

DUNDALK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

GUIDANCE PLAN

January 2011

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context and Aims of the School Guidance Plan

This Guidance Plan is specifically designed for Dundalk Grammar School, a multid denominational secondary school. At present, the school has approximately 500 students and provides a range of educational programmes to cater for the needs of students which includes:

- Junior Certificate Programme;
- Transition Year Programme (compulsory);
- Leaving Certificate Programme;
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

The school's Guidance Plan is in keeping with the aspirations of our school mission statement in that students at Dundalk Grammar School live in a community where freedom and responsibility are seen as interdependent, where co-education is natural, and where rational thinking and an open mind are prerequisites of true understanding. Students will be encouraged to grow up sensitive to the rights, needs and dignity of others, aware of the strengths and weaknesses of human nature, and conscious of their environment.

This plan aims to:

- state the objectives and priorities of the provision of guidance;
- enhance the provision of guidance by targeting the needs of the pupils;
- focus the school's resources where they are most needed;
- address the needs of students at varying stages of the secondary school cycle;
- provide a comprehensive counselling service for the school community.

2. THE SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

The guidance counsellor is responsible for the implementation and provision of guidance within the school. This involves constant consultation with all school partners e.g. staff, management, students, parents, Boards of Governors and Management and support agencies outside the school including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The primary functions of Guidance Counselling as outlined by the Department of Education and Science (DES), the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) provides the framework to support and review the counsellor's work in the school. These functions are listed and described below.

2.1. Counselling

Counselling is offered on an individual or group basis. An open door policy exists whereby students can avail of this service and their participation is entirely voluntary. The guidance counselling service will provide a caring context for counselling, engage in advocacy where appropriate and support young people in crises.

i. Individual Counselling

Counselling is offered individually to students in order to assist them in making decisions, resolving problems, coping with crises and enhancing self-awareness. Through individual counselling the student may feel a greater sense of empowerment and be more resourceful in coping with situations that impact on his/her personal, social and emotional well-being.

ii. Group Counselling

Group Counselling takes place within the context of programmes that are currently run by the school, e.g. the Bereavement Support Programme, and programmes that are in the development stage, e.g. the Friends Programme. These groups will be facilitated by the guidance counsellor and other trained staff members. Parental consent for participation in such programmes is always requested.

iii. Counselling Supervision

The guidance counsellor attends five sessions of group counselling supervision each academic year funded by the DES. This assists the guidance counsellor in enhancing competence by providing clinical skill development, ongoing consultation regarding legal and ethical issues and a professional support system that can mitigate stress and burnout.

3. COUNSELLING GUIDELINES

3.1. Confidentiality

The guidance counsellor will take reasonable care to ensure that confidentiality is respected in consultations with students, parents and other professionals. Confidentiality of students must be respected unless there is a clear and immediate danger to the student or to others. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the following circumstances:

- when the guidance counsellor suspects abuse or neglect or the student discloses this;
- when the student poses a danger to himself/herself or to others, e.g. intention to self-harm;
- when the school has a legal obligation to surrender records, e.g. to the HSE or An Garda Siochana.

3.2. Referrals

The guidance counsellor is involved in two types of referral:

- Referrals made to the Guidance Counsellor. Staff members, including academic and ancillary, senior students (Duty Assistants and Prefects) and parents can at all times refer students to the guidance counsellor. This referral can be made formally or informally.
- Referrals made by the Guidance Counsellor. Assistance for students from other qualified professionals/agencies may also be sought where appropriate. Areas of concern may include learning difficulties, bereavement, emotional and behavioural problems. In such cases the guidance counsellor will seek the consent of parents/guardians prior to all external referrals.

3.3. Record Keeping

All records will be kept in accordance with the provisions of the schools Data Protection Policy and under the Freedom of Information Act. In the case of personal counselling records the guidance counsellor will use appropriate coding to protect the identity of the student.

