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An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,
Urlár 1, Bloc 4,
An t-Áras Árachais,
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Qualifications, Curriculum and
Assessment Policy Unit,
Department of Education and Science
Floor 1, Block 4
Irish Life Centre
Talbot St
Dublin 1

Circular M37/03

To the Principal of the School
Named in the Address

30 October 2003

Re: Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance

Dear Principal

Please find enclosed the draft document entitled "Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998), relating to students' access to appropriate guidance". This document will assist schools and Guidance Counsellors in defining the implications of Section 9(c) and (d) of the Education Act which obliges schools to

- (c) *ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choice,*
- (d) *promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students....*

This document does not contain all the elements of a comprehensive guidance programme, rather it identifies the minimum standards necessary to provide appropriate guidance to students. Schools, as part of the overall School Development Plan, will form a comprehensive guidance plan, taking into account the needs of students, available resources and contextual factors.

This document is based on the report and recommendations of a committee set up by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) at the request of the Department of Education and Science. Representatives of the NCGE, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the Department formed the committee which presented its report to the Minister. In the course of its work the committee invited representatives of different sectors to make presentations concerning the perceived needs of students from transition to post-primary school onwards to the transition from second level education to higher/further education and/or training/employment.

The NCGE has been working on Guidelines for Guidance Planning which will issue shortly to all second level schools. The two documents together will be of assistance to Boards of Management in preparing the guidance plan for the school.

The enclosed document is a draft which is being circulated for consultation. The Department now invites submissions, **in writing only**, from schools and other interested parties which will inform the finalisation of the document. Submissions should be sent to the following address:

*Mr Pat Conroy, HEO
Post Primary Administration
Block 2
Department of Education and Science
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1*

Envelopes should be marked clearly "Appropriate Guidance" on the top left hand corner. All submissions should arrive on or before the **31st December 2003**:

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Kelly P.O
Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit



Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance.



INSPECTORATE

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Acronyms	2
Introduction	3
Part 1: Planning Guidance Provision in Schools	7
Part 2: Elements of the School Guidance Programme	13
Part 3: Resources and Supports for Guidance	18
References and websites	20

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Thanks are also extended to the representatives of Youthreach, primary support teachers, second level guidance counsellors and Transition Year programme co-ordinators who accepted invitations to discuss the needs of particular groups of students.

Lastly, the Department wishes to thank the individuals and organisations that made submissions following the circulation of the document for consultation. These submissions, all of which were carefully considered by the Department, played a very significant role in the finalisation of the Guidelines.

July 2005

Acronyms

CAO	Central Applications Office
DES	Department of Education and Science
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
GEI	Guidance Enhancement Initiative
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
JC	Junior Certificate
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
RE	Religious Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
TY	Transition Year
TYP	Transition Year Programme
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme



Introduction

This document aims to set out the implications for schools of the provisions in the Education Act 1998 relating to guidance. It is prepared for school managements, guidance counsellors and staff and also for a wide variety of education partners, most importantly, parents and students.

The Education Act 1998 in section 9 states that a school *shall use its available resources to...*

(c) ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices

In fulfilling its obligation to provide access to appropriate guidance, a school will need to consider two requirements:

- the need to provide *access* as determined by the general resources available in the school and the additional resource allocation for guidance and counselling and other related activities provided by the Department of Education and Science
- the need to provide *appropriate guidance* - that is, the whole school's response to meeting the guidance needs of all its students. These needs are identified in broad terms in this document.

The Education Act 1998 also places a duty on the Board of Management of the school to prepare a School Plan and to regularly review and update it [Section 21 (2) and (3)].

The school plan shall state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school and the measures which the school proposes to take to achieve those objectives...

...The school plan shall be prepared in accordance with such directions, including directions relating to consultation with the parents, the patron, staff and students of the school, as may be given from time to time by the Minister...

As indicated above, the provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools under the Education Act 1998. Schools are encouraged, therefore, to develop a comprehensive guidance plan as part of their overall school development plan, taking into account the needs of students, available resources and contextual factors. The development of the guidance plan should, where possible, be led by the guidance counsellor/s.

The guidance plan should include a detailed guidance programme which includes learning experiences and activities designed for specific groups of students. The guidance programme should draw on the expertise of the guidance counsellor/s who should be central to the process as well as all relevant management and staff. It should be designed and implemented taking into account the views of relevant stakeholders. In undertaking this planning, the school can seek support as appropriate, from the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Department of Education and Science (DES) and other relevant agencies.

