



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK GUIDANCE PLAN

(Adopted by the Board of Management on 25th May 2021)

“Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives.

It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance”.

(DES, 2005)

Table of Contents

Vision, Mission & Introduction	3
Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School	3
Rationale	4
Definition of the Guidance and Counselling Service	5
Confidentiality Policy	5
Whole School Approach to the Guidance Programme	6
Assessment Policy	7
Record Keeping Procedures	7
Reporting Procedures	8
School Protocol for Meetings/Appointments	8
Links to other Policies & Curriculum Development	9
Whole School Guidance	10
Review Procedures	16
Appendix i - A Guidance & Counselling response to students ‘coming out’ in Dominican College Muckross Park	17
Appendix ii - Needs of young students who are LGBT	19
Appendix iii - Confidentiality Policy	21

Our Vision

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

Our Mission

To provide our students with an education that in the spirit of St. Dominic:

- recognises and responds to the unique needs and abilities of each individual student
- encourages the development of positive, respectful and inclusive relationships
- challenges each student to speak and act with honesty and integrity.

Introduction

This is the Whole School Guidance Plan for Dominican College Muckross Park. It is a structured document which describes the school guidance programme and specifies how the guidance needs of the students are to be addressed and delivered. The plan reflects the uniqueness of the school in its own particular context and circumstances. This particular Guidance Plan refers to the subject 'Guidance' as it is delivered to students of this school and takes into consideration the needs of our students and the resources available to us to implement this plan. This plan forms part of the Whole School Plan.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Dominican College Muckross Park is a Christian school in the Roman Catholic tradition. The motto 'Veritas' inspires the school's Dominican ethos which is enshrined in the booklet *In Search of Truth (The Dominican Way in Education)*.

Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person. Within the school community we share our search for truth about God, the world, ourselves and our eternal destiny. We work in partnership with parents to instruct and educate the young people in our school. We encourage respect, responsibility, initiative, personal growth and leadership. Our school community is based on a sense of trust. The Guidance plan reflects this respect for the individual in its student centred holistic approach. The promotion and enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of potential – academic, personal, social and emotional – leading to a greater personal autonomy for all students are its central goals.

Rationale

This Whole School Guidance Plan meets the school's obligations under the Education Act 1998 Section 9 (c). By stating the objectives of the Guidance programme it helps focus limited resources on areas identified by the stakeholders as being most important. The plan encourages input and ownership from all partners in a collaborative and positive fashion.

Definition of Guidance

Guidance refers to a wide range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self management skills which will lead them to make effective and informed choices about their lives and in making transitions to these choices. These learning experiences may be broken down into three very distinct but interlinked areas:

- Personal and social development
- Educational guidance
- Vocational guidance

Guidance resources and activities that assist students in the decision making process include:

- Personal counselling
- Career information (classroom, personal, vocational guidance interviews, attendance at careers events, guest speakers, on-line course provider sites, etc)
- Personal and social developmental programmes
- Information technology

Definition of Counselling

Counselling is a key and intrinsic part of the school guidance programme which is offered on an individual basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis. Counselling may come in the form of personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of the aforementioned. Counselling facilitates students in crisis by suggesting and exploring a range of coping strategies and interventions in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs. Counselling can only take place in an atmosphere where the young person feels secure, accepted and understood. Counselling facilitates the individual students in a holistic way to realistically appraise their abilities, interests and aptitudes in order to make appropriate life choices and achieve personal happiness and fulfillment in life. The Guidance Counsellor can be involved in group, individual or peer counselling as is necessary.

Aims of the Guidance and Counselling Service

- To meet the social, personal, educational and vocational needs of each student within the school.
- To act as the administrator of all guidance and counselling services that operate within the school.
- To assist each student in realising, accepting and developing his or her own unique talents, skills, aptitudes and abilities.
- To assist each student in making realistic, appropriate and informed career choices.
- To provide a model of counselling based on sound theoretical theory to any student who wishes to avail of such a service.

Confidentiality Policy

The Guidance & Counselling Service is a professional counselling service, which abides by a strict code of ethics and confidentiality policy as outlined by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. Confidentiality is a central and integral part of the counselling process and is assured to each student who avails of the Counselling Service. It offers safety and privacy to those who choose to discuss personal and private concerns. The issue of confidentiality is always discussed with students during the first session. This provides the opportunity to clarify any concerns that may arise. Counselling Service files are not attached to any academic records held within the school.

Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed stand-alone Policy on Confidentiality.

Limits to Confidentiality

In exceptional circumstances Guidance Counsellors may need to break confidentiality if they believe there is a real intent of serious harm or danger to either their student or another individual. Such circumstances may pertain to issues relating to sexual abuse, rape, self-harm, suicidal ideation or criminal activity. In as far as is possible, in such cases, a full explanation will be given to the student regarding the necessary procedures that may need to be taken. Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed stand-alone Policy on Confidentiality.

Whole School Approach to the Guidance Programme

Guidance is a whole school endeavor that all members of the school community are responsible for and have a role in implementing.

- Learning Support teachers
- Teachers of S.P.H.E. / R.S.E.
- R.E. Team
- Year Heads
- Class tutors
- Chaplain
- Principal / Deputy Principal
- Subject Teachers
- Ancillary Staff
- Representatives of the Student Council
- Representatives of the Parents Association
- Board of Management
- Trustees

Guidance Personnel

The Guidance Counsellor is keen to ensure a good working relationship with the school's Chaplain and the members of the Learning Support team.

The Role of the School Chaplain

The Chaplain is a faith presence in the school, committed to the values of Christ, chaplain to the whole school community and a support to the R.E. Department. A significant role of the Chaplain's work will be to ensure that the characteristic spirit of the school, as expressed in the school's mission statement, finds practical expression in faith formation as well as pastoral, liturgical, para-liturgical and outreach services. The Chaplain holds a specific pastoral role and will be required to act collaboratively with all other staff, in particular with those who hold designated pastoral responsibilities relating to students, staff and members of the wider community connected with the school. The Chaplain while upholding the normal disciplinary procedures of the school will not be expected to exercise a disciplinary function as this would mitigate

against her/his pastoral role in this school. The Chaplain will work within agreed structural arrangements as outlined by the Principal.

Formal Guidance

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

- Individual appointments with students
- Classroom guidance delivered in classes or modular format or year group intervention as required.

Informal Guidance

The Informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with other Teaching Staff/Management to actively promote cross curricular links and to enhance the development of a whole school approach in relation to the delivery of the Guidance. Meetings and appointments with parents form an integral part of the Informal Guidance plan.

Assessment Policy

Assessment for first year students comes under the remit of the Guidance Counsellor in conjunction with the Learning Support Team. CAT 4, NRIT, GRT 3rd Edition are all used.

Aptitude Tests (D.A.T.'s or MyAptitude) and an interest assessment (My Future Choice) are administered to Transition Year Students by the Guidance Counsellor. Feedback is given to all students and parents/guardians by the Guidance Counsellor prior to senior cycles subject decisions. Other interest inventories both digital and in-print are also used.

Record Keeping Procedures

The Guidance Counsellor operates the following record-keeping procedures. Records of all personal counselling and careers/vocational guidance interviews are kept securely in the school for 7 years after the students have left.

Reporting Procedures

In both the Personal Counselling and Vocational Guidance Interviews the confidentiality rule is adhered to, i.e. school management, year head and/or parents/guardians are informed if it is felt that the student is a danger to herself and/or to others. As previously mentioned the student is informed of matters pertaining to confidentiality but also of the limits of confidentiality. This is done at the beginning of the initial session. If the Guidance Counsellor feels that it is in the best interests of the student to inform a Teacher/Year Head/Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Parent/Guardian of a particular difficulty, this is only done with the knowledge and hopefully agreement of the student. This policy acknowledges that Guidance is a whole school issue and as such it is the responsibility of all staff of the school to adhere to the Child Protection Guidelines and report their concerns about a child to the Designated Liaison Person, in our case the school Principal or in the event of her absence the D.D.L.P.

School Protocol for Meetings /Appointments

1. Meeting with students

Students may make an appointment via email to see the Guidance Counsellor at any time. An appointment will be arranged as soon as possible. Self-referral to the service is encouraged. The Guidance Counsellor works closely with Year Heads / Tutors and other members of the pastoral care team, often referral is through a Year Head or tutor or indeed any member of the staff.

2. Meetings with parents/guardians

The Guidance Counsellor will meet parents or guardians on an individual basis. The Guidance Counsellor's direct phone number and email address is posted on the school website. Appointments are usually conducted during school hours but may in certain circumstances be arranged after school. On occasion the Guidance Counsellor may request that another member of staff be present at a particular meeting, e.g. Year Head, subject teacher and/or Principal / Deputy Principal. The student may be invited in for part or whole of the meeting with approval of the Parents/Guardians. This affords the students responsibility, ownership, accountability and inclusion in the meeting outcomes. Notes of all meetings shall be kept securely by the Guidance Counsellor.