3.4. Multicultural Counselling

Our school community and wider society bring together students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The guidance counsellor will at all times be sensitive to the students' traditions, values and beliefs.

It is also essential to acquire knowledge in relation to each cultural group so that appropriate and effective student specific supports are promoted throughout the school. In this regard the guidance counsellor will liaise closely with the overseas student co-ordinator, Pastoral Care and Year Head teams.

3.5. Assessment

The guidance counsellor will use a range of tests for a number of purposes including prediction of academic performance, categorisation of occupational interests, assessment of behaviour as well as educational and career planning. In communicating these results of tests the guidance counsellor will endeavour to ensure that the results are not misused, misinterpreted or damaging to the student in any way. The purpose of each test administered will be made clear to students and the results will be made available to the student and parents/guardians.

The specific tests used at the school include:

- Differential Aptitude Test (T Form).
- Connor's Teacher's Rating Scale.
- Rothwell Miller Interest Inventory.

- Careers Problem Checklist.
- Career Directions, Careers Portal and Qualifax computer guidance packages.

3.6. Vocational Preparation

As part of the school guidance and counselling service students will be afforded the opportunity to engage in a range of experiences that promote career development and prepare them for the transition to work, training and higher education. Examples include:

- three designated work experience weeks as part of our Transition Year Programme
- visits to industry as part of Business, Geography and LCVP programmes
- visits to Colleges and participation in taster days.
- presentations by all third-level college liaison officers and other speakers.
- participation in the Enterprise and YSI programmes in Transition Year.

3.7. Policy on Student Appointments

A core feature in the provision of guidance is to afford students the opportunity to discuss issues that impact on their social, emotional and personal well-being. An open door policy operates in the school where a student can make an appointment to meet with the guidance counsellor. The student indicates this on the appointments timetable posted outside the careers office.

At the end of each student meeting the guidance counsellor will provide the student with an appointment card. This details the student's name, the appointment time and date, the signature of the guidance counsellor in addition to the time that the student is being returned to class. This card is presented to the subject teacher(s) to explain absence.

3.8. Open-Day Policy

The school recognises the importance and benefit to students of attending college open days. It can greatly assist students in their information gathering and ultimately in their college and course preference.

The school permits each senior student (5th & 6th Year) to attend a maximum of two open days per year during the school week. Where possible students are encouraged to attend open-days that take place at weekends, in an effort to minimise disruption to their academic work.

Where an open day takes place during the school week, an open day request form must be completed by the student, countersigned by parents/guardians and returned to the school for consideration. A copy of this form is included in Appendix 1.

3.9. School Policy on Subject Choice

The school aims to provide students with the greatest possible range of subjects at Junior and Senior Cycle.

Prior to commencing 1st Year, students and parents are asked to select a European language option (French/German/Spanish). In addition they are also asked to select two other optional subjects, listing five in order of preference in the event of being unsuccessful in securing their two top preferences (Technology/Technical Graphics/ Woodwork/Art/Music/Home Economics/Physical Education). A copy of this form can be viewed in Appendix 2.

In March Transition Year students are asked to select their subjects for Leaving Certificate. They indicate their preferences on the 5th Year Subject Choice Form. Appendix 3.

At any stage in junior or senior cycle students may wish to change/drop subject(s). The Subject Change Form, Appendix 4, requires the student to seek the advice of the subject teacher, form teacher and guidance counsellor. If parents agree with the staff recommendations on the form then they must countersign this document and return it to the school prior to the change being officially sanctioned.

3.10. Evaluation & Reflection

It is essential that the school guidance programme is continually evaluated and further developed in order to meet the ever changing needs within the school community.

As a starting point for evaluation senior cycle students will be asked to assess the guidance service at the end of each academic year. The guidance counsellor along with other staff members will highlight specific targets for development within the guidance programme and aim to achieve these within the course of the academic year. In addition to this ongoing evaluation it is envisaged that the school guidance plan would be reviewed every 4 years in an effort to promote a broader definition of guidance within the whole school programme.