The school guidance plan should reflect the needs of both junior and senior cycle students. Balance between the personal, social, educational and career guidance offered to students should be ensured in the plan.

This document is intended for use as a reference point for a school in identifying the minimum standards necessary to provide *appropriate guidance* for its students. It does not purport to contain all the elements of a comprehensive guidance programme. The NCGE, in association with the Department, has issued guidelines for guidance planning in schools to assist in the development of a whole school approach to the provision of guidance - *Planning the School Guidance Programme 2004*¹.

Guidance in Second Level Schools

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.

Counselling in Second Level Schools

Counselling is a key part of the school guidance programme, offered on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis. Counselling has as its objective the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. Counselling in schools may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of these.

¹ Planning the School Guidance Programme - National Centre for Guidance in Education: Dublin, 2004

The Aims of Guidance and Counselling

The guidance and counselling process aims to help students to develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities; to explore possibilities and opportunities; to grow in independence and to take responsibility for themselves; to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on those choices.

In this document, the word *guidance* is used to describe the activities provided by the *guidance and counselling services* identified under *support services* in paragraph 2 of the Education Act 1998.

The Importance of Guidance and Counselling

Significant changes are taking place in economic and social structures in this country which have important implications for the education system and for the students who are its principal focus. The value of guidance and counselling in responding to these challenges is widely recognised in Government policy statements and by other national and international bodies:

- The National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006 states that *the provision of guidance and counselling in second level schools is vital to enable each pupil to gain the maximum benefit from the education system*¹. The NDP identifies the school guidance service as a social inclusion measure within the education sector. The New Deal 1998 also supports this theme, it states that guidance plays *a major preventative role in helping young people at risk to stay within the formal education system*².
- The importance of lifelong guidance is emphasised by the White Paper *Learning for Life - 2000*, which lists it as a key support *necessary for successful access and learning*³.
- The Commission on the Points System states that *good quality, comprehensive guidance can*

*contribute significantly to broadening the views of second-level students and their parents on diverse pathways to careers. The Commission supports the need for an effective and comprehensive guidance and counselling service in schools and considers that the provision of such a service should be viewed in terms of the right of a student to access to an appropriate level of such services*⁴.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which carried out a comparative review of national policies for career information, guidance and counselling services in 14 OECD countries, including Ireland, describes guidance within education systems as having an important role to play in laying the foundations for lifelong career development, including *knowledge and competencies regarding self-awareness, the world of work, and making decisions and transitions*⁵. It defines guidance services as *services that assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers*⁶. It stresses that effective advice and guidance on educational and training options and on links between these options and later occupational destinations *can help better match individuals' learning choices to their interests, talents and intended destinations*⁷. In the OECD's view, this can help to reduce early school leaving, improve flows between different levels of education and improve transitions from education to the labour market. It states that *these outcomes help to make better use of educational resources, and to increase both individual and social returns to investments in education*⁸. A report of the review was published by the OECD in 2004⁹.
- European Union Presidency Conclusions on the importance of guidance throughout life in supporting and furthering the Lisbon Agenda¹⁰, issued after the informal meeting of the European Ministers for Education and the Commission of the European Union

¹ Ireland - National Development Plan 2000-2006 - Stationery Office: Dublin, 2000, p.99

² The New Deal: A Plan for Educational Opportunity - The Department of Education and Science, Stationery Office: Dublin, 1999

³ Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education - Stationery Office: Dublin, 2000 p.113

⁴ Commission on the Points System, Final Report and Recommendations - Stationery Office: Dublin, 1999, p.105

⁵ Why Careers Information, Guidance and Counselling Matter for Public Policy, A Working Paper OECD: Paris, 2002

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap - OECD: Paris, 2004

¹⁰ Lisbon Agenda - Strategy agreed by the EU Heads of States and Governments to make the European Union *the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010* - Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council: March, 2000

in Dublin on 28/29 April 2004, stress the importance of all European citizens having access to guidance services at school level and at all later life stages, as appropriate and reflecting local circumstances. The need for particular attention to be paid to early intervention with individuals and groups at risk of not completing their schooling and at risk of alienation from society is highlighted as well as the need for provision for persons with special educational needs.

- In May 2004, a Resolution¹ was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe. The Resolution highlights the need for guidance provision within the education system, especially in schools. Guidance has an *essential role to play in ensuring that individuals' educational and career decisions are firmly based, and in assisting them to develop effective self-management of their learning and career paths.* The Resolution stresses the role of guidance services in:
 - the prevention of early school leaving
 - the empowerment of individuals to manage their own learning and careers
 - the re-integration of early school leavers into appropriate education and training programmes.

