

Holy Family Secondary School



School Guidance Counselling Policy

1. Link to Mission Statement
2. Rationale
3. Scope
4. Team
5. Confidentiality
6. Referral and Standard Operating Procedures
7. Assessment
8. Accountability and Evaluation

Holy Family Secondary School staff, the Parents' Association, the Students Representative Council and the Board of Management were consulted during the formation of the policy.

Ratified by Board of Management on: 14th January 2019

Ms T. Brophy
Chairperson, Board of Management

Ms S. Allen
Secretary, Board of Management

Fr. J. McDermott
Diocesan representative

1. Mission Statement

Guidance Counselling is provided by a professionally trained Guidance Counsellor and Student Support staff. This Policy has been developed in line with our Mission Statement which states;

‘We promote the Christian virtues of faith, hope, love, gentleness, respect and tolerance, and we emphasise togetherness and family. Guided by these Christian virtues, and dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, it is our mission to provide a safe, caring, inclusive learning environment in which to foster the spiritual, intellectual, academic, aesthetic, physical, emotional and social development of each pupil so that she may fulfil her own unique potential and may leave our school with the capacity and the willingness to contribute to the building of a society characterised by these Christian virtues’

The policy content herein must be interpreted and understood in conjunction within the policies framework of Holy Family Secondary School.

2. Rationale

The Guidance Counselling policy is a structured document that describes the school guidance programme and specifies how the guidance needs of students are to be addressed. It is an integral part of the school’s overall school development plan.

Section 9 (c) of the Education Act, 1998 requires Holy Family Secondary School to “*ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices*” based on the need to provide access as determined by the general resources available and the additional resource allocation for guidance and counselling and other related activities provided by the DES and the need to provide appropriate guidance that is, the whole school’s response to meeting the guidance needs of all of its students.

The Guidance Counselling policy endeavours at all times to make the guidance;

- Accessible to all students in Holy Family Secondary School
- As responsive as possible to concerns expressed by staff, students and parents.
- Impartial
- Inclusive
- Informed
- Confidential in nature
- Expressive of the ethos of Holy Family Secondary School

3. **Scope**

Guidance Counselling in Holy Family Secondary School refers to a range of learning experiences, provided in a developmental sequence, which assist pupils to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives.

Guidance Counselling is an interactive learning process between counsellor and student, which approaches, in a holistic way, personal, educational and/or vocational issues. The availability of a counselling service can support individual students inside/outside the classroom context, the pastoral and the disciplinary structures in the school.

It is essential that a counselling service within the school operates in collaboration with processes within the school, which promotes the wellbeing of the school, particularly pastoral and disciplinary teams. Working within the requirements of The Institute of Guidance Counsellors Code of Ethics for legitimate practice, ensures that the service is properly supervised and monitored so that the student needs are placed at the centre of all considerations and interventions.

The Guidance Counsellor, along with designated colleagues in student support i.e. SPHE, Religion, Year Heads, Class Tutors, Well-being co-ordinator, Senior Management Team & TY co-ordinator facilitate and engage in developmental programmes designed to enhance personal/social skills, self-awareness, decision-making skills, planning and promotion of wellbeing.

In the area of educational development, programmes include subject/level choices, motivation and learning and study skills/exam techniques. In vocational development the programmes create employment opportunity and sector awareness. Educational pathways and training courses at all relevant levels of the QQI are presented in class.

Information is also an essential remit within the role of the Guidance Counsellor. As such, the gathering, organisation and dissemination of information are all key aspects of the day to day role of the Guidance Counsellor. The ultimate goal of the above is to provide as much information as possible on the widest range of options open to the student.

It is the holistic approach to each student's development that is the key to the success of Guidance Counselling at Holy Family Secondary School. This is achieved through timetabled lessons and one-to-one interventions.

4. **Team**

The Guidance Counsellor is part of an educational team and pastoral structure which includes subject teachers, class tutors, academic mentors, year heads, deputy-principals, principal, chaplain(s), specialist teachers TY, LCVP and Wellbeing, Religion, SPHE and Learning Support.

In conjunction with staff and management, the Guidance Counsellor will be supportive of pastoral teams and policies which attempt comprehensively to deal with a range of in-school issues, including amongst others, anti-bullying, substance abuse, crisis response, bereavement and child protection.