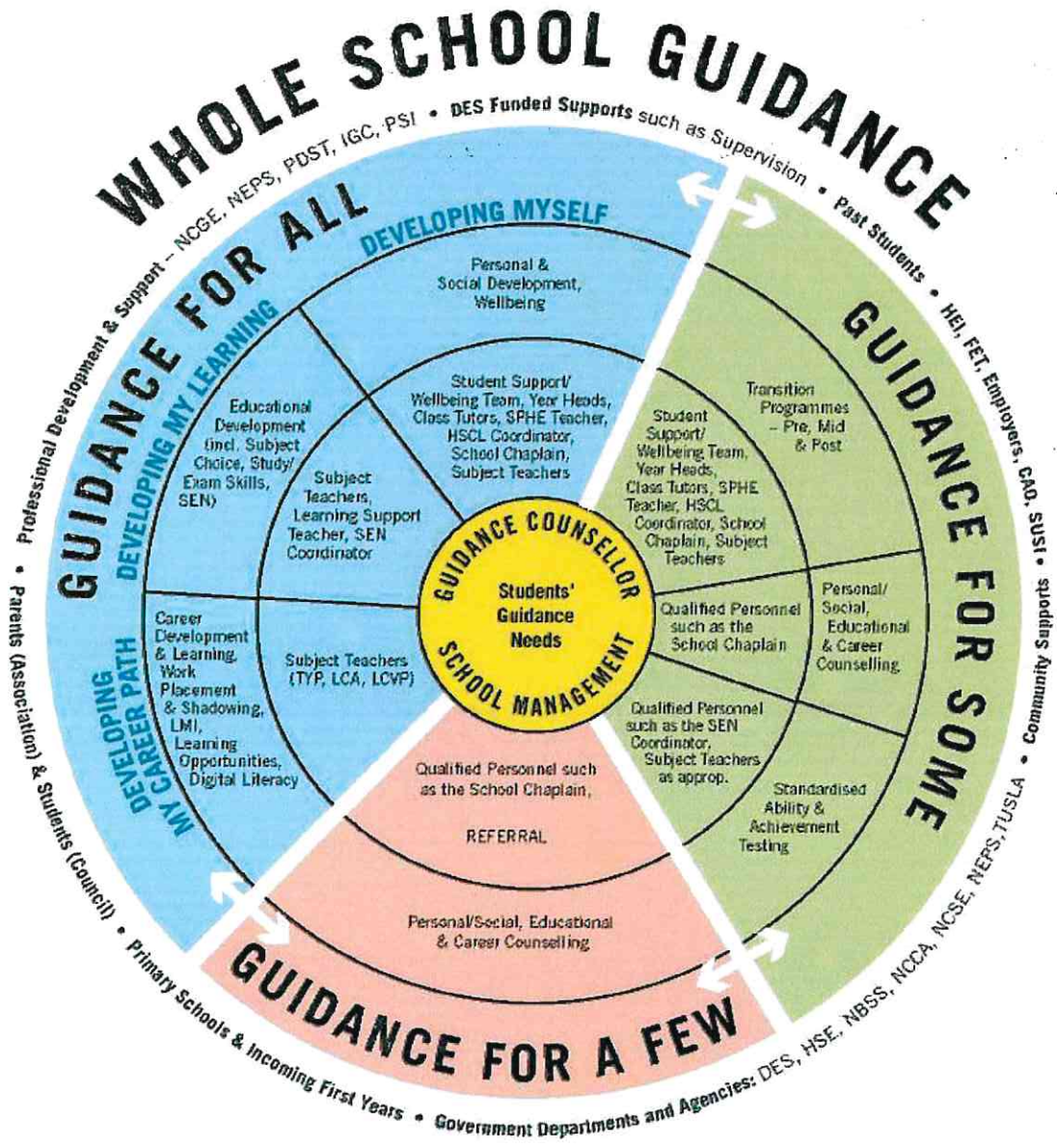
Links to other school Policies and Curriculum Development

This Guidance Policy is consistent with other school policies already in place:

Code of Behaviour	Child Safeguarding Statement	Anti-Bullying	Admissions Policy	Critical Incident Plan
SPHE Policy	RSE Policy	Pastoral Care Policy	SEN Policy	

Whole School Guidance

In line with NEPS (2010) continuum of support model. The whole school approach incorporates the 'areas of learning and competences'.



