



Coláiste Pobail Acla

Whole School Guidance Policy

Coláiste Pobail Acla,
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Achill,
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1. School Mission Statement

At Coláiste Pobail Acla we strive to motivate our school community to realise its full potential academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally in a safe, supportive learning environment

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all students, their Parents/Guardians, staff and Board of Management.

3. Rationale

Schools are required in accordance with the Education Act (1998) to ‘ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance’ (Section 9c), with the consequence that guidance is an integral part of a school’s curricular activities.

The Act also requires schools to develop a school plan based on the needs of the school.

This policy having due regard for the education Act 1998 sets down how guidance is regarded as a core element of this school’s curriculum.

4. The Aims of the Guidance Programme

- To make all stakeholders aware of the importance of addressing the guidance needs of all students in Coláiste Pobail Acla.
- Help students explore their thoughts and feelings and the choices open to them in the various aspects of their lives.
- Give care and support to students learning to cope with specific difficulties and those learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up.
- Provide several types of psychometric tests and interest inventories to assist students to obtain a better self-understanding.
- Provide information on education and training opportunities, occupation and labour market trends and to assist students in the transition to further and higher education, training and employment.
- Provide individual students with advice and directions in the personal, social, education and career areas.
- Assist students in choosing their subjects and to develop study skills and exam techniques.
- Co-operate with the SPHE teachers in the delivery of knowledge and skills relating to the personal and social development, self-awareness, decision making and planning of students
- Refer students if necessary to outside services such as GP’s and NEPS.
- Facilitate the referral of individual students to the Guidance Counsellor by teachers, Board of Management, school management, and Parents/Guardians while respecting the voluntary participation of the referred student.

- Provide an Induction Programme for incoming first year pupils and to assist their transition from primary to secondary school.
- Facilitate students to experience the world of work in a meaningful and structured way in conjunction with Parents/Guardians, relevant programme coordinators and work providers.
- Track the progression of past pupils so that current pupils can benefit from their knowledge and experience of further and higher education, training and employment.
- Be available by appointment to Parents/Guardians who wish to discuss issues arising for individual pupils.
- Establish links with employers, relevant agencies and institutions to enhance the provision of guidance for the pupils.
- Be available to Leaving Certificate students and Parents/Guardians on Leaving Certificate Results Day and CAO Offers Day.
- Be contactable by Leaving Certificate students and Parents/Guardians about CAO offers, HEAR offers, DARE offers, UCAS offers, once offers are made by the aforementioned establishments.
- Ensure there is a whole school approach when working to give the students the correct guidance in the appropriate areas.
- Inform Parents/Guardians of the objectives, provisions and services available with respect to guidance.
- Continually review students' progress in consultation with Subject Teachers, Tutors, Pastoral Care Team, HSCLO, Chaplain, SCP, etc.
- Strive to ensure that all members of staff are aware of how to deal with guidance issues sensitively, correctly and appropriately.

Coláiste Pobail Acla's Guidance Policy is also heavily influenced by the realisation that we are living in a time of enormous change. The rate of development driven by technology and globalisation means that organisations are constantly exposed to growth. Security lies not in employment but in employability, so individuals constantly need to learn new skills. The guidance programme of Coláiste Pobail Acla will help students to develop self-awareness, career management skills and a self-directed approach to lifelong learning. This policy aims to provide clarity of purpose between and among all stakeholders in keeping with the school's Mission Statement and in compliance with current legislation.

5. The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

Guidance counsellors are professionally trained to undertake the following tasks within the school guidance programme:

- **Counselling:** empowering students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviour and resolve issues in their lives. Such activity may be personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling, or it may involve combinations of each. Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis.
- **Support:** The guidance counsellor provides support to Parents/Guardians, teachers, the school principal, Board of Management and referral agencies in assisting the personal and social, career and educational development of students.
- **Assessment:** The guidance counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other evaluative instruments to support relevant objectives of the school guidance programme. Such objectives may be related to career and educational planning, personal decision making and development of self-awareness.
- **Information:** Assisting students to acquire interpret and use information relevant to their personal and social, educational and career development.
- **Classroom Guidance Activities:** Providing classroom-based learning experiences that are relevant to the objectives of the school guidance programme. Such experiences may include information giving, information and communication technologies (ICT), skills development (e.g. planning, decision-making, study skills, communication, values clarification), and vocational preparation.
- **Planning and Organising Workplace Learning:** Schools need to make provision for work based or work simulation learning experiences relevant to the personal and social, educational and career learning objectives of the school guidance programme. Such experiences include work experience, work shadowing, visits to workplaces, training centres and higher education institutes etc.
- **Referrals:** Seeking for students the assistance of non-school based professionals e.g. NEPS, following standard procedures. The guidance counsellor also provides support for students referred to him/her by teachers, Parents/Guardians and School Management.
- **Professional Development:** The guidance counsellor should keep abreast of on-going changes in the fields of training, education, work, and child welfare. The School management should facilitate the attendance of the guidance counsellor at relevant events and at in-career professional

