differential Aptitude Tests (DATS) or the Cognitive Abilities Test 4 (CAT4) to any student who may benefit from taking these tests. The results need to be relayed in an appropriate manner. It is important to bear in mind that the scores some students obtain in these tests can be very low. Sensitivity has to be very much to the forefront when dealing with these students when giving them their scores. The Guidance Counsellors in conjunction with other departments organise information for parents in the form of leaflets, letters and information nights.

- Incoming First Year Parents
- Options after Junior Cert
- Offer the EirQuest Guidance Programme to 3<sup>rd</sup> and Transition Year Students
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Subject choice at Leaving Certificate Level
- CAO, UCAS, PLC and other options for the future

### **1.6. Career Guidance**

Career Guidance provision is a continuous process beginning with entry to second level and ending after CAO/UCAS/PLC offers are accepted. The aim of the programme is to encourage students to explore further third level education

appropriate to their interest, aptitudes and abilities. This service aims to provide students with the scope to develop their decision making skills, cope with employment/unemployment, develop job search skills, increase their awareness of employment opportunities within the locality, as well as looking at reports on employment trends nationally.

The Guidance service will include some or all of the following:

- Information about future careers
- Information about third level courses, entry requirements etc.
- Empower students with the skills necessary to make future career choices
- Computer packages to assist in making an informed career choice e.g. Qualifax, Careers Portal etc
- Mock interviews
- Guest speakers from third level institutions, Army, Solas, Garda Siochana etc.
- School outings to open days
- Information on grant payments: SUSI
- Higher options

## **2. The Guidance and Counselling Service – Year Plan**

The following year plan is divided up into the functions and responsibilities of the Guidance Counsellor for each group.

### **JUNIOR CYCLE**

#### **2.1. First Year**

The aim is to ensure that there is a smooth transition for every student from primary school to CBS Roscommon. The emphasis is on happiness and enjoyment of school and to encourage students to get involved in school activities. There is major emphasis placed on the role parents play in making sure that all necessary practicalities are looked after. The Guidance Counsellor makes both parents and students aware of the very important aspects of subject choice and explains the significance of choosing certain optional subjects e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> language. A handout is prepared on this very important topic which includes

guidelines that each parent can use to advise their child in this decision making process. An Open evening is organised for both parents and students.

- In conjunction with the Learning Support Coordinator administer, mark and evaluate incoming first year entrance tests. Work in co-operation with the Learning Support Coordinator, resource and learning support teachers to allocate extra help to academically challenged students.
- Highlight the role of the Guidance Counsellor and the care team system at first year parents' night.
- Advise students and parents on subject choices.
- Introduce yourself at first year class groups.
- Work in co-operation with the care team to meet any students who are having problems settling into the school.
- Individual student counselling.
- Group counselling if necessary.
- Parent/Guardian appointments.
- Meet all first years before February mid-term to check in with them.

## **2.2. Second Year**

- Advise students about taking higher, ordinary or foundation levels in core subjects
- Individual counselling as requested
- Study Skills Programme is organised in conjunction with Second Year Year-Head
- Group counselling as necessary
- Parent's appointments

## **2.3. Third Year**

This is a very important year with students facing their Junior Certificate Examinations and having to make decisions in relation to the type of programme they will take the following year as well as having to make subject choices in some cases.

- Advise students about taking higher or ordinary level subjects at Junior Certificate level

- Classroom based guidance on the need to make informed and appropriate decisions in terms of subject choice and levels to be attempted
- Individual counselling as requested
- Group counselling as necessary
- Parent appointments
- Meet with all class groups and talk about the various options after Junior Cert e.g. LCVP, TY, LC
- Organise a parents' information night
- Offer EirQuest to 3<sup>rd</sup> years going straight to 5<sup>th</sup> year
- Meet all third years regarding subject choice

### **SENIOR CYCLE**

After the Junior Certificate, a number of students follow the Transition Year programme. The other options available to the students on completion of the Junior Certificate include LCVP as well as the established Leaving Certificate. Apart from the range of courses available, choosing the appropriate subjects is also very important for those students who are moving into the Senior Cycle. CBS Roscommon offers a range of subjects at Senior Cycle and as a result it is essential that all students as well as their parents are well briefed and informed.

#### **2.4. Transition Year**

Transition year offers students many opportunities to develop social and personal skills apart from academics when entered into in the correct frame of mind.