Areas of Learning and Competences

Developing Myself

- Developing and maintaining self-esteem and a positive self-concept.
- Interacting effectively with others (face to face and online)
- Developing and growing in all aspects of my person throughout life

Developing My Learning

- Employing effective personal learning / exam strategies
- Making educational choices in line with career aspirations

Developing My Career Path

- Using career related information and sources appropriately
- Understanding the world of work and life roles
- Managing career development and decision making

Overview of Whole School Guidance



Guidance for All	Guidance for Some	Guidance for Few	Year Group(s)
Incoming First Year Welcome Evening for students and parents in March of 6th class			First
	Consultation with incoming parents re option subjects, base class allocation, Additional Needs, etc., in person and via phone, Google Meet		First
Guidance Counsellor visits all feeder schools (or calls those school with one or two students joining us), in order to build a profile of each individual child and prepare for their arrival.			First
First Year Students sit an assessment test at some point early in term one, CAT 4, NRIT, GRT	Some students undergo additional assessments , WIAT T		First
		Students undertake a tour of the school in May when the school is quieter and meet with the Guidance Counsellor or appropriate staff member e.g. students with ASD	First
Induction Programme first three days of School			First
SPHE class once per week			All Year groups

RSE programme			Delivered to All year Groups
Guidance Related Learning as part of Wellbeing Programme			First
P.E. one double per week			First, Second, Thirds, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth
Buddy System			First with Fifth
Pastoral Care Team, Year Head and Four tutors			
Guidance Counsellor meets with All First Years individually to build rapport		Supporting students who are finding the transition to Second Level challenging	First And any new student to the school
Assemblies lead by Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to acknowledge, affirm students' efforts and achievements	Meeting of new students as a group, (if merited), with Year Head, G.C. and D.P.		Fifth Year
		Counselling	All Year Groups
Extra-Curricular Activities Students are encouraged to become involved in any activity, Book Club, Chess Club, Choir, meditation, debating, hockey, basketball, orchestra, etc.			All Year Groups
Parent Teacher Meetings All staff	Year head Meetings with parents to discuss ongoing issues or concerns		All Year Groups
	Guidance Counsellor meeting with parents to discuss ongoing issues or		

	concerns		
	Care Team meetings as needed to discuss some students progress and to realign supports if needed	Meetings with Year Heads, Deputy Principals, A.E.N. Team to discuss some students progress and to realign supports if needed	Third Year, Sixth Year
Study Skills Delivered by Outside Agency			First Year, Fifth Year
Study Skills delivered by Guidance Counsellor			All Year Groups
Referral of student to external agency			Fourth Year
Work Experience			Fourth Year
Subject Choice Information Day			Fourth Year
Administration of Psychometric tests, e.g. MyFuture Choice, My Aptitude	Meeting with Students/ parents to discuss results of assessments		Fourth to Fifth
Creation of Fifth Year options classes that maximise student satisfaction			Fifth Year
	Meetings with students not happy with initial subject choice		Fifth Year
	Meetings with students to discuss Subject levels		Fifth Year
Guidance Classes			Sixth Year
Guidance Classes			Sixth Years
Guest Speakers from all CAO colleges and Colleges of Further Education that are attended by students from this school			

Meet all students individually as needed throughout the year			Sixth Years
	Assist Students applying for UCAS	Assist Students applying to other EU countries Assist students applying to the U.S. Assist students applying for supplementary admission schemes e.g. Adelaide Nursing Hospital applications	
Collate Material for future reference requests			
	Assist students applying for DARE		
		Assist Students applying for HEAR	
		Assist students preparing for PLC applications & interviews	
	Fifth Year Leadership Seminar		Fifth
	Parents Association host series of career talk online to senior students		Fourth, Fifth, Sixth

Review Procedures

The Whole School Guidance Plan will be reviewed and evaluated in the light of experience and feedback from parents, students and teachers.

This plan was reviewed, amended and adopted by the Board of Management on 25th May 2021

Signed: Mary White
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Anne Marie Wlee
Principal

Date: 25/5/2021

Date: 25/5/2021

Appendix to Whole School Guidance Plan

Appendix i

A Guidance & Counselling response to students ‘coming out’ in Dominican College Muckross Park

Dominican College Muckross Park strives to be supportive of all students and ensure that they are happy and safe, regardless of difference.

