



St. Michael's College Guidance Plan

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Guidance Plan: St. Michael's College

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1) PREAMBLE: THE SUPPORTIVE ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.

-William Faulkner

The two quotes above lie at the heart of human nature. Emerson reminds us of the huge potential within every human being. He does not disregard past suffering or future worries. However, he does suggest we all have the capacity to deal with what comes our way. This is something that the guidance service hopes to convey to all students about themselves. Faulkner presents a fitting image for someone facing a difficult issue. Look at it clearly, identify the parts that make up the whole and then begin slowly. That is a fitting image for what the guidance service seeks to do: helping students as they address seemingly huge problems and supporting them as they tackle each problem piece by piece. In doing so, we hope to follow our school ethos of "Believe, Belong, Become".

Rationale

A Brief History of the Legislation

In 1996, the DES published guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of school staff, management and the DES in the delivery of school guidance programmes highlighting that it is not the sole responsibility of the guidance counsellor. In 1997, a survey of school principals found that consultation, accountability and evaluation in guidance were ad hoc, informal and needed to be addressed. In 1998, the Education Act was published. It states in section 9c and 9d that schools shall use their available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices(and) to promote the moral, spiritual and personal development of students in consultation with their parents.

In 1999, the School Development Planning Initiative announced the provision of assistance for schools in identifying and planning responses to the changing needs of students. Subsequent legislation too expansive to discuss here has laid the following responsibilities at the feet of the guidance service:

- Guidance planning is both a whole school activity and an integral part of the School Development Plan.
- Guidance plays a role in the prevention of early school leaving, empowerment of individuals to manage their own learning careers and re-integration of early school leavers to education.
- The guidance programme should reflect the needs of JC and LC students and provide a balance between the personal, social, educational and career guidance offered.
- Schools are required to provide appropriate guidance to all students.

The School Guidance Programme in St. Michael's College reflects and supports this legislation and the School Mission Statement. It is out of this context through the supportive role of the Guidance Counselling service (outlined in the Preamble) that the Guidance Plan constructs its aims.

2) ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

St. Michael's College is an Irish Catholic School under the guidance of the Spiritan Congregation. Inspired by Christian ideals, we strive to create an environment in which the whole school community can achieve their social, intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual potential in a friendly and caring atmosphere.

(Believe, Belong, Become.)

Aims of the School Guidance Programme

- Provide a framework for the delivery of the school guidance programme
- Help students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span
- Ensure a structured response to student's personal, social, educational and career guidance needs
- The plan needs to be inclusive providing for the junior, senior, minority, special education needs etc., of all students
- The plan will include all guidance activities: classroom sessions, Vocational Guidance Interviews, attendance at career exhibitions, open days etc., meeting with management, support agencies etc., personal counselling and group work etc

Objectives of the School Guidance Programme

Based on those aims, the objectives are as follows:

Junior Cycle Objectives:

- To ease students' transition from first level to second level education
- To develop an understanding of themselves as individuals and in relation to others.
- To foster positive wellbeing
- To become aware of their strengths and weaknesses.
- To provide programmes and support systems for students with emotional difficulties
- To acquire the competency to consult with the Guidance Counsellor and any other teachers with regard to personal and educational concerns.
- To develop study skills.

Senior-Cycle Objectives:

- To develop an awareness of interests, aptitudes and personality traits in themselves and others.
- To develop career awareness and develop employment readiness.
- To acquire the skills to investigate both the world of work and third level education in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.
- To assume responsibility for their own vocational journey.
- To view career development as a continuous process.
- To maintain and develop programmes and support systems for students with emotional difficulties
- To continue to consult with the Guidance Counsellor and other teachers with regard to personal and educational concerns as they approach their Leaving Certificate examinations.

Counselling: Theoretical Framework

Counselling will be offered on an individual or small group basis. The focus of counselling is on the personal, educational, and vocational issues, individually or in groups. The guidance counselling service will provide a caring context for counselling, engage in advocacy where appropriate and support young people in personal crises. In this regard-

Individual Counselling is an interactive process to help the student to understand his personal reality in a safe, supportive environment and help him deal responsibly with his needs. **Group Counselling** is the responsibility of the group under the direction of the Counsellor or other qualified adult. Depending on the context and the group this can be the most effective form of counselling for individual members, where students can

learn that they are not alone in their experience and receive healing from one another. All group counselling will only take place where there is proper supervision and permission.

The Guidance Counsellor must at all times be sensitive to the developmental stages of the students. As in all counselling, respect for the integrity of the individual student is paramount and appropriate confidentiality must prevail. Parents will be made feel welcome and afforded an opportunity to develop realistic perceptions of their children's aptitudes, abilities and interests, in education and occupational planning. They will be supported by the Guidance Counsellor and all staff in their efforts to help their sons with their personal and social development and school progress.

Ethical Considerations and Accountability

This policy statement will be the basis on which a regular review and evaluation of the Counselling Service will be conducted between the members of the Care Team. A comprehensive review of the entire Counselling Service within the context of the Whole School Plan will provide an opportunity for the team to create a discourse and discover any gaps in the service and agree a budget for the following year. The Guidance Counselling Service is subject to all relevant legal requirements e.g. the provisions of the 1998 Education Act as mentioned earlier, to the Department of Education and Skills Directives, to the College's Religious and Educational Philosophy and the School Plan.