4. DUNDALK GRAMMAR SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

1. Pre-Entry	
Primary School Visits <i>October - December</i>	Conducted by the Headmaster and School Chaplain providing information of programmes on offer in the school.
School Open Day <i>October</i>	Meet with prospective students and parents and provide information on programmes and subject choice.
Interviews with prospective 1st Year parents <i>November</i>	Gather information on students regarding academic attainment, health issues, individual educational needs for students with a Specific Learning Difficulty(SLD)
Assessment <i>March & April</i>	Use Drumcondra Reasoning Tests along with school reports to develop an academic profile. Other relevant documentation, e.g. psycho-educational reports, will be used in conjunction with the above to implement appropriate supports for students where necessary

2. First Year	
First Year Induction <i>August</i>	Meet with each class group and parents to explain the guidance counsellor's role in the context of the pastoral care structure within the school.
Application & Progress <i>October</i>	At the beginning of October meet with each class group and discuss homework & study techniques.
Teacher Referrals	Meet with students individually to identify issues and discuss strategies to improve performance.
Development of IEP's (Individual Education Plans) <i>October</i>	Liaise with colleagues in the Learning Support Department to identify and implement appropriate supports for students with SLDs.

3. Second Year	
New Students <i>September & October</i>	Induction, subject options, timetable arrangements and other issues that may be a cause of concern in the initial weeks. Meet with new students regularly in the first month.
Teacher Referrals	Meet with students individually to identify issues and discuss strategies to improve performance.
Behavioural Difficulties	Review and develop strategies for students that present with behavioural difficulties. Where appropriate, and with parental consent, referral to an educational psychologist (e.g. the school's NEPs Psychologist).
Student Appointments	Meet with individual students to devise study timetables or discuss issues of concern to them.

4. Third Year	
Teacher Referrals	Issues around application and subject levels for Junior Certificate discussed.
Study Skills <i>January</i>	Workshop for all students in January each year conducted by an outside agency. A full-day programme.
Classroom Visits <i>March</i>	Meet with each class to discuss to outline options after Junior Certificate.
Student Appointments	Meet with students who may be changing schools. Inform the Headmaster in order to set up a meeting with parents and the student.

5. Transition Year	Each class group has one formal guidance class per week. The year is broken up into four 7 week modules. Each student has at least one meeting with the guidance counsellor in the second part of the year to discuss subject and career choice.
Module One Vocational Preparation <i>September - November</i>	Concept of a career explored. CV preparation, Interview techniques and work experience discussed. Three designated weeks in the school year are set aside for students to undertake work placements in the months of November, February and May.
Module Two: Assessment <i>November - January</i>	Explanation and administration of Differential Aptitude Tests (DAT). Each student completes a range of interest inventories. Results of DATs explained and discussed with each individual student.
Module Three Subject Choice <i>January - March</i>	Different Leaving Certificate programmes outlined, LC, LCA & LCVP. Each subject available in the school discussed in detail, e.g. content, project/practical components and relevance to potential courses and career areas. Subject Choice form explained and posted to each student. Subject Choice evening held for students and parents.
Module Four Going to College <i>March - May</i>	Range of courses explained under the national qualifications framework. Entry requirements discussed and general costs associated with college highlighted. All students attend for mock interview.

6. Fifth Year	Each class group has a minimum of one class period of guidance per month. This is supplemented with visits by college liaison officers and guest speakers during the course of the year.
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Programme Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of subject choice - Outline procedure for changing/dropping subjects - Study Skills workshop – refresher course (outside organisation) - Report on destinations of most recent Leaving Certificate students - The points system & course requirements (HPAT) - CAO and UCAS application systems examined - Alternative programmes after Leaving Certificate – FAS, Tourism etc - PLC Courses and the FETAC Links scheme - Time management & an outline of deadlines in 6th Year
One-to-one interviews with students	Subject and level changes examined and recommendations given
Referrals by staff	Concerns relating to academic performance, motivation etc.
Visits by College Liaison Officers <i>September - March</i>	
Preparation of RACE applications	Assist colleagues in the learning support department with applications for accommodations in Leaving Certificate for students with SLD's.
Update on Guidance Resources	Identify new guidance sites, e.g. careersportal.ie, studentfinance.ie