Unlike other aspects of identity, sexual orientation is not necessarily a visible or apparent attribute; it is for the person herself to come to an understanding of their identity. Therefore, it is important that pupils *are not* asked about their sexual orientation unless they volunteer such information themselves. As this can be a very challenging time for young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered people, it is important that if they do speak to someone about their concerns, that this person will have their best interests at heart. Equally it should not be assumed that a young person who is lesbian, gay or bisexual is necessarily troubled by their sexual orientation.

If a student chooses to ‘come out’ to the Guidance Counsellor, the Guidance team will communicate a message to the young person that they are valued equally; will be treated equally to other students, and that the school leadership will ensure their safety and support. It is critical that a young LGBT person discovering their sexual orientation feels supported and valued, regardless of whether or not they disclose their sexual orientation.

When a young person ‘comes out’ as LGBT they are disclosing their sexual orientation and identity. This will not be interpreted as a statement of engagement in sexual behaviour. However, the advice given in the Child Protection Guidelines relating to sexual activity applies to all students regardless of their sexual orientation. (Note: The legal age of consent in Ireland is 17 years for boys and girls irrespective of sexual orientation).

Only if the Guidance Counsellor has a legitimate cause for concern for the student’s safety should engagement with the student’s parents be made. Often a young person experiences intense fear of rejection by his/her family and consequently finds it easier to ‘come out’ to others first.

The Guidance Counsellor will strive to ensure a positive experience of 'coming out' where the students is met with acceptance. This is critical in order to safeguard the young person's mental health and well-being; it can also, it is hoped, lessen the fear of the young person eventually disclosing to his/her family and friends.

The Guidance Counsellor will:

- **Identify relevant resources and supports** such as information leaflets and organisations, (local and national), that could be of assistance to the young person.
- **Consult with the young person** on how they would like the school to deal with their 'coming out' if, at all.
- **Advise staff members on what they should do** if a student tells them he or she is questioning their sexual orientation and might be lesbian, gay or bisexual. This includes a willingness to listen to the student; offering support relative to his/her needs and avoiding assumptions that a student is going through a phase or is too young to make such a discovery.

Appendix ii

Needs of Young Learners who are LGBT

Young Learners who are LGBT may need:

- Support and reassurance for those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Support and reassurance for those who are in the process of 'coming out'.
- Support and reassurance around disclosing LGBT identity to peers, friends, family, teaching staff, youth workers, and others.
- Support in accessing information and contact with other young LGBT people.
- Protection from prejudice and stereotyping.
- Protection from anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.
- To have their LGBT identity recognised, validated and normalised in educational establishments and learning activities

Young Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgendered people have made the following recommendations for those who work in educational settings on how to create safer learning environments for them:

- Try to understand the issues and language relating to LGBT identities by undertaking awareness and guidance training.
- Do not assume everyone is heterosexual or that everyone's parents are heterosexual.
- Do not make assumptions around gender identity.
- Try to avoid equating homosexuality only with sexual behaviour – those who identify as LGBT have friendships with one another too.
- Be sensitive to young people's feelings –take young people seriously, don't make jokes.
- Have an open mind; don't suggest that "it's just a phase".
- Show LGBT issues in a positive light and not always as problems.
- Address sexual orientation/gender identity in relationships and sex education programmes - refer to the fact that some people experience attraction to those of their own sex.
- Address anti-gay or anti-trans behaviour – name-calling, bullying and violence. Be aware that gay slugging is the most common put-down among young people, and actively respond in support of young LGBT people
- The questioning and 'coming out' processes are difficult and brave – treat them as such.

Provide more information on these issues:

- Include information about same-sex relationships in material that is distributed to everyone so that people do not have to identify themselves as lesbian/gay/transgender before getting information that is appropriate to them.
- Be aware that discussion of sexual identity issues may result in anti-LGBT sentiment being expressed and be prepared for this.
- Make it easier for young people who identify as LGBT to find one another, and to find other forms of support through help lines or dedicated groups.
- Include LGBT issues on educational modules for young people.
- Consider the possibility of including representatives from the LGBT community when developing a list of speakers to address staff or young people on aspects of equality.
- Resource student councils and peer trainers to deal with LGBT issues.
- While teaching always assume there are LGBTs students in the group.