training during the school year. Participation in these events should be related to the objectives of the school guidance programme. Attendance at non-school based events should be negotiated/agreed in advance between the School management and the guidance counsellor.

6. Organisation of Guidance

6.1. Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance curriculum is delivered using two forms of intervention employing a number of methodologies:

1. Individual contact of a personal counselling nature and careers/vocational guidance.
2. Classroom guidance delivered in regular weekly classes

6.2. Informal Guidance

The Informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with other teaching staff, school management, Parents/Guardians and local service providers to promote cross curricular links and to enhance the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of The Guidance and Counselling Plan. Meeting with Parents/Guardians form an integral part of informal guidance as do career events and information nights.

6.3. Grouping of students

Students participate in the Guidance programme within their class group. Class groupings are organised on a streamed basis in Junior Cycle. In Senior Cycle, they are streamed but they are also banded which allows students to access their core subjects at an appropriate level.

6.4. Target Groups

The School Guidance Service is open and accessible to all students. However, we recognise that there are students who need to have priority access to the service. These include, but are not limited to students who:

- are undergoing a personal difficulty.
- are affected by bereavement, separation, divorce or another loss.
- are underachieving academically.
- have issues to do with behaviour.
- are new to the school.
- have been bullied.
- have issues with school attendance.
- have physical and/or intellectual challenges.
- non-national students (difficulties with language/integration).

7. Student Development

The Guidance service is available to all year groups. In terms of Guidance Counselling hours, priority is given to TY, Fifth and Sixth years but the service is also heavily involved in First Year induction, testing and retesting, subject choice and progress monitoring with Third Years, etc.

‘Guidance’ refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assists students to make choices in three primary areas:

7.1. Educational Choices

- To remain in formal education.
- To encourage students ‘development as independent learners’.
- To provide the option of a Transition Year Programme.
- Subject Choice and Levels for Leaving Cert Programme with particular reference to required or recommended subjects for all Further Education and training courses.
- To aim at achieving the highest Educational standards.
- The development of students’ full potential in all areas.

7.2. Social Personal Guidance

- One to one and group/class work as appropriate.
- Provision of and access to personal Counselling.
- Behavioural choices in both their personal and educational development.
- Relationship issues in relation to bullying suicide prevention and other matters relating to student’s Mental Health.
- The Personal development of our students and their welfare is also discussed in different forums throughout the school.
- As part of our whole school approach to guidance these issues are also addressed in various other school policies, see the section on Related Policies for this information.

7.3. Career Choices/Guidance

- Careers Information.
- Further education and training information.
- Vocational decisions supplemented by careers assessments.
- Development and identification of ‘Personal transferable skills’.
- Information on the world of work.
- Experience of the world of work through work experience.
- Looking at Personal strengths.

8. Careers on the Curriculum

Careers classes are timetabled in Coláiste Pobail Acla. Some of the course content is listed below.

- Testing and Feedback
 - Group testing
 - Individual testing
 - Written test results
 - Individual meetings for each student
- Senior Cycle Information
 - Class presentations
 - Information booklet
 - Information night for Parents/Guardians
 - Individual appointments
 - Appointments for Parents/Guardians
 - Programme Co-ordinators
 - Subject Teachers
- Subject Choice
 - Class presentations
 - Information booklet
 - Information night for students and Parents/Guardians
 - Individual appointments
 - Appointments for Parents/Guardians
- College Requirements
 - Class presentation
- World of Work
 - Class presentation

9. Contact with Parents/Guardians

During the academic year, Parent/Guardian teacher meetings are scheduled for all classes. He/she will assist Parents/Guardians to support the student with their subject choices for Leaving Cert. A Subject Options Evening may be organised in the school, refer to our Subject Options Policy for further information on this. He/she will present a CAO Information/Study Skills Seminar for Parents/Guardians of Senior Cycle Students.