To reflect the importance of the Guidance Counselling service, St. Michael's College aims to have two Guidance Counsellors on staff. (In the 2019/2020 academic year, the school responded to the promotion of one Guidance Counsellor to Principal in another school; by appointing a subject teacher to teach Careers and it is envisaged that he will undertake the Guidance and Counselling Course in 2020/2021). Each Guidance Counsellor like all other members of staff in the College is entrusted with the care of their students in "loco parentis" and accepts the responsibilities of this position, keeping the students welfare to the forefront at all times. The Guidance Counsellor is constantly aware of his responsibility to the student, to the College, to his own profession, to himself and to the implementation of this policy. The Guidance Counsellor will take part in professional peer supervision (normally Tuesday afternoons for the South Dublin/Wicklow Branch of the IGC), which will provide support and feedback for his professional welfare.

The Care Team

Care of the student is the responsibility for all teachers in the school. The guidance team or care team is at the centre of the Guidance Counselling Service in St. Michael's College. The members of the care team are; Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors (2), Chaplain and Special Needs Co-ordinator. The team meets on a fortnightly basis during period 1 on Mondays. The role of team is to identify students at risk, enhance the support available to each student in the school and to help all students develop their potential. The team works to put in place strategies tailored to the students' needs. Confidential records are kept of each meeting and carefully stored in the Core Care team folder by one of the Guidance Counsellor. The team also reviews its progress at the end of each year and seeks to find new ways to improve the guidance service in the school. See Appendix 1 for the reviews of the Core Care Team/this plan.

Care Team 2019/2020

Principal	Mr. Tim Kelleher
Deputy Principal	Mr. Aidan O' Donnell
Chaplain	Mr. Oliver Doolan (Personal Counselling)
Careers and Subject Choice	Mr. Liam Hogan (TY Subject Choice, 5 th and 6 th Year CAO Preparation)
Guidance Counsellor and Special Needs Co-ordinator	Mr. Rory O'Connor (TY Subject Choice, Personal Counselling)

3) WHAT IS GUIDANCE COUNSELLING?

Guidance Counselling in St. Michael's College, as in all schools, is multifaceted, diverse and fluid, but encompasses the three broad areas of:

Personal Counselling

The IGC Role Document (1996) identifies this as exploring a range of coping strategies in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs. It must take place in an atmosphere of security, acceptance and support. Confidentiality is guaranteed within the bounds of the initial contract set out at the start of the session. This would facilitate students in the holistic way outlined in the mission statement helping them use their own abilities and develop personal, social and decision making skills to name but a few. This may take the form of individual, group or supervised peer counselling while bearing in mind the image from Faulkner's quote used in the introduction. It is a process that helps them see the obstacles they face and to make choices about what steps students want to take to overcome those obstacles. Another aspect of personal guidance is to take the role of intermediary between pupil and teacher and to steer a middle course, which respects both sides.

Some of the common difficulties that students experience are sexual orientation, self-esteem issues, bullying, loneliness, communication skills, depression, anger management, suicide ideation etc. It employs the Proactive Counselling model (See Appendix 2) and draws upon a wide variety of counselling theory such as Rogerian, Gestalt and Choice Theory. Mr. Rory O'Connor and Mr. Oliver Doolan are responsible for this area.

Educational Counselling

This involves the overall educational direction of the student, and it involves assisting the student in making decisions which are appropriate to his abilities, academic and social. It involves discussion both with parents and students, as to what subjects, both elective and mandatory, most closely coincide with the student's abilities. In the case of mandatory subjects, the levels at which the subjects are attempted is vital, and in the case of electives, the correct choices can have a direct influence on the direction of future career paths.

This is developmental in nature and begins in 1st Year. It includes assistance in the following areas: psychometric testing such as the CAT 4, Level E in 1st Year, and the CAT4, Level G in TY. The Indigo Self-Assessment tool was employed in TY in 2016 but we felt it wasn't worthwhile for our students. Other areas included are study skills, teacher consultations and subject choice. This work can take place in a variety of settings such as the guidance office, classroom and nights organised for parents and students such as 6th Year Options Night.

The Study Facilitation Programme

The Study Facilitation Programme is available for all pupils, but especially for those who are identified as having difficulties or concerns about their study patterns. It is designed to provide them with structures and techniques that best help them organise their time and study methods.

Pupils who require special help with study are identified in a variety of ways. Pupils are also frequently directed to the study facilitator on the recommendation of the principal, year heads, the guidance counsellor or individual subject teachers. Parents and pupils also make appointments directly with the study facilitator. Furthermore Student Enrichment Services were being brought in to formally teach study skills to 1st, 3rd and 5th Years respectively. This year, we are trialling a new company called the Super Generation who presented a course on study skills to 3rd Year students and their parents.

Vocational Counselling

The IGC Role Document (1996) quite rightly identifies this as a process, not an event that runs right through the student's second-level education. It involves career's information, different pathways involved in Higher Education, job-search skills, employment awareness opportunities and work experience programmes. This area mainly

involves one to one meetings between the student and guidance counsellor and a specificTY Guidance class every week in Transition Year and classes in 6th Year.