References

Department of Education & Science, 2004. Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Post-Primary Schools.

Diversity Powering Success in Education, G.L.E.N.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students in Post-Primary Schools. Guidance for Principals and School Leaders. Department of Education & Science, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network.

More Than a Phase: A resource guide for the inclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners. Understanding the Issues. Pobal (2006).

Appendix iii



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

(Adopted by the Board of Management on 25th May 2021)

Our Vision

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

Our Mission

To provide our students with an education that in the spirit of St Dominic:

- recognises and responds to the unique needs and abilities of each individual student
- encourages the development of positive, respectful and inclusive relationships
- challenges each student to speak and act with honesty and integrity.

Introduction

The purpose of our school's confidentiality policy is to outline and clarify information and procedures around confidentiality for all stakeholders within our school community. This policy outlines all aspects involved in confidentiality within the school and should be read in conjunction with other school policies. This confidentiality policy is written in the context of contemporary legislation and other relevant publications.

The safety and welfare of children is the key principle underlying all decision making within our school in line with the Child Care Act 1991 and the Children First Act (2015). Our school adopts a student-centred approach to education. Support of students is paramount in our school community. The Children First Guidelines (2017) are applied in our school as appropriate. All staff members must be aware that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In supporting the students of our school, all stakeholders must be aware of the limits to confidentiality. This includes a legal obligation to share information where a student's welfare is at risk. In the case where any member of the school community is aware of a concern to child welfare and safety this concern must be reported to one of the following:

- (i) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in our school: Ms Anne Marie Mee (Principal)
- (ii) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is (DDL), Ms Siobhán Kelly (Deputy Principal)

(iii) Child and Family Agency Child Protection Social Work Services

Any stakeholder can report a child protection concern about a student directly by contacting the local social work office. This information can be found at <https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/>

In cases where school personnel have a concern about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person shall seek advice from Tusla. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and it is not possible to contact Tusla, An Garda Síochána shall be contacted immediately. This may be done at any Garda Station. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Tusla intervention. It is not the responsibility of school personnel to assess or investigate or to make enquiries of parents/carers, and in some cases, it could be counter-productive for them to do so. It is a matter for Tusla to assess and investigate suspected abuse and neglect and determine what action it shall take.

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse or neglect should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child. Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 states that it is good practice to inform the parent/carer that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision to make the report. However, Children First National Guidance 2017 also notes that it is not necessary to inform a parent/carer that a report is being made - (a) if by doing so, the child will be placed at further risk, (b) in cases where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment, (c) if the reporter is of the reasonable opinion that by doing so it may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family. Where there is any doubt as to whether to inform a parent/carer that a report is being made concerning his or her child the advice of Tusla shall be sought.

This confidentiality policy should be read in conjunction with other School policies.

Our school recognises the importance of record keeping. Our school keeps records in accordance with Appendix 4 of the DES Child Protection Procedures in Primary and Post-primary (2017). All school records and data pertaining to students and parents/guardians are regarded as highly confidential and are stored in line with are stored in line with GDPR (2018) procedures.

The limits to all staff-student confidentiality are made clear to staff via the school's Teacher Handbook. Staff should consult a member of management if they have any questions or concerns about our school's confidentiality policy

The limits to all staff-student confidentiality are made clear to staff, students & parents/guardians in our school in the following ways:

- Staff are informed via the school's Teacher Handbook issued annually and the policy is available in soft copy on the V folder.
- Students are reminded about confidentiality at their first assembly of every school year
- The Guidance Counsellor states the limits of confidentiality rule at every meeting with a student
- Parents are informed via the school website

There are limits to confidentiality within our school. Under circumstances where an individual is at risk of significant harm, a duty exists on the part of those with information to alert others to the risk perceived.

The sample School Referral Procedures provide information and guidelines as to how to respond to any issue presented to a staff member. TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, and An Garda Síochána are the two key authorities. TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, has a duty to assess reports regarding a child's welfare or safety. The specific focus of An Garda Síochána is on the investigation of alleged offences and whether a crime has been committed.

Review and Evaluation

The implementation of this policy will be monitored on a regular basis.

Ratification

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 25th May 2021 and will be reviewed every five years and in conjunction with each whole school evaluation.

Signed: Mary White

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 25/5/2021

Signed: Aine Blane Whee

Principal

Date: 25/5/2021

Date of next review: 2026