¹ A Resolution is a policy and framework for action, agreed by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. While a Resolution, as opposed to a Directive, does not require member states to enact legislation to implement the provisions contained therein, it nevertheless provides a framework and guidelines for actions which countries are expected to implement taking into account the particular circumstances of each country.



Part One

Planning Guidance Provision in Schools

Introduction

Guidance as a Whole School Responsibility

The development and implementation of the school's guidance plan is a whole school responsibility. It should involve the guidance counsellor/s in the first instance, as well as all other relevant members of management and staff of the school. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of this process and representatives of the local community, especially local business, NEPS and other relevant agencies should also be consulted and actively involved as appropriate.

The Role of Other Members of Staff

While the guidance counsellor/s has/have primary responsibility for the delivery of the school's guidance and counselling programme, other members of staff have important and worthwhile contributions to make to the planning and delivery of many aspects of the programme.

These activities begin with the induction of incoming students into second level education. Some students may experience this transition as a traumatic time in their young lives and may need continuing support well into the first term¹. The more familiar incoming students are with the second level school, the easier will be their induction into the new system. Activities such as exploratory visits to the second level school, taster classes for students and information sessions for parents can contribute to dispelling doubts and uncertainties as well as helping the development of the confidence of the incoming students.

It is important that students and their parents are clear about the role and functions of the various members of staff concerned with aspects of student support, such as the guidance counsellor/s, chaplain, class tutors/year heads, Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator etc (some of these titles may vary between schools). It can help if the names and the different roles of support team members are explained to incoming first year students and their parents. This contributes to the elimination of confusion and helps to ensure that both students and their parents know who to approach for information, support or help when needs arise. The principal and /or deputy principal and teachers of first year students together with the guidance counsellor should endeavour to participate as far as possible in contacts between the school and the primary schools from which their students come.

Every effort should be made by schools to draw on the knowledge, experience and contacts of all staff members in providing the best possible guidance programme for students, for example:

- subject teachers are best placed to provide students with information and expertise on both the content and demands of their particular subject(s) syllabus
- subject teachers have a key role to play when students are choosing subjects and levels for the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations
- subject teachers may also be in a position to indicate to senior cycle students the content and study commitments of particular subjects in further and higher education courses
- the expertise of the subject teachers, learning support teacher and/or resource teacher, guidance counsellor/s and programme co-ordinators can combine to assist students in choosing the most appropriate, for them, of the educational programmes offered by the school
- teachers with special ICT skills and responsibilities may have opportunities to collaborate with the guidance counsellor/s in assisting students to use QualifaX and other guidance software packages and in enabling them to access the most up-to-date career information via the Internet
- teachers may have close links with community agencies and local businesses and, therefore, may be well placed to help individual students benefit from contact with these bodies for activities such as work experience or working with their local communities, as part of their guidance programme.

Guidance in Second Level Schools

The Importance of School Guidance Planning in Identifying Student Needs

The school, through the planning process, makes decisions regarding the provision of guidance using the professional expertise of management, guidance counsellor/s and other members of staff and taking into account the views of students, parents and other partners. It is important that the school guidance plan should balance the needs of all junior and senior cycle students in a sequential, developmental and comprehensive way, including those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups,

¹ Moving Up - The Experiences of First-Year Students in Post-Primary Education - *Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI): Dublin, 2004*

members of the Traveller community, those at risk of early school leaving, Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) students and those on Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS).

Choosing Educational Programmes

Schools should ensure that students and their parents are informed of the benefits to be gained from the programme options available. In addition to the Junior Certificate (JC) and Leaving Certificate (Established) (LC), such options are likely to be:

- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
- Transition Year Programme (TYP)
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)
- Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses.

Students also need to be made aware of how the choice of programme can have a bearing on future career options.

Appropriate Guidance

Following on from the identification of student needs in the planning process (see *Planning the School Guidance Programme* Chapter 4), schools will be in a position to define the principal activities to be included in the guidance programme. These will include providing students with:

- clear information concerning subject choices. This includes information about the consequences of subject choice and level taken for future educational, training and career options
- opportunities to explore their interests and subject choices and how these link to further education, training and career areas
- an awareness of the content and the syllabus demands of particular subjects
- assistance in the choice of educational programmes offered by the school
- assistance in identifying their own most effective learning styles and in developing effective study and note-taking skills, examination techniques and time management skills

- objective assessments of their aptitudes and achievements and feedback on these assessments
- guidance on the educational, vocational and career options available, including career progression routes and lifelong learning opportunities
- encouragement to explore a wide range of educational and career choices, including non-traditional careers
- the integration, as far as is practicable, of career themes and information into relevant aspects of the curriculum
- opportunities to develop information-seeking skills, including the use of ICT, with particular reference to career exploration and planning
- guidance in developing individual career plans based on the individual's achievements, ambitions, interests and personal circumstances.

