



GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

“WE NURTURE AND DEVELOP THE BEST QUALITIES IN EACH OF OUR STUDENTS”

- We are committed to fostering a sense of identity and self – worth in each of our students.
- We are committed to developing a well – rounded individual with skills, attitudes, sensibilities and personal initiative that will allow each to grow into mature, confident adults.
- We are committed to developing the whole person – morally, intellectually, aesthetically, spiritually and physically – in a caring, innovative, multi – denominational environment.
- We are committed to striving for high academic standards and in so doing we seek to challenge each of our students to achieve the best that they can.
- We are committed to ensuring that each of our students embraces the whole world, community and culture, while at the same time fostering an appreciation of Irish culture in which the school is rooted.
- We recognize that serving both the school (students, staff and parents) and the wider community is a cornerstone of our philosophy, and we are committed to developing in each student innovative capabilities to participate in a dynamic world environment.

BACKGROUND TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE

Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 states that a school ‘ shall use its available resources toensure 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 characteristics spirit of the school’.

Guidance is now regarded as a core element of the school’s overall programme. The guidance programme should reflect the needs of students at all stages of their school life.

Our objectives are conditioned by the good practice disseminated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. We see guidance as a continual developmental process which begins prior to the entry of the student to Sutton Park School and concludes after the student has left the school.



'The Sutton Park School guidance programme aspires to college placement both nationally and internationally. It is the aim of all staff in Sutton Park School to ensure students are nurtured to strive to achieve the highest level of placement available in Higher Education Institutes according to the National Framework of Qualifications

SCOPE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT

The guidance department is involved in the implementation of the following programmes throughout the school;

Pastoral care
Social, Personal and Health Educations
Relationships and sexuality education
Work experience
Substance misuse policy
Anti – bullying Policy
Critical Incident Policy
Discipline

The main scope of the Guidance Programme is to provide the following

- **Educational counselling**
- **Career counselling**
- **Personal counselling**

The Guidance Counsellor is the central person responsible for the continuous developmental guidance process which begins on entry of the student to Sutton Park School and concludes when the student has left the school.

The counsellor relates to school management through meeting the Principal and Deputy Principal on matters affecting the planning of the school's provision of personal, career and educational counselling, as well as on matters affecting individual students requiring intervention. The counsellor also relates with Year Heads, Learning Support teachers, Special Needs teachers, Subject teachers and parents as appropriate.



The counsellor has a role in informing the school management and staff of the operation of the guidance department, in contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate programmes, in administering tests and interpreting their results, in managing information, in administering the guidance service and in liaison with referral agencies and professionals outside the school.

Assessments in Guidance;

The guidance department uses standardised tests to provide information which is helpful in predicting academic performance and assisting in subject selection for senior cycle.

The Guidance department will supply this information to class teachers and learning resource to ensure students needs are met.

To ensure students are selecting the most appropriate subjects for senior cycle, all TY students will complete aptitude assessment and interest inventory. This will lead to a profile of the student which will assist them in subject selection and college focus.

In TY students will 'sample' subjects and through this staff will inform the students of the subject detail at leaving certificate level.

Incoming students into the senior cycle must present aptitude results. If these are unavailable Sutton Park School will facilitate the retaking of these assessments.

EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING

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

- Liaising with the Principal and Year Heads concerning pupils who require intervention.
- Offering those pupils counselling with regard to study techniques, educational planning and personal organisation back in classes or small groups.
- Monitoring and being aware of the delivery of study techniques courses within the Social, Personal and Health Education.
- Providing guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progress through meetings, e.g. prior to Transition Year, prior to the Leaving Certificate course and a few months before the Leaving Certificate examinations.



- 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.
- Liaise with the Learning Support departments to identify students requiring further attention.
- Advice on dropping and / or changing a subject
- Be a standing member of the weekly Student Support Meeting

Subject changes;

When changing subjects it is essential that the student attends a meeting to assess the implication of dropping a level or a subject in terms of university and career options. This change will be assessed by the deputy head and consulted with staff. A letter must be provided from the parents with permission. This letter will be followed with a phonecall to explain implications of a change in subject. The guidance counsellor will forward a list to the DP of fully authorized students every Friday in the staffroom. No student may move a class without this move being fully authorized by all parties.