Vocational Counselling becomes a more critical facet of the counselling role in the fourth, fifth and sixth years. There are many differing influences that are brought to bear on the ultimate career choice of the pupil. Primarily, these will comprise their aptitudes and abilities, their interests and their personality. Assessment of all three is amenable to scientific testing, with varying degrees of validity and reliability. Aptitude testing is both valid and reliable and will yield, broadly speaking, the same results on repeated testing. Both interest and personality tests are valid in that they reflect the world view of the student from the date of testing, but may yield quite different results, when retesting takes place. All however, have a significant function in choosing a career path and help to narrow the broad possibilities currently available at third level. Mr. Liam Hogan is largely responsible for this and works closely with Rory.

Protocol for meetings

Meetings with students

All meetings are by appointment. Students request an appointment with their guidance counsellor. Students are given an appointment slip by their guidance counsellor and this is given to their subject teacher at the time of appointment. See Appendix 3 for an example of the slip used. If a student comes to the office and the guidance counsellor is not there, appointment request slips are on the door. The student can fill one in, slide it under the door and the guidance counsellor discreetly contacts that student as soon as possible. See Appendix 4.

Meetings with Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians make appointments with the Guidance Counsellor by telephoning the school. Appointments are usually conducted during the school day, but may in certain circumstances be arranged after school. All parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation is necessary. On occasion, the Guidance Counsellor may request another staff member e.g. Year head, subject teacher and/or management to be present at a meeting or vice versa. The student is frequently invited in for all or part of the meeting with the approval of Parents/Guardians. This gives the student responsibility, ownership and inclusion in the meeting and its outcomes. Notes are kept of all meetings by the Guidance Counsellor.

4) GUIDANCE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Year Prior to Entry

Application forms may be obtained from the College's Administration Office. Application forms must be completed and returned to the Admissions Office at the school address. All applicants will receive an acknowledgement. Parents/Guardians are requested to confirm their continued interest in a place in the College when their child is in fifth class. An interview and information dissemination process may take place for students deemed to meet the criteria for the available places in the college.

Decisions regarding applications/admissions are made by School Management in accordance with school policy and the decisions are communicated to applicants within 21 days of the decision being made (usually in fifth class of the Junior school) to enable parents of unsuccessful applicants to investigate alternatives.

Prospective parents are interviewed by the school Principal, together with their son. An information night is organised for parents delineating the school's history, philosophy of education and ethos. The range of subjects available to students is explained together with the implications of choosing subjects, i.e. language requirements of third level institutions. No streaming obtains in first year.

Currently the college adopts a mixed ability approach to classes in the Junior Cycle. This is primarily the role of the first Year Head who creates classes with a view to providing a cross-section of cognitive abilities. The Year Head's decision on grouping students to specific classes is done in conjunction with management consultation.

Students with Special Needs

Identification of SEN students at St. Michael's College begins with the primary educator, the family. All parents of students who apply to the college are requested to provide key information during the admission process. As part of this information, parents of students who have been identified as having special educational needs are requested to provide details of any learning need and copies of psychological / educational assessments carried out. Reports from previous schools are evaluated, together with any educational assessments to determine what accommodations may be put in place to facilitate students with special needs.

Where applicants with Special Needs are eligible to attend St Michael's College, the College Management will request an up to date copy of the applicant's medical/psychological report/Individual Educational Report or an immediate assessment. This is in order to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his disability or Special Needs and to profile the support services required. On the basis of the relevant information the College will assess how his needs can be met and, if further resources are required, the Department of Education and Science will be requested to provide them. The

Principal/Special Needs Co-ordinator may meet the applicant's parents to discuss the child's needs and the school's capacity to meet them. For further information on students with special needs, please see the relevant section below. Please see the SEN plan for more detail.

1st Year

At the beginning of the school year, 1st year students are brought in prior to the full opening of the school. They are introduced to new school rules in an informal setting and attend talks on all aspects of life in secondary school and engage in a range of sporting activities to "break the ice".

Pupils and parents are informed of the introduction of streaming in Irish and Mathematics at the end of first year based on the cumulative results at Christmas and summer examinations and that there is a double loading on the summer results to accommodate those who had difficulty in settling in, in the first term.

Feedback is sought from teachers as to how the pupils are coping in their individual subjects. Further assessments and one-to-one counselling are available based on teacher or parent referrals. Parents and pupils are introduced to the school's policies on substance abuse and bullying.

In the first term, Mr O'Connor goes around and introduces himself to the students and explains about the Guidance Counselling Service. Furthermore, he and Mr. Doolan meet with the students in groups of 3 or 4 in order to build a relationship with them and see how they are settling in. This encourages them if they have any problems to come to him in the future.

As part of the wellbeing programme, in September, after First Years have got used to their new surroundings and have found their feet, they will undertake the Cognitive Abilities Test 4, Level E. This is a series of battery tests that explores students' abilities in the following areas:

- Verbal Battery
- Quantitative Battery
- Non-verbal Battery
- Spatial Battery

The results are compiled and used to help us ascertain our students' strengths and weaknesses in order to have adequate provision in place to support them in their future studies. It may help identify gifted students/students with special needs. It is used as

an aid to spotlight those that may need extra help in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy. It also will aid us as a school in our pursuit of excellence for all our students. It **is not** used to stream students into a particular academic level of class group for any subject as evidence in the letter sent home to the parents of First Year Students.