The most up-to-date course and career information is to be found on the Internet. The planned connection of all schools to broadband will provide schools with greater access to multimedia applications and will facilitate more efficient use of the Internet to obtain up-to-date information on educational and training courses. In view of this, schools should work towards ensuring that students have regular and adequate access, for guidance purposes, to web-based information sources.

Given the nature of some aspects of the work of the guidance counsellor, schools should be cognisant of the need to ensure that adequate physical facilities are available for guidance purposes. Individual work with students requires appropriate surroundings and equally, work with small groups and classes requires suitable facilities. Space for the storage and display of guidance materials should also be provided to the extent possible.

Personal and Social Education

It is recommended that staff members involved in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Religious Education (RE) as well as HSCL co-ordinators should work together with guidance counsellors and others involved in guidance provision, since they share the objective of promoting the students' personal development and growth.

The particular contribution of guidance to SPHE is in facilitating students to:

- recognise their own talents and achievements and to identify their strengths and weaknesses

- develop coping strategies to deal with stress, personal and social issues and the challenges posed by adolescence and adulthood
- cope with the demands of school programmes, study and examinations
- organise the management of time for school, study, sporting and leisure activities
- develop interpersonal skills and awareness of the needs of others
- establish good patterns of decision-making and to learn how to make informed choices
- make successful transitions from primary to second level and from second level to further or higher education, training or directly into employment.

Where young people have serious learning, personal and social difficulties, these may need to be addressed by the relevant professional/s, such as the learning support teacher, guidance counsellor and/or NEPS psychologist or health services personnel, before the student can begin to make educational and career choices. Such young people may require ongoing learning and guidance support in order to enable them to participate fully in the education process.

Counselling: individual and group

Counselling should be available when necessary, on an individual and/or group basis, to assist students in their personal and social, educational and career development. Guidance counsellors are qualified to provide counselling support to students. The demands for counselling will vary among schools, and within any particular school from year to year, in response to student needs. Schools, therefore, require flexibility in determining the allocation of time for the guidance counsellor/s to engage in counselling. However, schools need to balance the time available to the guidance counsellor/s for individual counselling against their responsibilities to the full student body in the school. It is recommended, therefore, that in cases where students require personal counselling over a protracted period of time, guidance counsellors should refer such cases to relevant outside agencies.

Referrals

In cases where a student requires specialist support, the guidance counsellor should become involved in assessing his/her needs and where necessary, arrange a referral to an appropriate outside agency. Procedures for the referral of students to the guidance counsellor

and for referral to outside agencies should be included in the School Plan. NEPS psychologists provide a source of advice to guidance counsellors on appropriate referral pathways.

The Role of Guidance in Promoting Educational and Social Inclusion

Education plays a key role in the promotion of a more inclusive society. Educational qualifications, or the lack of them, are significant in determining the life chances of most people. Now, more than ever, underachievement at school tends to result in social difficulties that can lead to a life of uncertainty, marginalisation and dependence on the structures of social assistance. Equally, a lack of formal qualifications can prevent an individual progressing into further education, training or stable employment.

Addressing Educational Disadvantage

To address disadvantage adequately, schools should endeavour to streamline and formalise their policies and practices so that all students have access to the fullest possible range of educational services and supports. The Education Act 1998 defines educational disadvantage as *...the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools* [Paragraph 32(9)].

Students whose families have little or no tradition of progressing to further or higher education or training require access to a guidance programme that allows them to explore the full range of learning and career opportunities available. In such cases, schools should endeavour to give every assistance to those students and their parents to become aware of the benefits to be gained from continuing in school, obtaining qualifications and progressing to further study and/or training. Students should be given the opportunity and encouragement to study subjects at the highest possible level in accordance with their individual needs and ambitions. Therefore, it is important that all incoming students and their parents be informed of the importance of making appropriate subject choices and the possible implications of these choices and levels at senior cycle, e.g. that the study of a subject at foundation level for JC does not easily transfer to the study of that subject at a higher level in senior cycle.

Early School Leaving

Early school leaving and low educational attainment can be attributed to a number of factors which may be related to the individual, home, community or school.