7. Sixth Year	One class per week conducted on a 4 week rotation basis. Classes brought together for visiting guest speakers.
Programme Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study Skills workshop (outside organisation) – refresher course - All students attend the Higher Options Conference - Destinations of most recent Leaving Certificate class relayed - UCAS applications commence - CAO application packs administered. - CAO information evening for students & parents - All students attend the DKIT annual open day. - Changes in CAO system highlighted (following CAO/HEI conference) - NUI language exemptions processed - Exploring the DARE and HEAR application procedures - CAO applications begin - PLC/FAS/Tourism courses - Third Level Grant scheme explained - The cost of going to college – information on accommodation costs etc - Taking stock after the mocks presentation - Leaving Certificate timetable distributed to students - The Offer Stage – procedure for accepting/declining college offers. - Appeals & Viewing of scripts – important dates and procedures

Visits by College Liaison Officers <i>September - March</i>	
Individual student & parent appointments	
Track Destinations of Leaving Certificate students <i>August - September</i>	Each student is contacted individually following the offer stage. Information is compiled and relayed to staff.

5. COUNSELLING & STUDENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES

Junior & Senior Cycle	Counselling
Assessment of students' individual needs.	Information provided by parents, teacher referrals and other agencies will be utilised to provide appropriate supports for the individual in school. Case conferences held by the school pastoral team.
Counselling	An open door policy exists where students can make appointments to discuss issues in a safe and supportive environment. Student participation is completely voluntary at all times.
Attendance	In consultation with Year Heads and Form Teachers identify students at risk and implement support. Where necessary inform the NEWB and the local education welfare officer would provide additional support to both the students and parents.
Drug & Alcohol Abuse Programmes	Liaise with SPHE teachers.
Liaising with the Traveller Education Officer/Overseas student co-ordinator and Head of Boarding	Identify and respond to the specific needs of students within these groups.
School Anti-Bullying Policy	Liaise with the student welfare officer in identifying and supporting students at risk. 'Cool School Programme' run in conjunction with SPHE teachers Annual School Friendship Week.
School Critical Incident Plan	Identify and define the roles of key contact people that will offer support to students and staff.
Social & Emotional Programmes	Bereavement Support Programme runs each January. Open to all students throughout the school. Love for Life Organisation invited to make presentations in school covering topics on relationships and sex education. This complements the work by SPHE teachers. Friends Programme currently in the planning stage. The objective of this programme is to assist students in developing social skills.

6. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED

National Educational Psychological Service	(NEPS)
Health Service Executive	(HSE)
Department of Education and Science	(DES)
National Educational Welfare Board	(NEWB)
Institute of Guidance Counsellors	(IGC)
National Centre for Guidance in Education	(NCGE)
Differential Aptitude Tests	(DAT)
Leaving Certificate	(LC)
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme	(LCVP)
Leaving Certificate Applied	(LCA)
Young Social Innovators	(YSI)
Specific Learning Difficulty	(SLD)
Health Professionals Aptitude Test	(HPAT)
Central Applications Office	(CAO)
Universities & Colleges Admissions Service	(UCAS)
Post-Leaving Certificate	(PLC)
Further Education & Training Awards Council	(FETAC)
Higher Education Institute	(HEI)
Dundalk Institute of Technology	(DKIT)
National University of Ireland	(NUI)
Disability Access Route to Education	(DARE)
Higher Education Access Route to Education	(HEAR)

7. APPENDICES

7.1. Open Day Consent Form

7.2. Subject Choice Form (Junior Cycle)

7.3. Subject Choice Form (Senior Cycle)

7.4. Subject Change Form