



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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John Scottus School

Guidance and Counselling Policy

John Scottus School offers a vision of education which gives young people the self mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them. It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover and express their innate gifts: that each child can come to contribute something unique and exceptional and that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is character development through cultivating the life skills of stillness, attention and enquiry. This takes place by emphasising the importance of coming to know your true self, of discovering your true limitless essence and coming to know that we are united in oneness through this essence.

Mindfulness along with philosophy and meditation are considered the 3 key aspects in the journey of self-discovery. The mindful motto of the school is “Delight in the present” and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true self it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

Contents

Section 1 – Aims of The School Guidance Programme

- 1.1 What is guidance in our school?
- 1.2 School Philosophy and Mission Statement
- 1.3 The Aims and Objectives of the Guidance Counselling Service
- 1.4 Summary of Aims
- 1.5 Summary of Objectives.

Section 2 – Current Guidance Provision and Personnel

- 2.1 Provision and Personnel
- 2.2 Current Guidance Provision in the School
- 2.3 Senior Cycle
- 2.4 Junior Cycle

Section 3 – Current Guidance Procedures

- 3.1 Keeping Records
- 3.2 Linking in with parents

Section 4- Current Resources

- 4.1 Facilities

Section 5 – Appendices

Section 1 – Aims of The School Guidance Programme

1.1 What is Guidance in our School?

John Scottus, in line with its aim to devise an overall school plan, has developed a guidance plan. This is in keeping with sections 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998:

9. A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall use its available resources to—

(a) ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices,

(b) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students.

The counselling aspect of guidance involves helping students to navigate through the busy stage of adolescent development. They will increase in their understanding of their feelings and thoughts and connect with inner strengths and outer strategies that will guide them to adulthood with mental wellness and a sense of belonging in their own skins and in the greater community.

1.2 School Philosophy and Mission Statement

Our mission is to motivate, encourage and support students in realising their full potential during their time in school and in their future lives. We adopt a whole school approach to guidance, where there is an awareness among all members of staff of the importance of wellbeing in the lives of our students and staff. We have a Care Team which aims to support the school community in relation to emotional guidance and well being. We also have class teachers and Junior Cycle Head who work in tandem with the Care Team to support the students. Integral to our approach is the inclusion of the school's ethos relating to unity, stillness and enquiry.

1.3 The Aims and objectives of the Guidance Counselling Service

The guidance process helps the student to develop and accept a full personal, social, educational and career awareness of his/her personal talents and abilities and, in this way, it helps people to grow in independence and to make well-informed decisions about their lives.

We aim to provide a wide range of learning activities, such as information giving, counselling and assessment. These are offered in a developmental sequence appropriate to the age and needs of the student.

The plan is inclusive, providing for the junior, senior, minority and special education needs of all students. The plan will include all guidance activities: career classes, Vocational Guidance Interviews, attendance at career exhibitions, open days, meeting with management, and support agencies.

1.4 Summary of Aims:

- All students will have access to appropriate guidance.
- John Scottus Secondary School will provide a comprehensive Guidance and Counselling service to all pupils in accordance with their needs.
- During their time at the school, all students will engage in a range of learning experiences that would assist them in making healthy and informed choices in their lives.
- The Guidance Department will endeavour to enable students reach their full potential.

1.5 Summary of Objectives:

- All students in the school will be informed about the support systems that are in place in the school and know how to access them.
- All students will have access to factual information that would enable them to make informed choices relating to their careers and personal development.
- Students will be given adequate study skills training which would enable them to improve their performance.
- Students requiring specialist intervention will be referred appropriately
- Students will have timetabled careers education classes that would enable them to require the information and to develop the skills necessary to make transitions to further and higher education, training and employment.

Section 2 – Current Guidance Provision and Programme

2.1 Provision and Personnel

As part of fulfilling guidance needs, we at John Scottus Secondary School have a care team that meets weekly. At present this includes the Deputy principal, the guidance counsellor and psychotherapist. The care team is in constant communication with the principal, especially regarding issues that require the input of the principal. He also receives weekly minutes of the Care Team meetings.

The role of the Guidance and Counselling team in John Scottus is evolving and at present includes the provision of support for students on both an individual and group basis.

We, in the John Scottus Guidance Department, believe in a whole school approach to guidance and therefore offer a very comprehensive programme with specific interventions targeted at various year groups in the school.

Communication is essential to the cohesive administering of care to the students and all staff are regularly encouraged to attend courses for CPD and be very familiar with recent developments in the area of child protection legislation.

2.2 Current Guidance Provision in the School

Support is provided in three areas:

- Career
- Educational
- Personal and Emotional

Career Guidance: This includes helping students explore careers, college courses or training opportunities. The Guidance Department facilitates students in developing skills and finding relevant information, which enables them to make good and appropriate career choices. It also facilitates students meeting with professionals from different academic and career areas so as to deepen the students' understanding of particular areas of interest.

Guidance in Education : This aspect of guidance covers advice and support in choosing subjects, choosing higher or ordinary level programmes, addressing difficulties in relation to study skills and exam preparation.