CAREER COUNSELLING

All 4th, 5th and 6th year students will have a career profile on file in the guidance office. This will have details of aptitude results and interest assessment and research / career plans to date. All meetings must be recorded by the Guidance Counsellor with date and details.

- The counsellor addresses all students in 4th year prior to them choosing their subjects for the Leaving Certificate. The counsellor also addresses a meeting of parents on the same topic.
- In 4th year (Transition Year) the counsellor is timetabled to teach a career guidance course to all students. The topics covered include interest inventories, 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, differential aptitude tests, computer-based career programmes. Throughout the career guidance module in TY, students must complete curriculum vitae, cover letters, career project and work experience.
- Every student will apply to CAO / UCAS with deadlines ranging from October 15th to February 1st of the students final year.
- Students must ensure their college applications are safe in order to prepare for all eventualities at result time



- The CAO / UCAS system will be explained in detail to students and their parents at the beginning of 6th year (It is the policy of SPS that all students should unless in exceptional circumstances apply through the CAO in order to maximize 3rd level options. This may well be in addition to other application options within the State or Internationally)
- The DP, Heads of 5th & 6th Years and the Counsellor will liaise with each other to ensure that regular contact is made with students in these grades. A programme of rotating lessons will be allocated to ensure no one subject is overly affected.
- The Counsellor will be assigned to the Computer Room for a minimum of three lessons per year to illustrate the variety of web sites available to students in the Leaving Cert Programme. These sites will include www.qualifax.ie, www.cao.ie and wwwucas.com
- All students and parents will have at least one individual meeting with the Counsellor in both 5th and 6th Years.
- The Counsellor is a member of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and attends regular meetings, Open Days etc., with this organization.
- Applicants for the USA must begin preparation early in 5th year.
- 5th year – further advice on senior cycle subject choice, including a parent evening to inform parents. Individual meetings with all 5th year students must take place (min. 2)
- 6th year - College applications and career advice, including a parent evening for 6 year parents on. Individual meetings with all 6th year students is essential (min.2)

Open days;

- Sutton Park School will organise a visit to the Higher Education Options Conference for all 5th and 6th Years..
- The GC will organise these open day trips and inform of upcoming dates and deadlines
- Parents will be notified via the website of upcoming open days.

CAREER GUIDANCE AS A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH;

Sutton Park School considers career guidance as a whole school priority and considers all staff members to be in a position of guidance and support. Students who excel in certain subject areas



will be notified to the GC, through staff member and will be mentored by relevant staff member when necessary.

It is the priority of Sutton Park School to enable students to make the best possible decision regarding their future academic careers and this will be encouraged through access to information.

Lunchtime seminars will take place throughout the year, primarily aimed at 4th, 5th and 6th year students. These seminars will be held by members of academic institutes, parents or past pupils. To as great a degree as possible these talks will be held in conjunction with themed weeks, e.g. science week, engineering week etc. This aims to help students apply their current subjects to tertiary courses and career areas.

The aim in this is to motivate students within different subject areas and to provide as much information on different routes as possible.

Speakers will be briefed as to information required during seminars, a template will be provided detailing requirements e.g. college choice, specialisations, how to find work in sector etc.

In addition to this, students with an interest in a career area can be mentored by the most appropriate staff member from work experience in TY through to leaving certificate.

A list of Speakers will be posted on the weekly DP's briefing

PERSONAL COUNSELLING

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 education and the adult world.



- Students and parents are free to request a consultation with the counsellor.
- The counsellor also initiates consultations with pupils, teachers and parents when particular circumstances arise indicating that a pupil may be in need of counselling on a personal issue which impinges on their school life.

Adolescence is a time of change and identity development and most adolescents successfully meet these challenges. Inevitably, problems arise and may manifest themselves through difficulties in learning, relationships and in emotional & behavioural development. Staff in Sutton Park School are in a prime position to monitor:

- A pupil may become withdrawn and unable to make friends
- A pupil may be unable to concentrate on class work or homework
- A pupil may become disruptive and / or aggressive in class.

If any member of staff is concerned about a student they must refer the information immediately to the school Counsellor. Any change in behaviour must be taken seriously and be responded to swiftly and appropriately.

At the beginning of the counselling contract students are always informed that what is said in the counselling session is confidential between the counsellor and the student UNLESS the counsellor feels there is a danger to themselves (including eating disorders) or anyone else. Confidentiality will not apply in the case of abuse (Child Protection Guidelines definition applies here).

