# Guidance

**GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS**

There are two guidance counsellors in Loreto Secondary School – Majella Rafter and Kay Phelan. Both are fully qualified and are members of the professional body, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. In addition to our permanent Guidance Counsellors, the Board of Management has made available the services of a member of the staff who is also a qualified counsellor.

As with all services of the school, guidance and counselling is provided in line with the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Guidelines which have been adopted in full by the Board of Management. The Principal has been appointed as the Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy Designated Liaison Person to operate their functions in accordance with the guidelines.

**SCHOOL GUIDANCE POLICY**

Guidance is regarded as a core element of the school's overall programme. The guidance programme seeks to respond to the needs of the students at all stages of their education in the school.
The objectives of the guidance programme are not only framed by reference to the legislative requirements, but are also referenced by the good practices disseminated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. Guidance in the school is viewed as a continual development process which begins prior to the entry of the student into Loreto Secondary School and concludes after the student has left the school.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**;

<u>The aims of guidance include;</u>

- To provide a framework for the delivery of the school's guidance programme.
- To ensure a structured response is in place to meet the personal, educational, social and career guidance needs of the students.
- To ensure that all students, junior, senior, non-Irish nationals, those with special needs, are catered for and included in the guidance activities of the school.

<u>The objectives of guidance include;</u>

- To help each student become aware of their talents and abilities and how best to utilise these talents and abilities so as to optimise their engagement with education and to reach their optimum potential.
- To assist students to make choices about their lives (Personal and Social, Educational and Career) and to make transitions consequent on these choices.
- To help students develop a positive self concept and assist them to explore career areas, in terms of their interests, desires and abilities.

- To bring students to a position of independence that allows them to make a career choice, which will ultimately lead to personal fulfillment.
- To encourage students to become independent learners by engaging in information finding and processing.

**DEFINING GUIDANCE**

Guidance refers to the range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assists students to make choices - personal and social, educational, and career - about their lives and which enables them to successfully deal with the transitions which result from such choices. A spectrum of activities and services are provided in order to assist students; counselling, assessment, advice, information, educational development programmes, personal and social development programmes, vocational development programmes and referrals.

**THE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR**

There are three main areas in which the guidance counsellor exercises his/her role. The three areas are educational counselling, career counselling and personal counselling. Operating in these areas the guidance counsellor works in conjunction with the students, the parents/guardians, the management and the staff of the school. Whilst the guidance counsellor has the specific training in counselling, it is only through a collaborative approach that students experiencing difficulties in any of these areas will be given the necessary support to assist them to overcome their difficulties and to optimise their learning.

The role of the guidance counsellor is one which is formative, informative and consultative and involves helping to direct and develop students' capacity to become self-directed and independent learners, equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed decisions. Such a role is carried out in consultation with the students', parents/guardians and with other members of staff.
The guidance counsellor has a role in informing school management and staff about the operation of the department, in contributing to the development and evaluation of appropriate programmes, in administering psychometric tests and interpreting their results, in managing information, in administering the guidance department and in liaising with appropriate professionals, bodies, and agencies outside of school.
The remit of guidance involves three distinct, yet very much interlinked areas; personal guidance, educational guidance and career guidance.

**PERSONAL GUIDANCE**

Personal guidance is a key part of the school guidance programme. It encompasses relatively brief interventions (from once-off meetings, to meetings ranging over approximately six to ten weeks) with students either on an individual or group basis. Such interactions may be part of the developmental learning processes of students but may also result from students' moments of personal crisis. Personal guidance

may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or a combination of these. Counselling is available on a referral basis. Students may self-refer or can be referred by management, staff or parents/guardians. The exercise of this role is carried out in the following ways:

- Publicising to the students and at parents' meetings the role of the guidance counsellor and the counsellor's availability to individual students for consultation at any time, within the framework of guidance hours available.
- 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.
- The counsellor is consulted by school management and pastoral care personnel on such issues.

**CAREER GUIDANCE**

Career guidance encompasses a variety of activities including the following:

- The guidance counsellor has both class contact presentations and group meetings with all First Years to assist them in making the transition from primary to secondary school. A study skills module is also taught in September to First Years. Guidance classes are also given to students to assist them in choosing their subjects for the Junior Certificate.
- Presentations are made to Third Years on the various options after their Junior Certificate. The guidance counsellor assists Third and Fourth Year students with their subject choice for senior cycle.
- Presentations are made to parents on the issue of subject choice and options after completion of Junior Certificate. There is a night for First Year parents, a night for Third Year and Fourth Year parents, and an information night for Sixth Year parents.
- Each class at Junior Cycle level receives a module of guidance (five class periods) in each year.
- Every student in Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Year receives one class period of guidance once a week.
- Follow up meetings and telephone conversations concerning career issues also take place between the guidance counsellor, students and parents as required.
- The guidance counsellor advises and assists students on the completion of CAO, Post Leaving Certificate, UCAS and any other relevant applications.
- The Guidance Department liaise with among others, Colleges of Further Education, Institute of Technologies and Universities.

**EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE**

The ways in which the guidance counsellor fulfils this role include:

- Liaising with the Principal and Year Heads concerning pupils who require intervention.
- Offering educational counselling to pupils who require intervention with regard to study techniques, educational planning and personal organisation.
- Providing guidance and information to students and parents at appropriate stages in their progression through secondary school.
- Being available to Leaving Certificate pupils in late August/early September to offer advice if required
- Liaise with Special Needs and Learning Support departments to identity students requiring further attention.

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

Follow the links to any of these websites: 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.dyslexia.ie Support website for dyslexic students
- www.careersportal.ie A very useful careers website with a number of resources for students.
- www.qualifax.ie This is another useful careers website
- 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 This outlines what financial assistance is available re grants etc.
- www.careerdirections.ie A very comprehensive site, run by FÁS, giving details of numerous occupations
- www.ucas.co.uk This is the website for those who intend to apply to colleges in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- www.1life.ie Suicide helpline
- www.belong2.org A website for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people in Ireland.
- www.itsnotyourfault.org Advice, information and things to remember for children on marriage breakup and divorce.
- www.letsomeoneknow.ie Support on many issues concerning young people.
- www.console.ie Bereavement support for those affected by suicide
- www.aware.ie To assist those whose lives are directly affected by depression
- www.al-anon-ireland.org Support website for relatives and friends of alcoholics.

- www.treoir.ie  Support website for young parents.
- www.bodywhys.ie Support for people affected by eating disorders.
- www.childline.ie  Support on many issues concerning young people.