The Guidance Counsellor is responsible for the management of information relevant to career guidance, to promote guidance as a whole school activity and to engage with student on a one to one counselling basis. She is responsible for the senior cycle careers education. She facilitates the Transition year programme giving them information and guidance in relation to work experience, career choices and subject selection for the Leaving certificate cycle. She also takes 5th and 6th year classes and works with them in relation to the career investigation module. She organises relevant field trips and invites key speakers to address the students on issues relating to academic and career decisions. She also sees students for counselling from both the Junior and Senior cycle and teachers are aware they can refer students and students are aware of the open door policy.

Personal and Emotional Guidance: Our guidance counsellor is trained in counselling skills so that she can support students where issues in their personal lives impinge on their performance at school. We also have safe counselling provision for students who need to reflect more deeply on life situations with a non-judgemental and empathic adult who supports by listening and allowing growth in confidence and belief in self.

The psychotherapist on our care team is also involved in this area and takes referrals for personal counselling from parents, year heads and teachers on a needs basis.

From time to time problems may arise in students' lives that require referral to a specialist.

2.3 Senior Cycle

Transition Year students receive advice regarding subject choices and levels and how these may affect their choice of career. Scheduled talks are also given to students with regard to careers. These talks are arranged with the TY Co-ordinator.

Subject teachers are invited to speak about their subject to transition year students during subject choice Week. This is to inform them regarding choices for the Leaving Cert. Students attend a variety of subjects as a trial near the end of Transition year to get a sense of what each subject is like.

5th and 6th year class groups are each timetabled for one Guidance class per week. Depending on the time of year, this class is used for either Career Guidance, Research or RSE.

Each senior student receives a minimum of two careers appointments with the Guidance Counsellor. If a student requires more time than this it can be organised by arrangement with the Guidance Counsellor.

With a person-centred approach, the team undertake the following tasks to assist every student with fulfilling their own individual potential:

- Organize and provide information with respect to education and vocational opportunities
- Support individuals in developing a positive self-concept.
- Career design:
- Facilitate the process of decision making

This is achieved by providing the following services for our students;

- Counselling (personal/ career and educational)
- Personal and Social Development
- Psychometric Testing
- Career Information Management
- Consultation with parents, staff and support agencies
- Managing guidance related activities
- Follow up one to one sessions
- Phone calls
- Research/seeking out information
- E-mailing
- Organising meetings
- Managing the Careers Notice Board
- Managing all information relevant to Guidance (in guidance room and sixth year common room).

Year Group	Educational	Personal Counselling	Career
First to Third Year	Study skills Interest Inventories	Referrals on request	During 2 nd year SPHE a module on Career Guidance is introduced to students
Transition Year	Personal reflection DATS and feedback Subject choices	Referral on request	Careers investigation Work experience DATS and feedback
Fifth Year	Study skills	Referral on request	One to one guidance Guest speakers
Sixth Year	Study skill Review of work	Referral on request	One to one guidance Classes on 3 rd level edu Open Days Higher Options Parent Meeting CAO Meeting

2.4 Junior Cycle

Students from Junior Cycle can be referred to the care team by teachers or parents.

The junior cycle along with the senior years are given time each week to approach topics such as bullying, drug abuse, sex education and self esteem in their SPHE/Philosophy classes. These are not discussed on a whole class approach with the guidance team. Issues may arise of this nature in the private personal counselling sessions.

Section 3 – Current Guidance Procedures

3.1 Keeping Records:

All relevant student information relating to guidance is kept in a locked filing cabinet.

An individual file is opened for all 4th year students and remains opened through to 6th year.

3.2 Links with parents:

Every attempt is made to keep parents involved in and informed of their child's education and to offer guidance where appropriate. Parents are encouraged to make appointments with the relevant member of the guidance team where there is a concern of any nature.

There are also designated meetings for parents of students in the senior cycle relating to transition year, fifth and sixth year. These will be on the general school calendar.

Section 4 – Current Resources

4.1 Facilities:

Includes:

Guidance room

Filing cabinet for storage with access by key only.

Section 5 – Appendices

5.1.Relevant Documents

Here is a list of documents that are relevant to this Guidance Plan:

1. The School Guidance Handbook

<https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook>

2. Codes of Ethics of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors

<http://www.igc.ie/about-us/our-constitution/code-of-ethics>

3. Children First Act

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/acts/2015/a3615.pdf>

4. Planning the School Guidance Programme

<https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook/planning-school-guidance-programme>

5. Freedom of Information Act 2014 and related information on accessing personal information stored by Government departments and other public bodies.(Note: John Scottus not covered by FOI act).

a) <http://foi.gov.ie/>

b) Data Protection in Schools

<http://www.dataprotectionschools.ie/en/>

6. Education Act 1998 Section 9 and Section 21

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=5725&CatID=87&StartDate=01%20January%201998&OrderAscending=0>

7. Department of Education and Science guidelines on the implication of Section 9 of the Education Act on Guidance

https://www.ncge.ie/sites/default/files/.../pp_guidelines_second_level_schools_9c.pdf

8. The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/.../03.-The-Role-of-the-Guidance-Counsellor-docaug-07>

9 Guidance Provision in Second Level School (Circular Letter No. PPT 12/05)

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/ppt12_05.doc

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