10. General Procedures

10.1. Referral System

Students may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor by Principal, Deputy Principal, Tutors or staff members. They may also be referred by Parents/Guardians, HSCLO or by self-referral.

Peer support is encouraged. Students see the Guidance Counsellor on an appointment basis with the co-operation of class teachers.

Students will be referred to outside agencies when appropriate and in consultation with the students' Parents/Guardians he/she can be referred to the appropriate professional.

In keeping with Article 3.6 (ii) of the 1996 Guidelines for Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools the voluntary participation in counselling of the referred pupil is always respected.

10.2. Guidance Counselling Confidentiality

Confidentiality is extremely important in the provision of a guidance and counselling service. All reasonable steps to preserve confidentiality about clients/students will be taken. Confidential information will be disclosed only with the clients consent unless concealment would result in danger to the client/student or others. The Guidance Counsellor will operate in reference to the 'Children First Guidelines and Legislation - 2017' and may defer to the judgement of the DLP. Sharing concerns of this nature does not constitute a breach of confidentiality. It is important to recognise one's professional limitations and seek expert advice when necessary. If the student is under 18 years of age the Parents/Guardians are entitled to information.

10.3. Record Keeping

All tests and results are kept in the Guidance Office. The Guidance Office is locked when not in use. Care is taken to record facts rather than any form of conjecture.

11. Testing/Assessment

11.1. Overview

The Guidance and Learning Support departments use standardized tests to provide information which is helpful in predicting academic performance, assessing learning support requirements and levels of achievement. Aptitude tests, interest inventories and exam performance are all useful tools for the Guidance Counsellor.

11.2. Psychological Assessments

All incoming first years are assessed using the CAT 4 (cognitive abilities test). Tests are corrected and scored by computers. Test scores feed into Literacy and Numeracy initiatives in the school along with scores from our re-test towards the end of first year.

11.3. Differential Aptitude Test (DAT)

Each fifth-year student has an individual meeting with the Guidance Counsellor to discuss his/her results with a view to choosing suitable college courses etc.

When giving such feedback we bear in mind that the information could potentially damage the student. Sensitivity and confidentiality, therefore are extremely important. We interpret the results in language easily understood by the student.

We attach significant importance to the security of test materials and results. Tests are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

12. Policy on Dropping/Changing a Subject

Refer to Coláiste Pobail Acla's Subject Options Policy.

13. Whole School Approach to Guidance

This policy recognizes that Guidance is a whole school activity and that links to other planning teams, academic and extra-curricular activities and other stakeholders in CPA are very important. There are strong links with the Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care Teams as well as the SPHE department.

14. Pastoral Care Team

Refer to Coláiste Pobail Acla's Pastoral Care Policy.

15. Reviewing and Evaluating

The plan will be reviewed and evaluated at certain pre-determined times, in the light of experience and feedback from Parents/Guardians, students, teachers and others.

The plan will be reviewed with a view to amending it, if:

- The plan may need to be revised / updated from time to time to take account of new target groups of students, additional needs of students and new priorities.
- It may become evident that certain guidance activities are more effective than others or that some objectives have become redundant through the passage of time.

The plan will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning. Particular indicators will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

Examples might include the extent to which:

- Guidance is seen as a whole school activity
- The provision of guidance is a co-ordinated activity
- Positive feedback is received from students, Parents/Guardians and staff in relation to the effectiveness of the school's guidance programme
- The guidance plan is having the desired outcomes e.g. specific targets are being met.

16. Related Policies and Documents

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Out of School Activities Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- S.P.H.E / R.S.E / R.E
- I.C.T. Policy
- Subject Options Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Attendance and Participation Policy
- Education Act 1998
- Planning the School Guidance Programme (2004)
- Looking at Guidance (2009)
- Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools (1996)

17. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: _____

Mr. Pat Kilbane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Mr. Paul Fahy

Board Secretary & School Principal (Acting)

Date: _____

18. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

Below is a list of abbreviations and acronyms used in this policy.

CAT	Cognitive Ability Test
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DAT	Differential Aptitude Test
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HSCLO	Home School Community Liaison Officer
I.C.T.	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IT	Information Technology
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
TY	Transition Year
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service