A key objective of the NDP is the prevention of early school leaving and it identifies the school guidance service as playing a major preventative role in helping young people at risk to remain in the formal education system.

One of the strands under which additional guidance resources were allocated to schools as part of the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI) was to increase retention rates/combat early school leaving. Schools included in the School Completion Programme (SCP)¹ can use some of the resources available through the programme to provide additional guidance for students at risk of leaving school before obtaining any formal qualifications. Schools with discretionary posts e.g. posts under the designated disadvantaged scheme, also can use some of these hours to provide additional guidance to students at risk of leaving school early.

Disability and Special Educational Needs

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, provides for the rights of people with special educational needs to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education which should take place, wherever possible, in an inclusive environment. Such students' particular needs should be addressed within the school's guidance programme. They should also be assisted to leave school and progress into adulthood with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity and in an inclusive way, in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives. For those with a specific learning, intellectual or physical disability, guidance should be planned and delivered in formats and using methodologies, appropriate to individual needs. Parents and students need to be fully informed of all third level access programmes, of particular FÁS (and other agency) schemes and other initiatives designed to give special support to those wishing to avail of reserved places in third level and further education colleges and on training programmes. While in school, students with specific disabilities should be empowered to explore the fullest range of options available and to acquire the skills necessary to reach individual goals.

Students with special educational needs may require particular support to achieve their full potential and to become aware of the range of career and other options available to them. The school's guidance plan should take cognisance of the available support services and include provision for an appropriate range of interventions, information formats and delivery

methodologies to meet the special needs of these students. This should include provision for liaison between the school and the Special Education Support Service, FÁS and other relevant agencies in relation to planning for the long-term educational and training needs of such students. NEPS also has a role to play in the identification and support of students with special needs, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the NEPS Model of Service².

Non-national Students

In recent years the number of non-national students, including those whose first language may not be English, residing in Ireland has risen. Learners from ethnic minority groups may not have access to the same information about available education and training opportunities as their national counterparts. As well as being unfamiliar with the Irish education system, non-national students and/or their parents/guardians may not have the confidence or the language skills to approach the appropriate sources.

In allocating guidance and counselling resources, managements of schools with significant numbers of non-national students need to be aware of the time and other supports that guidance counsellors may require when working with students whose cultural background and language ability may be radically different to that of the majority of the school population.

Adult Students

Where a school's population includes adult students participating in, for example, VTOS, PLC and other adult education courses, the guidance programme should reflect their particular needs. Adults may need guidance and support on an individual basis to assess their abilities and skills, to discuss and explore their life, work and educational experiences and to discuss their interests, course selection and progression routes. In turn, drawing on the life experiences of adult learners may significantly enhance the guidance programme in the school for younger students.

Promoting Inclusion

The school's guidance programme can support the operation of a proactive inclusive school policy by promoting:

- strategies for building motivation and self-esteem

¹ This programme will be integrated into the School Support Programme (SSP) on a phased basis over the five years 2005/2006 - 2009/2010

² Working Together to Make a Difference for Children - The NEPS Model of Service *The National Educational Psychological Service*.

- the identification and support of students with special educational needs
- an awareness and understanding of racial, ethnic and intellectual differences
- early identification and support (through counselling and other measures) of students at risk of early school leaving
- guidance support for school attendance strategies
- awareness among students of the consequences of early school leaving
- knowledge among those who decide to leave early, of the options available to them after they leave school in the areas of further education, training and employment.



Part Two

Elements of the School Guidance Programme

Guidance in Junior Cycle

The early years of second level education are critically important ones for young people. There are transitions to be undertaken and many choices and decisions to be made by the student. The school guidance programme can facilitate this decision-making process, and make it an exciting and positive experience. The main challenges and choices for junior cycle students are likely to relate to:

- the transition from primary to second level school
- the choice of JC or JCSP (where available)
- choice of subjects
- the levels at which JC examination subjects are to be taken
- participation in TYP
- which Leaving Certificate programme to pursue (LC (Established), LCA or LCVP, as available)
- subject choice for senior cycle.

Making the transition from primary to second level education

Most students need time and support in order to adjust to the second level school environment, involving as it does a variety of teachers, new subjects and teaching methods as well as a changed social context. Some students may need individual help, and possibly counselling, in order to complete this transition successfully.

Links between primary and second level schools

In order to facilitate the smooth transition of students to second level school, it is recommended that there should be a formal communication structure established between second level schools and their main feeder schools. This should include structures to support students with special educational needs. The guidance counsellor/s should participate in the development of links with schools from which their students come and, in co-operation with other relevant members of staff, should develop a guidance programme for incoming students and their parents. This programme should include information about subject choices available, levels of study, the choice of programmes at junior cycle and support services provision.