5. Confidentiality

All students have a right to confidentiality in their dealings with the Guidance Counselling team at Holy Family Secondary School. However, counselling is provided with the understanding that confidentiality is not absolute. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a young person discloses information about risk of harm to themselves or others or if there are child protection concerns. If a disclosure of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or child neglect is revealed during a session, it is mandatory under the updated *Children First National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children 2015*, to report the concerns to the Designated Liaison Person in the school. Collaboration with other agencies such as the HSE or the Gardaí, if appropriate, may be necessary. Parents/Guardians will be informed, unless to do so would endanger the young person.

The Guidance Counsellor(s) recognise their obligation to uphold the code of ethics of the IGC. She/he is obliged to operate, in policy, process and practice in an ethical manner. The primary focus is the welfare of the pupil and she/he is ethically bound to act in the best interest of the pupil. The counsellor must act within the law and within the ethical guidelines as outlined by her/his profession. The guidance counselling team are expected to be competent in and mindful of the legal and ethical responsibilities of their work. Furthermore, they are ethically obliged to keep abreast of personal, educational and vocational developments with the aim of continuing personal and professional development so as to maximise best provision of service to the student.

6. Referral and Standard Operating Procedures

Referrals to the guidance counselling team may come from the principal, deputy-principals, year heads, parents or students. Pupils who are referred to cannot be forced to attend and their choice must be respected. If, however, a pupil is referred and attends guidance counselling, their presence will be acknowledged and welcomed.

Pupils can access or be referred to the Guidance Counsellor as follows:

- Referral by Senior Management (Principal, Deputy Principal)
- Referral by Year Head(s) (standard referral form)
- Referral by School Chaplain(s)
- A pupil may self refer

In the case of pupils who are attending counselling on an ongoing basis a green form will be completed by a Guidance Counsellor and given to the relevant Year Heads for placement in the appropriate pupil files in the Year Head Office. Written consent will be requested from parent /guardian if a pupil is to attend for a second and/or subsequent counselling visit. A list of students attending counselling will also be given to the Senior Management Team at our pastoral care team meetings.

The Guidance Counselling team may also recommend a pupil is referred to an external, appropriately qualified professional. A legitimate referral (one made with the received permission of the necessary people e.g. parents) may occur after the Guidance Counsellor has made an informed decision that the student's situation requires assistance beyond his/her professional training.

Assistance for students may be sought for learning difficulties, substance abuse, addiction, bereavement and personal crisis from agencies such as the student's GP, NEPS, Educational Welfare Officer, CAMHS or counselling/psychotherapy practices.

** Parents must be informed of and permission sought for a referral by the Guidance Counsellor to an external agency.*

The availability of the School Guidance Counselling Services is subject to DES allocation and school timetabling for the provision of school guidance counselling and the needs of the student(s). The Guidance team meet weekly.

7. Assessment

Psychological and educational assessments/tests are useful insofar as they provide information for School Guidance Counselling and others for whom it is relevant and ensuring that HFSS General Data Protection Regulations are strictly observed. Judicious use of test information is helpful in predicting academic and occupational performance, classifying ability, assessing remediation requirements and levels of achievement. Assessment results are important. Yet, their dissemination is of equal or greater importance. In returning the results of a pupil's assessment, the School Guidance Counsellor must be aware of the confidentiality and sensitivities of the pupil and the manner in which he/she shares the information with the pupil.

Tests may include: personality tests, aptitude tests, assessment tests, attainment tests, interest inventories, problem checklist, general ability tests, performance tests, school exam results and public exam results.

8. Accountability

Records of counselling sessions, in line with best practice, are kept to a minimum. It is also advisable for the School Guidance Counselling team to use own personal notation if records are to be kept.

The School Guidance Counselling team is mindful of its obligations to management, staff and pupils alike and recognises that they are responsible for the school guidance service throughout the school. The counsellor(s) discusses with and informs both staff and pupils of information that is relevant and pertinent to their situations.

HFSS SCHOOL POLICY:**School Guidance Counselling Policy****YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION/REVIEW: Academic 2018-2019**

PROCESS STAGE	DATE	NOTES
Identification Primary Planning Meeting	January 2018	A review of the 2014 policy (last ratified version)
Scoping document (DRAFT 1)	February 2018	
Discussion document finalised (DRAFT 2)	February 2018	
Circulation of discussion document to staff (DRAFT 2)	November 2018	
Consultation with SCR, Parents' Association (DRAFT 3)	December 2018	
Review by Planning Team (DRAFT 4)		
Consultation with Board of Management (FINAL DRAFT)	December 2018/January 2019	
Ratification date (BOM)		
Implementation date	14 th January 2019	Effective as date ratified by the HFSS BOM