Mr. O'Connor meets each of the students in class groups in November to discuss the results process before they are sent home; and explains a little more about the Guidance Service in the school.

In the second term, after Christmas exams, pupils are sometimes identified who would benefit from additional individual help regarding study. They meet with the study facilitator, who goes through their study routine providing them with a timetable for their weekly study. During this time problems regarding study and improvement techniques are discussed. Goals are set to help improvement in specific areas.

2nd Year

At the start of second year an information evening takes place, in which parents are informed of the implications of streaming in Irish and Maths. Classes are streamed based on first year results but some movement is possible subsequently if students perform particularly well at the major exams at Christmas and summer. No streaming takes place in English.

Student Enrichment Services used to give a Study Skills Seminar in early October to all 2nd years. During the two hours and thirty minutes the boys are given help with study patterns and techniques. They are helped with note-taking and time management and organisation. This is currently on hold to explore the quality of the Super Generation.

Monitoring of students with educational difficulties continues with suitable strategies developed or modified as required.

Counselling is available on a one-to-one basis for students with behavioural difficulties educational, vocational or personal issues. Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Doolan are all available for such counselling. Furthermore, Mr O'Connor is available to meet students or parents to both in order to encourage productive study habits. Bullying is a phenomenon which often emerges in second year, more so than in any other year. For whatever reason, 2nd years, having found their feet in the system, begin to assert their individual identities, sometimes at the expense of their peers. There has been a well-documented increase in cyber-bullying nationally, but physical intimidation or verbal bullying still occurs intermittently. Anti-bullying strategies are implemented where the need arises.

As part of the wellbeing programme, meetings will take place with all of the 2nd Year classes to introduce them to the world of career paths and interests.

3rd Year

The main focus of the year is the Junior Certificate terminal Examinations. Decisions are made as to what level, higher or ordinary, a student will take the subject papers, based on their individual capabilities. Students must determine this well in advance, as changes of mind are not readily permitted at the time of the examination.

Bullying is a phenomenon which sometimes occurs in third year too. Again, Anti-bullying strategies are implemented where the need arises. This involves following the Anti- Bullying Policy and classes/assemblies with Mr. O'Connor and the Year Head.

One-to-one counselling is available in relation to behavioural and difficulties educational, vocational or personal issues. Contact is maintained with the SEN Co-ordinator in relation to the availability of special centres or other accommodations that may be required for the Junior Certificate Examinations.

As part of the wellbeing programme, Mr. O'Connor meets with all the 3rd Year classes and discusses topics that may be relevant to that year group such as stress management, personal goals etc. Towards the end of the year, a parent's information evening is conducted to explain the nature and scope of Transition Year, as it is a mandatory programme in the school. Students attend. It is conveyed to the parents that students will sample all available elective subjects, in a modular form, and the importance of persisting with the 6-week exposure to each subject, prior to final Leaving Certificate subject decision-making, is stressed.

If needed, the Year Head makes Mr. O'Connor aware of what students need extra help with study habits, methods, timetables, targets, reviews of previous assessments etc. A new departure this year is to explore a new study programme called the Super Generation where the students will hopefully learn how to learn. One thing we maybe need to do better is to involve parents in the conversation about how our boys learn how to learn. Therefore they will address the parents as part of that process this month.

Transition Year

Transition Year is a very significant year in terms of Guidance. Psychometric testing takes place again. Aptitude testing, primarily CAT 4, level G is administered by Mr. O'Connor and Mr Hogan with a view to defining strengths and also weaknesses of the students in relation to subject choice for the Leaving Certificate. This is done in class in October and November. This is a series of battery tests that explores students' abilities in the following areas:

- Verbal Battery
- Quantitative Battery
- Non-verbal Battery
- Spatial Battery

This is a new departure in 2019/2020. We also hope to use this data to monitor progression

for SEN and other students, by comparing it to the CAT results acquired in 1st Year.

Beyond the mandatory subjects – Irish, English and Maths – we offer fourteen electives for fifth and sixth year within the envelope of the school day. These subjects are:

Geography	History	Construction Studies
Spanish	French	German
Business	Economics	Accounting
Physics	Chemistry	Applied Maths
Music	Classical Studies	

Sampling takes place on a modular basis in all these subjects, over a 6 week period. The implications of subject choice, in relation to possible career paths are explained to all students.

Added to the CAT, each T.Y. group will undertake lessons on the following topics during their class once a week using the Reach+ Programme.

- Choosing a career- the process.
- Curriculum Vitae Preparation
- Cover Letter Preparation
- Personal Values and ambitions
- Interest Inventories
- Multiple Intelligence Assessment
- Skills Assessment.
- National Qualifications Framework
- C.AO and Points System

- Introduction to specific websites and how to use them as research tools for a career:
qualifax.ie
careers
portal.iecao.ie
- Presentation of information of all Higher Access Education Schemes
- Third Level Courses.
- Entry requirements for specific course areas
- Consequences of specific subject choice
- Points required for specific courses that particular year

Each student is met on an individual basis in order to prepare them for their Senior Cycle Subject Choice. Information gathered from the Reach + Programme (e.g. JC results, CAT result and Interest tests), creates a springboard for dialogue that helps students and their parents make an informed choice.