The buddy programme is organized by prefects and 6th and 1st Year Heads of Year. The GC will provide training to all buddies with particular reference to child protection and referral.

Consultation and referral

- Individual meetings with students are conducted and recorded in the guidance office.
- Parents will be informed if their student is not focused or unwilling to attend Career Counselling.
- The guidance counselor will report to academic advisors regarding students of concern.



- The guidance counsellor is part of the Student Support team which meets weekly. This also includes the deputy head of school and the head of learning resource. These meetings assess any students of concern and ensure that their needs are met appropriately.
- The guidance counsellor will provide up to date information on student's aspirations and academic requirements needed to achieve these goals.
- The guidance counsellor is available for any student concern throughout the day but most appointments are to be booked in advance. A weekly record of meetings will be provided to the DP.
- The guidance counsellor is available throughout the state examinations for support if necessary.
- Students can self refer or be referred by parents or teachers. Parents may ask the counsellor's help in order that the counsellor may help their son/daughter.

Parents are not notified regarding personal counselling, unless in the following situations;

- the student is receiving ongoing support and agrees to inform parents
- the Counsellor needs to discuss issues with parents
- the Counsellor needs to make an external referral

Attending counselling is optional and a student who does not attend will not be reprimanded.

A referral service is also available for any student requiring external support.

Good practice in counselling means:

Always working in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.

- Treating all young people equally with respect and dignity
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering students to share in decision making.
- Keeping a written record of all meetings.

External referral;

The school has no official psychologist, however for all assistance in the area of special accommodations and educational concerns close contact is maintained with



The Guidance Counsellor will receive ongoing training and attend relevant workshops etc. to ensure he / she is up to date with information and courses of suitable action.



Appendix A

Guidance Department Core Duties throughout the year
(this list is not exhaustive and is subject to change)

Key functions of guidance;

September – December

- Introduce to all students and explain remit of Guidance and Counsellor.
- Meet all new students years 2 – 6 (ensure suitable subject choice)
- Primarily meet 6th form applying to UCAS with particular focus on medicine, veterinary and Oxbridge colleges – 15th October deadline. (Include individual meetings, teacher consultation, and aptitude assessment reg.)
- Administer 4th year and new student (year 4 – 6) aptitude assessment.
- Organize timetable of open days and book as required.
- Meet all 6th years at least once in this time frame for UK and Ireland applications.
- Evening meeting with 6th year parents regarding application process.
- Evening meeting with 4th year parents to explain aptitude results and subject selection for TY.

January

- Meet all 6th years again to confirm and clarify CAO / UCAS applications.
- Meet with parents if necessary.
- Ensure staff have list of college aims ahead of mock results.

February – May

- Meet all 4th year students regarding career profile using aptitude results and interest assessment to assist in senior cycle subject selection. Also begin the process of third level choice.
- Meet all 5th years again regarding third level selection
- Meet all 6th year again following mock results and review choices ahead of change of mind.
- Prepare mock interviews for 5th / 6th years ahead of interview for college.
- 4th year parent evening to discuss subject selection for leaving certificate.

Ongoing throughout year;

- Organizing career speakers for 4th, 5th and 6th year
- Teaching and monitoring SPHE classes
- Career classes with TY
- Monitoring and dealing with bullying incidents
- Personal and educational counseling
- Policy development and reviews



Appendix B:

Open day Worksheet

Personal Time Sheet

1. What do I want to get out of my visit to _____?
2. What specific information do I need to get?
3. Are there any particular courses I need to check (requirements, subjects, places, points, particular difficulties, career prospects / opportunities)?
4. Name your particular areas of career interest?

What talks did I go to, at what time and what did I learn?

Talk 1;

Talk 2;

Talk 3;

Fill in and keep as a reference. Take notes of any questions or issues which you would like to discuss.



Appendix C

Template for external speakers

Information to cover in career talk to students;

1. How college choice was made – what advice regarding making the decision
2. What you wish you knew now!
3. Content of college degree (general information)
4. What other career options were available to you on graduation
5. Relevance of degree to present job
6. Route to present position
7. Further qualifications necessary for present position
8. Day in the life of
9. Future options
10. Present market and recruitment within the sector