It is recommended that schools consider formalising their support activities for the transition from primary to second level education into a defined set of measures within the school plan. Such activities could include orientation days, information sessions for parents and meetings with principals from feeder schools. These measures should start before students enter the school and extend at least until the end of the first term of the school year. In order for transition programmes to facilitate the students' successful transition to second level, the co-operation and input of the primary schools are essential.

Support Services within the school

Students and their parents/guardians are entitled to be informed of the support services available in the school. It is recommended that first year students be given a clear outline of the roles of the personnel involved in the support structures e.g. guidance counsellor, chaplain, HSCL co-ordinator, learning support teachers, care team, year heads, class tutors and others as appropriate. In the context of the school guidance programme, each first year student should have access to individual support from a member of this staff team, in order to assist with his/her integration into the school.

Progressing through the Junior Cycle

Students in junior cycle must prepare for State examinations for the first time. They are also faced with making subject and programme choices that will have implications for their career choice. In addition to the activities outlined in the section of this document on *Guidance in Second Level Schools* (pages 8/9), the guidance programme should aim to give junior cycle students the opportunity to acquire the following:

- understanding of their strengths and weaknesses
- study skills, including time management
- examination techniques (in 3rd year)
- awareness of the implications of subject selection and levels therein for career choice
- awareness of the need to consider all subject options including non-traditional subjects
- knowledge of the potential benefits of TYP (where it is available)
- knowledge of senior cycle options - LCA, LCVP and the LC (Established), as applicable.

The school guidance programme throughout junior cycle should enable students to begin their exploration of career options. The programme should encourage consideration of a wide range of educational, training and career choices, not bounded by traditional considerations of gender or social stereotyping.

The guidance programme should begin the process of linking students' aptitudes, achievements and interests to career options. Activities to support this could include:

- the encouragement of students in first and second year to explore a range of educational and career areas including non-traditional careers
- project work and team work as a means towards group discussion on career opportunities
- information on the competencies and skills required for the working world, including employability skills
- objective assessment of students' aptitudes and consideration of their achievements, interests and subject choices and how these link to career paths.

During the junior cycle, students and their parents need to be assisted to understand the implications of choices of specific subjects and levels taken, on the range of further study and career options available to them in the future. Ideally, such information should be incorporated into the teaching of these subjects. Where the level of provision by the school of certain subjects or timetable constraints limit a student's options, it is essential that parents and students should be informed of the possible implications as early as possible. For example, under current conditions students should know that:

- higher level Gaeilge is a requirement for entry to the colleges of education for primary teaching
- higher level mathematics is a requirement for most honours degree courses in engineering
- a laboratory science subject is a requirement for all medical and most paramedical courses and higher level chemistry is a requirement for some specific medical and paramedical courses in a number of third level institutions.

Students not wishing to progress to senior cycle or to TYP should be provided with opportunities (with their parents) to meet with the guidance counsellor to discuss possible progression routes and training options, such as Youthreach. This vocational programme offers education and training opportunities for 16-21 year olds in local

community settings. Those wishing to enter the labour force should be encouraged to contact FÁS and access local employment support agencies to secure viable employment opportunities.

Guidance in Senior Cycle

The Transition Year Programme

Students in TY often sample the full range of subject options available at senior cycle and gain vocational skills and competencies by undertaking work experience and/or work shadowing. In TY, students are encouraged to develop their full range of intelligences through a greater variety of activities than is available in the other years of second level education. Students undertake a variety of new roles and responsibilities and they engage in new means of personal development, e.g. work experience or mini-companies. These features are an integral part of the TYP.

As part of the TY guidance programme, students should be facilitated in developing and progressing their career plans. Through ongoing exploration and feedback they should develop a growing understanding of their skills, aptitudes and achievements. The work experience/shadowing module should provide each student with the opportunity to participate in a structured work experience/shadowing programme, and in structured and detailed debriefing sessions.

Leaving Certificate Programmes

Currently, there are three programmes available at senior cycle: the LC (Established), LCA and LCVP. The guidance programme at senior cycle aims to assist the full development of each student's potential, to help the student grow in self-knowledge and self-esteem and to prepare him/her for higher or further education, training and/or employment. In addition to the guidance activities outlined in the section of this document on *Guidance in Second Level Schools* (pages 8/9) students have additional guidance requirements in senior cycle. The guidance programme should endeavour to provide students with opportunities to:

- prepare to manage their successful transition from second level to further or higher education, training or employment
- identify their own key motivating factors
- prepare for successful transition into adulthood
- learn about job search and job retention skills

- develop research and ICT skills so that they can be self-directed in their career exploration and development
- learn about the world of work, including employment rights and responsibilities
- develop awareness of the need for lifelong learning
- develop skills to become independent and self-motivated learners.