An integral part of Transition Year is the Work Placements and activity weeks which take place twice during the year and together with community service placements, offer a broad perspective on future career possibilities.

One-to-one counselling is available in relation to educational, vocational or personal issues.

5th Year

Fifth year requires a major shift in the student's life. He has reduced his range of subjects to seven within the normal envelope of the day. This affords the possibility of offering classes in each of these subjects for five periods a week. The exposure to each subject every day is certainly beneficial but can pose problems as some students will not be taking the mandatory subjects – Irish, English and Maths at honours level.

Consequently they may seek to take an extra subject outside the normal timetable. This is accommodated by the availability of a range of additional subjects prior to morning classes or after school.

A certain amount of movement occurs in the first term also as students discover that particular subjects do not accord with their preconception. These changes are discussed, the implications pointed out and final decisions made.

Vocational guidance now moves to a more individualistic approach with small groups catered for when they share a common interest, notably Medicine and Architecture whose very specific selection procedures take place involving the HPAT (in the case of medicine) and creativity testing in Architecture.

Individual interviews take place with Mr. Hogan, which now focus on the aptitude results and interest profiles of the students with a view to their implications in a career context as opposed to Leaving Certificate subject choice. The school is currently using College Select but that may change in the coming years.

As interests can often change, it is important that interest inventories are administered periodically to establish a relatively consistent pattern of results.

Towards the end of fifth year, some testing is done by the SEN department for a number of students for the **RACE** scheme. Those students with certain designated disabilities, ranging from Dyslexia and Dyspraxia to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome, are granted reasonable accommodations in the Leaving Certificate Examinations. This frequently involves the use of special centre, readers, scribes, or assistive technology.

One-to-one counselling is available in relation to behavioural and difficulties educational, vocational or personal issues.

The Student Enrichment Services used give a Study Skills Day towards the end of November. This is currently being reviewed. After a review of Christmas Exam results in January, follow-up work continues for individual students, to help them organise their study plan well in 5th Year.

6th Year

The main aim of guidance at Leaving Certificate is geared towards the CAO system. Consequently, vocational guidance interviews are available for all students.

Interest in the British system UCAS fluctuates from year to year. Unlike the CAO system where points are the main measure of academic progress, the UCAS process demands detailed personal statements and a detailed reference from the Guidance Counsellor. These applications are submitted in the first term of 6th year and those directed at Oxford, Cambridge and the Medical faculties of all UK Universities need to be in place by early October.

Sixth Year Careers Class 2019-2020

One period per week is scheduled for Careers in sixth year. The Careers Portal website is used along with Qualifax to ensure students become familiar with the CAO process and PLC courses etc. The teacher takes small groups of students to discuss the various career sectors as well as looking at entry requirements for courses to ensure that the correct choices can be made. Speakers from the main colleges are invited to the school during the year and in many cases during the class the students get the opportunity to prepare questions relevant to possible courses of studies. The main focus of the class for the terms is outlined below.

Early in the first term, all sixth years attend the Higher Options Conference in the RDS. This is a major showcase for all the Academic institutions in Ireland and the UK. It offers contact with Admissions Tutors from the UCAS system and individual academic staff members from the CAO colleges.

August – October: Preparing for college and how to use the websites/college prospectus to consider the correct course of study. Emphasis on Study Plans and focus given to class groups for this term. Introduction to the CAO system.

November – February: CAO system and all further education options discussed with smaller groups over this period. Special emphasis in some classes for students applying for DARE. Information on Eunicas and explanation on options outside Ireland to continue studies given in classes.

Various speakers and a College Choices Evening held in conjunction with Sandford Park School are additions to this term as well as an evening for parents on the CAO facilitated by Mr Brian Mooney .

February-March: Midterm and Mock exams take place at this time

March – June: Focus on options to change course choice after Mock results as well as detailed talks on the next steps after the Leaving Cert. Various speakers and information given on Colleges to include practical advice re study skills given in this final term.

During the year, the Past Pupils Union provides speakers in a broad careers forum, open to both 5th and 6th year students. Individual speakers describe their own career paths, some traditional, some more chequered and make themselves available to answer students questions.

Furthermore, speakers from the various universities and colleges will be brought in for 6th years to attend optional talks. Visits out to particular universities and institutions also take place.

As always, one-to-one counselling is available in relation to behavioural and difficulties educational, vocational or personal issues.

5) DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMMES

These programmes help students' social or personal development. They may revolve around such concepts as decision-making skills, assertiveness skills and coping strategies. This is an example of whole school approach to guidance counselling operated in St. Michael's College. Different teachers such as those teaching RE, SPHE and PE would be involved in constructing the class material and delivering it to students.

Chaplaincy

The provision of Chaplaincy Services in St. Michael's College is rooted in the values of the Gospels and guided by the vision of the Founding Fathers of the Spiritan Tradition:

- Openness to the Spirit
- High Educational Standards
- Concern for the Poor
- A sense of Community
- Promoting a Global Vision
- Personal Development

At present, the Chaplaincy Services take a collegial approach in carrying out its duties. This approach has taken the shape of a team structure, called the Chaplaincy Team. In 2012/2013, the team consisted of:

Fr. Paddy Moran (Chaplain)
Mr. Oliver Doolan (Chaplain/Coordinator)
Mr. Aidan O'Donnell
Mr. David Sheridan
Ms. Mary Jo Delaney
Mr. Gavin Knaggs
Mr. Liam Hogan
Ms. Katie Doherty
Others take part every year

The team also links in with other members of the Religion Department as well as the Core Care Team and wider staff body in the provision of its services. Mr. Doolan is the main link between the Chaplaincy Team and the Core Care Team.