- Weekly classes with each group covering the following modules:
  - Module 1 – Work Experience
  - Module 2 – Career/Course Investigation
  - Module 3 – The World of Work
  - Module 4 – Subject Choice
- Introduce students to the career websites etc
- Individual counselling as requested
- Group counselling as necessary
- Parent appointments

- Talk about the various options after TY, e.g. LCVP and LC
- Organise a parents' information night
- Liaise with TY co-ordinator
- Meet with Transition Year Year-Head and Tutors to work on the pastoral care system
- Administer psychometric tests (DATS or CAT4) if requested

## **2.5. Fifth Year**

### **2.5.1. Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme L.C.V.P.**

All the remaining students are either following the established Leaving Certificate programme or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (depending on their subject choices). Every student is encouraged to do as well as they can in their studies. It is hoped that by becoming aware of the realities of the working world they will become more focussed on their studies.

- Advise students about taking higher, ordinary and foundation levels in core subjects
- Advise students about subject choices
- Advise students on choosing their work experience
- Individual counselling as requested
- Group counselling as necessary
- Parent appointments
- Individual consultations about future options by appointment

## **2.6. Sixth Year**

- Each 6<sup>th</sup> year student is given two specific individual career guidance appointments, one before Christmas and one post mock examinations
- Updating of Careers resources and Notice Board
- Individual counselling as requested
- Group counselling as necessary
- Parent appointments
- Organise speakers from third level institutions, Garda Síochána, Army, Solas etc.

- Organise a parent's information night about C.A.O./U.C.A.S./P.L.C, college grants/SUSI and fees etc.
- Organise outings to third level open days
- Mock interviews
- Past pupil talks
- Realistic preparation of students for moving out of home and advising them on a successful transition to third level
- Be available in August when Leaving Certificate results and college offers are made to advise students if requested
- Contact all students who have completed the Leaving Certificate to find out what option they decide on and report back to staff
- Organise study skills for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years; two sessions – one before mid-term and one before the Mocks

### **Timetabling**

1 <sup>st</sup> Years:	No formal class
2 <sup>nd</sup> Years:	No Formal Class
3 <sup>rd</sup> Years:	One class every third week
T.Y.:	One class every week
5 <sup>th</sup> Years:	One class every 3 <sup>rd</sup> week Non L.C.V.P. Group one class per week
6 <sup>th</sup> Years:	One class every other week Non L.C.V.P. Group one class per week

#### **2.6.1. Useful Websites**

[www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) this is the website of the Central Applications Office and for those intending to apply to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) the information on the CAO website should be carefully considered.

[www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie) a very useful careers website with a wide variety of contemporary and information resources for students.

[www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) this is an extremely useful careers website which contains the national data base for all third level courses in Ireland

[www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) this website outlines how specific applicants to the CAO may avail of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) or the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE). Both of these schemes are aimed at increasing participation rate in Higher Education.

[www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) this outlines what financial assistance is available re. grants etc.

[www.susi.ie/www.grantsonline.ie](http://www.susi.ie/www.grantsonline.ie) Student Universal Support Ireland is the single national awarding authority for all student grant applications

[www.ucas.co.uk](http://www.ucas.co.uk) this is the website for those who intend to apply to colleges in the UK

Every HEI has their own individual website

Professional Bodies website

Recruitment Agencies websites

## **2.6.2. Themes and Topics for 6<sup>th</sup> Year Classes**

Students will be given several opportunities to highlight areas of specific interest that they want covered. Every effort will be made to cover these topics.

### **Core Topics**

- National Framework of Qualifications
- CAO/Restricted Entry Courses/Change of Mind Facility/Course Acceptance
- UCAS
- PLC courses
- Preparing for Open Days/Speakers from Colleges/Universities
- SUSI
- Scholarships
- Study Plans
- Aptitude Testing/Career Interest Inventory
- CV/Job Application Forms
- Job Application Process
- Individual Colleges and Universities
- Specific Careers e.g. Medicine/Engineering/Farming
- Travel



- Options after the Leaving Certificate
- College Interview Preparation

### **2.7. Evaluation of the School Guidance Plan**

The Guidance Plan is proposed to respond to the guidance needs of the students in CBS Roscommon and it is not a definitive plan. Thus a review will be carried out at the end of each year on different aspects of the plan in the light of changing circumstances. The Guidance Counsellor is very conscious that a guidance plan cannot be a plan that remains unchanged. Society changes and the challenges which face young people are many and varied and continue to change. While life for young people can be exhilarating and exciting, it can also be very distressful and worrying. Therefore, because of this fluctuating situation, the Guidance Counsellor must continue to make sure that their work is relevant to the students they meet every day. So while it is important to have a plan, it is even more important to be aware that this plan must continue to evolve and change if it is to remain relevant.

### **2.8. Parent/Teacher Meetings**

Parent/teacher meetings are held each year for each of the various years in the school. The Guidance Counsellor is available at every meeting to meet parents.

