



The School Guidance Plan
Scoil Mhuire, Trim,
Co. Meath.
Review: Spring 2022



School Principal: Ms J. Maher

School Deputy Principals: Ms C. Nulty, Mr P. Maguire

School Guidance Counsellors: Ms Pam Whelan, Ms Monica Mahon

School Guidance Planning Group Spring 2022:

Chairperson: Monica Mahon, Secretary: Pam Whelan, committee members: Máire Ní Anluain, Mícheál Kerr, Shauna Colgan, Jackie Maher, Celine Nulty.

Scoil Mhuire

Scoil Mhuire is an all-girls Voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of CEIST. It was founded by The Sisters of Mercy in 1936 and currently has a student enrolment of 815, a teaching staff of 60, 2 Special Needs Assistants and 10 ancillary staff.

Scoil Mhuire is an inclusive school fostering the academic and holistic development of all its students.

Mission Statement

Scoil Mhuire seeks to provide a quality education for all its students in a challenging and positive environment. We are committed to the holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

What is the School Guidance Plan?

The school guidance plan is a structured document that describes the school's 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.

What is 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.

What is 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.

What makes the Guidance Counsellor a Specialist?

Guidance counsellors -

Are teachers registered by the Teaching Council.

Have undergone specialist training in guidance and counselling. (Level 9 NFQ)

Are qualified and registered to administer psychometric tests.

Belong to a professional body – The Institute of Guidance Counsellors

Engage in ongoing professional development through their local IGC branch and at the annual IGC conference.

Attend regular supervision for the protection of themselves and their counselling clients.

What is the Guidance Plan?

This guidance plan aims to outline how the guidance needs of students are met and to identify areas that require development in the short, medium and long term.

Guidance and Counselling provision is presented in a sequential manner from a student's first contact with the school to tracking past pupils. Activities which embrace all year groups are then outlined.

Reference is made to guidance for all, guidance for some, and guidance for few.

This Guidance Plan is constantly evolving to meet the needs of students and to reflect what is happening in the wider world.

A full review of this plan should be carried out in 2026.

Guidance Plan by Year Group

First year

- Annual Open Night. Allows potential students the opportunity to view the school and its facilities as well as interact with staff and students.
- Outreach Programme. The Principal and some senior students visit feeder primary schools for a question and answer session.
- Information session for parents/guardians of incoming students in May. Parents/Guardians are given practical information about the school and how to prepare for secondary school.
- Special Education Teachers (SET) liaise with all primary schools prior to students starting 1st Year.
- Students especially Special Educational Need (SEN) students are facilitated to visit the school by request prior to starting in August.
- There is a comprehensive induction programme for students.
- Psychometric tests are done in September
- Athrú: Group of selected 5th year students who undergo training and mentor each first year form group. Meet with classes on a regular basis, offer help and advice. Help organise activities and trips.
- Follow up information evening for parents/guardians in late September. In advance of the meeting parents/guardians are invited to submit questions or issues of concern so that these can be addressed on the evening by staff.
- A variety of bonding events are organised throughout the year.
- Year Head liaises with students, parents/guardians, special education teachers, guidance counsellors, form teachers and subject teachers, as well as outside agencies where relevant in the management of the year group.
- Referrals to outside agencies are made when further interventions are required.
- Guidance Counsellors assist students with subject choice for Junior Cycle.
- Guidance Counsellors meet students and parents/guardians by request.
- One parent/teacher meeting is held per year.
- Time capsules are created in Religious Education Classes to be opened on Graduation Day.

Second Year

- Second year student are encouraged to become autonomous members of the school community
- Peer support continues in second year where Senior Prefects replace the Athrú team but preform a similar role in encouraging and advising students and meeting with them on a regular basis.
- Students are encouraged to become active members of the school community through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Learning or emotional issues which arise at this time are dealt with through the school pastoral care system and learning support department.
- Students can avail of counselling with the Guidance Counsellor by referral from a teacher, parent or by self-referral.
- Fun trip at the end of the year.
- Information meeting for parents/guardians regarding 2nd year.
- One Parent/Teacher meeting held during the year.

Third Year

- Students are encouraged to remain active members of the school community.
- There is a strong emphasis on enabling all students to reach their full potential in school.
- October meeting for parents to clearly outline expectations and practical information for the year. For example, deadlines for the presentation of practical work for examination purposes.
- Third year student are introduced to the programme and subject options for senior cycle.
 - Class sessions with Guidance Counsellor
 - Half day seminar with presentations on programmes and subject choice.
 - All 3rd year students have individual meetings with Guidance Counsellor.
 - Programme and subject descriptor booklet given to each student.
 - Presentation for all parents/guardians of third years on Senior Options.
 - Focused information meeting for students going into Transition Year.
 - Subject teachers provide information on their subject at Leaving Certificate level during classes.
- Junior Cycle Special Accommodations for examinations are processed by the Learning Support Department
- A Junior Cycle Examination orientation meeting is held in May for 3rd year students.
- One Parent/teacher meeting held during the year.
- Focused meeting for students going into LCA.
- Focused meeting for students progressing to Transition Year

Transition Year

- All students in Scoil Mhuire are given the opportunity to do Transition Year.
- A focused information meeting is held for parents and work experience forms distributed

- There is a well-established core curriculum in Transition Year and it is constantly evolving in line with available opportunities.
- The programme is managed by a programme co-ordinator, a core co-ordinating team, a year head and form teachers.
- Work experience is an integral part of TY.
- Students participate in a wide range of activities on campus and off campus.
- Trips national and international are organised for students.
- There are taster classes in all Leaving Certificate subjects to assist students in making informed choices for Leaving Certificate.
- Students are invited to attend the Career Symposium.
- Assessment is carried out through a credit system and folder of excellence.
- At the end of year there is an exhibition of students' work and a graduation ceremony to which families are invited.
- Certificates of Participation, Merit and Distinction are awarded as appropriate.
- Student reports are sent to parents/guardians in December and at the end of the year.
- A focused meeting for students going into LCA.