The Team meets each week for a period in the Chaplain's Office. Although it is difficult to completely narrow down all the activities in which the Chaplaincy Team is involved, the Team has chosen to prioritise the following areas. These are: Liturgies, Retreats, Counselling, Charities, Immersion Projects.

Liturgies: From St. Michael's Day to Family Masses, these are offered to all students and their families during the school year. Students are encouraged to engage and get involved in the liturgy through reciting readings, writing Prayers of the Faithful, singing, playing instruments, delivering reflections etc. In conjunction with Family Masses, the Chaplaincy Team also works on providing prayer services throughout the year. These are to mark key events/festivals, or as the needs arise. These events work closely with Mr. David Sheridan who provides the music from the student body – an extremely important aspect of the services.

The Chaplaincy Team also assists in providing reconciliation services for all years in conjunction with Fr. Moran. The team also plays a major role in organising the 6th Year Graduation Mass. All necessary booklets for services are made in-house with a lot of care by Oliver Doolan. These are personalised to the students, creating a more individual and special association.

Retreats: Each Year is given their own day out on retreat. These retreats range from Clonlost in Killiney, Dominican Retreat Centre in Tallaght, Emmaus in Swords, St. Kevin's Way and Glendalough in Co. Wicklow, walking retreats of Dublin city centre. These days are challenging and thought provoking for all students. It is the hope that the experiences will help inform the students' faith on their journey through school life. The Chaplaincy Team has also been involved for many years with bringing six 6th Year students to Lourdes each September 7th – 12th with the Dublin Diocese.

Personal Counselling: Counselling is considered as being an extremely important facet of Chaplaincy Services by the team. Mr. Doolan provides the main body of this work. Students are seen on a one to one or small group basis. Individual students can

be referred through teachers, Year Heads or Principal. Students are also encouraged to make appointments themselves as they see fit. Mr Doolan and Mr O'Connor meet regularly outside of the Core Care team meeting to touch base about the students that they are currently meeting.

All other members of staff are made to feel welcome to drop into the office as they wish. Over the last couple of years the Chaplaincy Office has been given a facelift. This has made the space a warm/hospitable environment for whoever uses it.

Charities: Throughout the school year the Chaplaincy Team is involved with a number of charitable activities in conjunction with all Year groups, most notably the Hospice Coffee Morning, The Christmas Hamper Appeal, selling Christmas Trees for St. Vincent de Paul, the Ghana appeal. It is the aspiration of the Team to engage and challenge the students to give of their time and energy to help the less fortunate and marginalised in our society – (Vision of Founding Fathers – Concern for the Poor)

Immersion Projects: Since 2006 St. Michael's College has been involved in forging links with the wider Spiritan family in Africa. This has taken the form of a trip with TY students to Kenya in 2006, to Ghana in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. In more recent years, it has been to Brazil.

One of the unique aspects of the trip is that the students see exactly where this money is spent. The trip also offers the students the amazing opportunity to feel part of the community - although this opportunity may only be for 10/11 days, the memories last a lifetime!!!

Special Needs Department

Special needs students are:

- Students with General Learning Difficulties
- Students with average and above average ability who experience Specific Learning Difficulties (SDL)
- Gifted students
- Physically handicapped students including those with sensory impairments
- Students with Social, Emotional, or Behavioural problems and Communication Disorders
- English as a foreign language students / English as a second language students
- Students whose education has been interrupted for a significant period

ROLE OF SPECIAL NEEDS PERSONNEL

The key tasks in defining this role are collaboration and consultation with all the partners involved, i.e. the class teachers, Principal, parents, students and outside

agencies. In the context of the Whole School Policy on learning support, the special needs/learning support teacher will:

- Have a core role to play in school policy development and should ensure that the Whole School Policy for Special Educational needs is fully implemented
- Assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- The main focus of the SEN staff work will be on providing supplementary teaching to pupils. This will be provided either by withdrawing the child for learning support or by teaching to individual or groups of children and using different shared teaching approaches e.g. co-teaching. This support should also take cognisance of students' chosen subject areas.
- Develop individual profile and learning programmes for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Conduct assessments and maintaining children's records
- Advise staff on the selection of screening instruments and on the scoring and interpretation of these instruments
- Assist in whole school early intervention / prevention
- Maintain a weekly planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
- Complete a '**Weekly Planning & Progress Record**' for each student they teach. This form will:
 - Address the overall programme of activities to be implemented that week
 - Record observations of the child's learning and their assessment of that learning
- Collaborate with the Guidance Councillor, who has responsibility in the College for assisting in the provision of reasonable accommodations and DARE for SEN students during house examinations, which have been sanctioned by the D.E.S.
- Liaise with outside agencies, such as the Department of Education & Science, N.E.P.S, the Visiting teachers service and the designated SENO for the College, as required, to provide support for SEN students within the school

Identification and Screening Procedures

- Identification of SEN students at St. Michael's College begins with the primary educator, the family. All parents of students who apply to the college are requested to provide key information during the admission process. As part of this information, parents of students who have been identified as having special educational needs are requested to provide details of any learning need and copies of psychological / educational assessments carried out.
- As part of the interviews during the admission process, the College will meet with parents to discuss their son's learning needs and the school's suitability or capability in meeting those needs. This is to ensure that the parents are informed of what support is currently available within the college in order for them to make an informed decision regarding the education of their son.