### **2.9. Other Guidance and Counselling Service Activities**

- Networking with local Guidance Counsellors
- Report to B.O.M. on school guidance and counselling programme
- Liaising with subject department heads to promote curriculum diversity and development
- Presentations at staff meetings on areas such as dealing with emotionally challenged students
- Liaising with HSE/NEPS/NEWB
- Five personal supervision and counselling session per school year
- Annual evaluation of school guidance and counselling service using feedback from students, parents, tutors and management
- Ongoing maintenance of careers resources

- Keep up-to-date on courses and entry requirements
- Networking with local employers to keep the channels open for work experience placements
- Weekly meetings with students care team making sure that it is preventative rather than reactive. The Guidance Counsellor co-ordinates these meetings and records the minutes
- Attend branch meetings and AGM of IGC (Institute of Guidance Counsellors)
- Assist LS with the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate RACE apps.

### **2.10. Record Keeping Procedures**

The Guidance Counsellors operate the following record-keeping procedures.

- Records of all personal counselling and careers/vocational guidance interviews are kept
- Guidance records are kept for seven years after the students leave school
- The records of personal counselling sessions should contain some of the actual words and phrases used by the student and the student should be informed of all matters pertaining to confidentiality between the counsellor and the student
- The Counsellor should ideally write up notes as soon as possible after the session to ensure accuracy and precision, and notes should be brief

### **2.11. Reporting Procedures**

In both the Personal Counselling and Vocational Guidance Interviews the confidentiality rule is adhered to i.e. school management, class teacher, year head and/or parents/guardians are informed if it is felt that the student is a danger to himself and/or to others. As previously mentioned the student is informed of matters pertaining to confidentiality but also of the limits of confidentiality. This is always done at the beginning of the initial session. If the Counsellor feels that this is in the best interests of the students to inform a Teacher/Parent/Guardian/School Management of a particular difficulty, this is only done with the knowledge and hopefully agreement of the student. This proposal acknowledges that Guidance is a whole school issue and as such it is

the responsibility of all staff of the school to adhere to the Child Protection Guidelines and report their concerns about a child to the Designated Liaison Person (Principal).

### **2.12. School Protocol for Meetings/Appointments**

1. Meeting with students
  2. Meetings with parents/guardians
- Students may make an appointment to see their respective Guidance Counsellor at anytime. An appointment will be arranged as soon as possible. Self-referral to the service is encouraged. The Guidance Counsellor will work closely with Years Heads/Tutors and other members of the pastoral care team, often referral is through a Year Head or tutor or indeed any member of the staff.
  - The Guidance Counsellor is most willing to meet parents or guardians on an individual basis. Appointments are usually conducted during school hours but may in certain circumstances be arranged after school. All parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation proves necessary. On occasion the Guidance Counsellor may request that another member of staff be present at a particular meeting e.g. Year Head, subject teacher and/or management. The student may be invited for part or whole of the meeting with approval of the Parents/Guardians. This affords the students responsibility, ownership, accountability and inclusion in the meeting outcomes. Notes of all meetings shall be kept by the Guidance Counsellor.

### **2.13. Links to other Policies and Curriculum Development**

This Guidance Counsellor proposal suggests working in conjunction with other school policies already in place such as: Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Learning Support, Admissions Policy, Critical Incident Plan, R.S.E. Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Substance Abuse Policy and the Student Care Team.

## **Conclusion**

The school Guidance and Counselling plan is a continuing and evolving process. To some extent the best plan, the definitive plan is never arrived at, never completed. Each year, those involved in the planning: Guidance Counsellor, teachers, parents, students and management may change thus altering the dynamic of the plan. Situations and circumstances outside of school can change such as Department of Education and Skills budget and this can have a major knock on impact on the services provided by schools. Consequently, evaluation of the programme is an integral part of the year's work. Quite often this involves making alterations to the curriculum offered in the school. As a result of this approach, the school Guidance Counselling plan will continue to change. Guidance is not only the concern of the Guidance Counsellor in the school. All those in the school are involved and have a role to play, all the staff members through their work and commitment to the school, be it in their teaching, through their work as tutors, their involvement in extra curricular activities are involved in the provision of guidance. The aim of this proposal is to reflect CBS Roscommon's ethos and mission statement which is always:

*Striving for Excellence in a Caring School Community. CBS Roscommon identifies and serves the needs of students and puts in place appropriate resources, curricula, programmes and methodologies to enable everyone to achieve this potential. We believe in having high expectations for all of our students. Students consistently perform better when they know that their teachers and parents believe in them. All Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate subjects are taught at both Higher and Ordinary Level.*

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management:**

**Date: June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Signed: Chairperson of the Board of Management**

**To be reviewed: June 2017.**

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