Successful guidance at this level requires an environment that facilitates students in developing an understanding of themselves, their values and their future adult roles. The guidance programme at senior cycle should assist students to continue to develop a range of self-management skills, including the ability to access information concerning further study and career options. To enable students to gain the maximum benefits from the guidance programme in the senior cycle, it is recommended that the following should be included:

- the provision of access to information prepared by public agencies and employers regarding career opportunities
- the provision of information about further and higher education and training courses, including entry requirements, course content, workload and progression routes
- the establishment and development of linkages with further and higher education institutions and training organisations to facilitate students' decision-making concerning course and institution choice
- the provision of opportunities for students to attend events such as college open days, career exhibitions, visits to employers. Such activities require careful planning, management and follow-up, in order to ensure that students get maximum benefit from them
- meetings with relevant role-models such as former students and parents to discuss their chosen career paths
- the organisation of mock interview sessions.

The LCVP and the LCA each includes a guidance module designed to help students become more aware of their interests, aptitudes and skills with regard to the world of work. These modules are designed to complement, but not replace, individual career planning interviews between the guidance counsellor and individual students.

The LCA course has developed a module on Job Search Skills from which every senior cycle student could benefit and which, consequently, could form part of the general guidance programme in senior cycle. By linking the LC subjects into vocational groupings, the LCVP strengthens their vocational dimensions. The two link modules - *Preparation for the World of Work* and *Enterprise Education* - sharpen the vocational focus of the LC subjects. Students of the LCVP have the opportunities to identify personal aptitudes and interests, to complete a career investigation, to develop job-seeking skills and interview techniques and to integrate their learning across the LC subjects they are studying.

The aims of the guidance elements of both the LCA and LCVP are directly related and complementary to the general aims of the guidance and counselling activities in senior cycle.

Progression from Second Level Education

The transfer from senior cycle to higher/further education, to training or to employment is the last major transition for the second level student. While it is an exciting period in a young person's life, it can also be a time of anxiety and challenge for both students and parents. Although a decreasing number of students completing the senior cycle now progress directly to employment, it is important for schools to recognise that for those young people who decide to do so, this may well be their last experience of fulltime education. In this context, it is essential that students be prepared for entry to working life and that their needs and expectations are identified. Knowledge of second-chance educational and training opportunities available may be of particular importance to these students so that they may be encouraged to resume their education at a later date. Three programmes - TYP, LCA and LCVP - are designed to offer students the opportunity to experience the world of work either through work experience or shadowing. Some schools also provide a work experience module for students in their first year of the two year Leaving Certificate programme. As a result, a high proportion of senior cycle students gain some knowledge of the work place. This practical experience, coupled with the modules studied in LCA or LCVP, can form a solid basis upon which students can confirm career and/or course choice.

The transition from second level to third level or to the world of work requires significant levels of adjustment for most young people. As a result, schools need to prepare students for a lifestyle change and the increase in personal responsibility that accompanies adulthood. Self-confidence and self-esteem are especially important at

this point and young people need to have been prepared for independence from school and from home. They need to be aware of how the adult world they are entering operates and what supports are available to them should they experience difficulties or need personal support.

Higher and Further Education

Since the early 1980s, the percentage of senior cycle students progressing to further or higher education has increased significantly, with approximately 90% of school leavers now going on to some form of higher or further study or training (including apprenticeship training). The number of institutions and courses in the Central Applications Office (CAO) system increased from 9 institutions and 95 courses in 1982 to 43 institutions and 895 courses in 2004. With the current level of choice, students need to carry out accurate and thorough research on their options and choices.

It is not uncommon for students progressing to further and higher education to experience difficulty during the first year of their course. A recent study of students at Institutes of Technology¹ suggests that efforts to improve completion rates should begin long before students arrive in the college and that students need to build independent learning skills prior to entry to the colleges.

Colleges of higher and further education provide careers and appointments services as well as a range of student supports. College open days are an ideal time for students to become acquainted with all of these services so that they can avail of the relevant supports, if required, at an early stage in their third level education. The more structured contact there is between the school and third level institutions the better prepared students are for the reality of life in these institutions.