- In order for the SEN department to apply for support from the Department of Education & Science, parents must inform the school during the admission process if their son has a diagnosed learning need.
- Once parental permission has been obtained, a Private and Confidential **Special Needs Register** will be provided to all teachers at St. Michael's College, in order to make sure that all teachers are aware of students who have been identified with a learning need in the College. This register will be updated regularly.
- Identification of students who do not have a previous diagnosis upon entering the College will be made through collaboration with the Principal, Assistant Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads, form tutors and subject teachers. This will be done on an informal basis.
- Additional testing will be carried out to see if there may be underlying learning needs. These will determine the extent to which pupils have mastered specific tasks in reading, intelligence, spelling and mathematics with a view to improving their subsequent performances. This will be done in consultation with the student's parents first.
- If testing suggests a learning need, an educational assessment will be recommended. Parents will be provided with the relevant information to access such an assessment. Parents will be responsible for providing an assessment for their son in order to access support.
- The student's educational assessment will identify if there is a learning need and will be used to indicate the student's strengths and needs. It will also be required to access support from the Department of Education and Science for teaching

support and reasonable accommodations in state examinations. It will also be required to apply for exemptions from Irish, which are based on a learning need.

- Currently Mrs. Susan Healy is responsible for making applications to the Department of Education and Science for reasonable accommodation in state exams for a number of students with learning difficulties each year. The most commonly used forms are: waiver in spelling and grammar and assistance of a reader
- St. Michael's College does not have access to a National Educational Psychologist Service (NEPS) visiting service, but there is a scheme to access a set number of assessments per year. Assessments have taken place for a number of students. The school also liases with a former NEPS Educational Psychologist on a private basis as the need arises.
- A personal pupil plan will be completed, after consultation with the individual student and his parents and other stakeholders. The personal pupil plan is a "written statement for each child with a disability; this statement will be developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with the student's individualised learning needs. It sets a number of targets to be achieved for the student concerned. It requires a review date to establish whether the targets have been met and further consultation with all appropriate parties.
- All appropriate parties will receive a copy of the Individualised Education Plan, once the student and his parents sign it off. Copies of this plan will be kept on the student's personal file within the SEN department and in the Career Guidance Councillor and principal's office.

The area of special educational needs is the **responsibility of every teacher**. A key role of successful learning support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the learning support teacher. The provision for on-going staff development in this area is vital.

For more detailed information on the Special Needs Department, please look at the Special Needs Department Plan as part of the Whole School Plan.

Literacy and Numeracy

In accordance with Circular No. 0025/2012: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY, St Michael's College has made a number of steps forward, some of which relate directly to the guidance plan.

As stated earlier, on enrolment, the Special Needs Teacher and the First Year Head are made aware of the results of any Literacy and Numeracy tests that the students have already completed. Furthermore, in September, after First Years have got used to their new surroundings and have found their feet, they will undertake the Cognitive Abilities Test 4, Level E. This is a series of battery tests that exposes students' abilities in the following areas:

- Verbal Battery
- Quantitative Battery
- Non-verbal Battery
- Spatial Battery

The results are compiled and used to help us ascertain our students' strengths and weaknesses in order to have adequate provision in place to support them in their future studies. It may help identify gifted students/students with special needs. It is used as an aid to spotlight those that may need extra help in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy. It also will aid us as a school in our pursuit of excellence for all our students.

It **is not** used to stream students into a particular academic level of class group for any subject as evidence in the letter sent home to the parents of First Year Students.

Moving Forward in the years ahead

In the future, the Guidance Counselling Service in St. Michael's College hopes to meet the objectives of this plan. We hope to develop the core care team and review the work of the team on an annual basis. In keeping with the spirit of whole school planning, we acknowledge that this Guidance Plan is a living document that requires regular review of the Guidance Counselling Service in St. Michael's College. To return to the opening, we strive to help, inform and guide students as they address whatever problems they have and support them as they tackle each problem piece by piece.

In short, we endeavour to get all students to believe in themselves, feel that they are very much part of the school community and to become the best adult they can be!

New Initiatives

It's Good to talk

This is an online initiative that aims to make it as easy as possible for students to talk to an adult about concerns they may have. In order to make it as easy as possible for a student to meet someone for a chat, we've created a 'one-click' system for arranging appointments with teachers. Every staff member listed has volunteered to have their name included on the contact list, and to be available to meet and help students. Many of the staff involved have completed the Mental Health First Aid Course.

-Space for students

At the start of the year as part of Mental health promotion, the co-ordinator decided that it would be a great idea to have a space for students to go if needed to chat to a teacher. We have the facility online where students can email a teacher to arrange a meeting so I was trying to supplement that in case students didn't know about it or maybe they wanted a less formal meet up with a teacher. So each Tuesday and Friday from 1-1.30 a teacher goes to the Villa and is available to talk to any student about any issue at all that they may be having. It can be big or small, school related or a personal issue, it doesn't matter. The idea is that students have another forum and a safe space to go and thrash out a problem. Students have been informed via email, website and announcements from class to class.

6) APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Core Care team reviews

Review of Core Care Team 2012/2013

May 13 2013

Present: Jane, Tim, Rory, Oliver, Barry, Aidan

Positives:

Jane: worthwhile, naming students that need focus, good way to touch base with other staff as a group

Barry: useful for co-ordination

Oliver: awareness for everyone, good for consistency

Rory: important for a whole school approach in terms of the care of the students
Tim: excellent for a pastoral care point of view

Areas of Improvement:

Tim: need to inform staff about it more often: e.g. at staff meetings twice/three times a year

Jane: 2nd Year - a problem area perhaps, could we do more?

Timetabling: could everyone be free at the same time

Once a week

Aidan and Tim identified a time during the week for 2013/2014: Period 6 on Monday.

Jane: resource hours - can we get someone else that's qualified and full time 5 days...22hrs

One clear aim for next year

Improve on next year's 3rd Years... lot of difficulties/special needs

Gavin (3rd Year Head) and Barry (2nd Year Head) to meet so Gavin is informed

Review of 2013-2015

Pros:

Aidan: Met regularly, on top of things, intervened when the time is right..All agreed..

Areas to be improved:

Our paper communication could be improved

Susan: new sheet for SEN referrals

Aims for this year:

Begin the process of a continuum of support..

Explain to staff about this at a meeting

Care for the students..

Review of 2015/2016

Pros:

Positive Mental Health Week is having a benefit

Sharing of information

Whole School Approach to helping students

The team are not seen as an elitist group that keeps information to itselfAll

involved are happy with how it works

To improve upon it:

Possibly a weekly meeting

Create a better link with year heads

Aim

Record information digitally rather than through paper

Review of 2016/2017

Positives:

Clear communication has improved - between ourselves and electronically with the rest of the staff e.g. results of CAT test in 1st Year
Fortnightly meetings work well together
The Care Team is in its 5th year and the team work well together
Using Excel to record info from the meetings
Year heads attend the meetings on occasion

Areas for improvement

Following up/checking in with students could be improved a little

Care Team: Review of the Year 2017/8

What has been going well:

- Group thinking about students
- liaising with the year heads
- passing on info within protective confidentiality
- supporting parents
- counselling provided

What needs improvement:

- calendar at the start of the year so everyone knows when the meeting is
- in line with current trends, what can we do for staff welfare?
- do we need a bigger room for this meeting? Rory's office is a little cramped.

Care Team: Review of the Year 2018/2019 September 12, 2019

What has been going well:

- Timetabled meetings keep us all aware of what is happening
- vulnerable students have been picked up
- Similar positives as before
- liaising with the year heads
- parental acknowledgement for having a Care Team
- Having management present at every meeting makes a big difference
- New initiatives such as 'It's good to talk' and 'Space for students' are welcome developments are signs that care is at the core of our school community.
- Oliver's office as a new venue works best
- CPD constantly ongoing such as Liam's 'Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapeutic

Studies' and Rory's ongoing training as a Psychotherapist.

What needs improvement:

Recent changes to staffing has reduced the Care Team to four - Liam who will train as AGC next Year may join our meetings

Should more upskilling be provided for all members of the Care Team re Counselling skills?

At staff meetings, we could outline the work we do more often.

Appendix 2: Proactive Counselling Model

Relationship Building:

- Joining
- Build Relationship
- Contract

Opening: What would you like to talk about today

Assessing: Listening to the story.....minimal encouragers

Reflecting and reframing the facts and the emotions

- It sounds like...
- I have a sense that...
- You seem to feel...when
- You seem to feel...because

- Open questions:
- how you feel
 - what you think
 - what you did
 - what happened
 - when...time
 - can you give me an example

- More assessing:
- identify themes and issues
 - identify **positive** stuff, strengths and resources:
 - have you always been so brave
 - how to keep going
 - how did you manage
 - summarise the story highlighting problem areas
 - ask the client which aspect they would like to look at

- evaluate the clients emotional state:
- what support has he/she
 - who knows
 - how is it impacting on their life
 - how severe is the problem
 - scaling question
-

- Addressing: - **miracle question**:
- if your life was the way you wanted it to be
 - -if you had a magic wand and could change things:
 - what would it look like/feel like
 - what would you be doing
 - how would we get there
 - what would you need to do to achieve it
 - what would help you
-

- Closing: - We are coming to the end of our time
- summarise what was said
 - how are you feeling now
 - where are you going
 - are you ok to go back to class
 - sign card + make follow up appointment if necc

Appendix 3: Appointment Slip

The Guidance Counsellor requests that _____ Class _____ be given permission to attend at his office Day _____ Time: From _____ To _____ Signed Out _____

Appendix 4: Appointment Request Slip

I would like to make an appointment to see the Guidance Counsellor about: (please tick the box) Careers related question <input type="checkbox"/> Worried about something <input type="checkbox"/> Name _____ Class _____