PLC and Adult Education Programmes

In schools offering a wide range of education options, the school guidance plan should include a programme designed to meet the educational, personal and vocational needs of those choosing PLC and adult education courses. The majority of PLC courses are of 1-2 years duration. On successful completion of the course students are awarded a Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) certificate and may seek employment or continue to third level education. Adults returning to education, to VTOS for example, also need access to support and guidance to choose educational

courses and to make worthwhile transitions into further or higher education, training or employment.

Student Feedback and Support for Guidance Programme

Students in the final year of senior cycle are well placed to provide valuable feedback to the school on the content and delivery of its guidance programme.

Through the Student Council, students should be able to provide useful feedback related to the guidance programme. This also should be a channel through which students can communicate constructive suggestions for changes that they, based on their experience, consider would enhance aspects of the programme for particular year group/s.

Past students also are well positioned to offer valuable insights on their experience of the school's guidance programme. It is recommended that schools avail of this type of information as part of their evaluation of guidance provision. In addition, past students can be a rich resource to the school by offering role-model support for students as they prepare to progress into further and higher education, training or the world of work.

¹ Non-Completion in Institutes of Technology: An Investigation of Preparation, Attitudes and Behaviours Among First Year Students - Eemer Eivers, Rita Flanagan and Mark Morgan - Educational Research Centre: Dublin, May 2002.



Part Three

Resources and Supports for Guidance

Staffing

The DES provides ex-quota staffing resources to schools to assist them with the provision of their guidance programme. Since guidance and counselling is a whole-school activity, schools should not depend solely on this additional resource when devising the school guidance programme. In addition to the normal allocation of teaching resources allocated to all schools, there are a number of other resources provided by the Department which can contribute to the provision of guidance and counselling support for students. For example:

- the LCA and LCVP include significant guidance elements and the additional resource allocations that are provided to schools implementing these programmes can be used to provide this element
- schools in the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI) receive additional ex-quota hours for guidance
- schools designated as disadvantaged have been allocated additional teaching posts from which hours can be used for guidance purposes.

Facilities and Other Resources

- ICT resources have been provided to schools under the *Schools IT 2000* initiative. These include the provision of funding for computers and staff training as well as direct support for the provision and development of the *QualifaX* course and careers software package. The *Schools Broadband Programme* will be introduced in mid 2005 and it will be completed by March 2006.
- All new school buildings are now required to include facilities for guidance provision including an office, access to a classroom suitable for group and class work and a library/display area for guidance.
- The NCGE is a fully funded agency of the DES, with the central role of supporting and developing guidance practice in all areas of education. Its services to second level schools include the provision of technical advice and information on guidance and the promotion, development and dissemination of good practice in guidance. A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is being developed by the NCGE with the aim of facilitating guidance counsellors' access to support and training materials, continuing professional development opportunities and best practice in guidance. The VLE will also provide practitioners with the opportunity to network using a web-board type facility, thus promoting information exchange and best practice in

guidance. It is envisaged that, initially, the VLE will focus on the provision of support to guidance counsellors in developing guidance programme plans.

- NEPS psychologists are available to support schools in facilitating the personal, social and educational development of all children and young people and in the promotion of mental health generally. They are also available to advise on support for students with special educational or counselling needs. All NEPS interventions are informed by the consultative philosophy that underlies their work and are in accordance with the procedures outlined in the NEPS Model of Service pamphlet¹.
- The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) is the professional body which represents guidance counsellors. Most practising guidance counsellors in second level schools are members of the Institute. The Institute supports the professional development of its members through the provision of a range of activities at local and at national levels designed in accordance with the needs of its members.
- Inspectors of Guidance visit schools regularly to evaluate the provision of guidance. In the course of this work, they are available to school management and staff to advise on aspects of school guidance provision.
- LCA and LCVP publications are a useful resource for guidance counsellors. The LCVP link module *Preparation for the World of Work* is designed to provide students with a general knowledge of the world of work, career research and job search skills. Sample CVs and career investigations are contained in the LCVP *Link Modules Assessment Guidelines*. The LCA *Vocational Preparation and Guidance* module facilitates the students' vocational development by developing their awareness of their interests, aptitudes and job search skills, investigating career, education and training options and devising personal career action plans. See www.lca.ie and www.lcvp.ie for these resources.

¹ Working Together to Make a Difference for Children -The NEPS Model of Service-The National Educational Psychological Service.

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Websites

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www.cao.ie

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www.education.ie

FÁS
www.fas.ie

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HETAC
www.hetac.ie

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www.igc-edu.ie

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