Fifth Year

- In Fifth year, students have a choice of doing the Leaving Certificate Programme, The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Formation of LCVP and LCA is dependent on the numbers of students who apply.
- Students from Transition Year and 3rd year are helped integrate through -
 - Bonding trip
 - Year head/ form teacher support
 - Subject teachers
- Guidance classes are scheduled for 5th year. (Under review)
- LCVP students have one week's work experience.
- LCA students have work experience one day per week (currently Wednesday)
- Guest speakers from voluntary organisations and colleges address individual classes or year group.
- Students are invited to attend the Career Symposium.
- All students have RSE classes. (Under review)
- A 5th year retreat is held annually
- 5th year students are selected through interviews to serve on the Athrú team.
- There is one Parent/Teacher meeting per year.

Sixth Year

- There is a strong emphasis on each student achieving their potential
- All classes have one period of Guidance per week
- All 6th year students are encouraged to attend the Higher Options exhibition. (2021,2021 online)
- New system of students booking own Higher Options tickets introduced 2022/'23
- Students are invited to attend the Career Symposium.

- 6th year students have individual career planning meetings with a guidance counsellor.
- Visiting speakers are invited during guidance classes. All students in guidance class and in the study hall must attend. Other 6th years may attend with their teacher's permission.
- Up to date relevant information is displayed on the guidance noticeboard.
- Important dates and deadlines are posted on Teams.
- Reminder texts are sent to parents/guardians for important deadlines.
- Students are encouraged to attend open days on Saturdays to ensure students and teachers do not miss tuition time. A schedule of open days is displayed in the guidance area.
- A Post Leaving Certificate information meeting is held for parents/guardians in November.
- One parent/teacher meeting is held during the year.
- On the last day of school, students reflect on their time in school, open their time capsules and share a meal and graduation cake.
- A graduation ceremony is conducted in which the whole school community shares. All students are presented with a scroll. Awards and rewards are presented. Strong emphasis is placed on having a dignified end to their time in Scoil Mhuire.
- There follows an evening celebration of Mass to which student may be invite family and friends. Students have a large input to the celebration through prayers, symbols, and hymns.
- The Parents Council present each Graduate with a gift.

Guidance Plan - Whole School

Pastoral Care System

A Form Teacher and Year Head system support students' well-being in school. Each class group has a form teacher with an administrative role and pastoral role. Form Teachers meet with their form groups every morning, to record attendance and offer support and encouragement. Year heads hold assemblies with the whole year group weekly, sharing information and giving motivational talks. Serious issues are referred to them by form teachers.

First year form teachers are assisted by Athrú students and all other form teachers are assisted by a Senior Prefect.

There is a strong emphasis on pastoral care and well-being and a good understanding that for effective learning to take place students must feel a sense of connectedness and belonging to the school as well as a sense of security and happiness.

Activities are carried out during Form Time to enhance student's well-being.

Subject Teachers

Central to the care and support of students in Scoil Mhuire are the subject teachers. These are the individuals who have the most contact with students, who help, encourage and support them daily. Subject teachers will often be the first to notice a change in student behaviour and will initiate further investigation, where deemed appropriate. A subject teacher may often be the 'one significant adult' available to a student.

Principal/ Deputy Principals

The Principal and Deputy Principals operate an Open-door policy to students.

Religious Education.

The Religious Education department facilitate the Celebration of Mass for all staff and students at the beginning of the new school year and for the graduation of students at the end of 6th year. Liturgical events are celebrated throughout the school year and include Advent Services and the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday as well as the celebration of other events as time and resources allow. Fr Warren Collier, Trim Parish is Chaplain to the school.

Guidance Counsellors/Resources

- Guidance allocation: 1.40
- Most 5th and 6th Year students have one timetabled period of guidance per week. (Schemes of work are included in the guidance folder)
- All LCA students have one period of Guidance per week. (2022/23 5th and 6th year combined)
- 1st year classes have one timetabled guidance class per week.
- 3rd year students have guidance classes to assist with subject choice.
- A student may be referred to the guidance counsellor by a teacher, a parent/guardian or may self-refer.
- Referral to outside agencies if appropriate are made in conjunction with parents and the School Principal. Such agencies include the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), General Practitioner (GP), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) through the GP and TUSLA.
- 2 x Guidance Counsellors
- 2 x Guidance offices
- Reach Programme, TY, 5th, 6th Year
- Notice Boards/Electronic Screens
- Computer Room/ Device delivery service
- Text alerts and emails through main office
- Relevant events posted on Teams.

Athrú

These are 5th year students who support 1st year students and assist them in making a smooth transition from primary school to secondary school. Students are selected following application and interview. They are then trained to provide them with the necessary skills to work with 1st years and the training programme is tailored to meet the needs of Scoil Mhuire.

Senior Prefects

Students apply for the position and are interviewed. (Interview introduced 2022). Students are selected who are deemed to be good role models, have a good record of attendance and punctuality, and have the characteristics to carry out the duties effectively. Training is provided. Prefects are co-ordinated and supported by the Deputy Principal.

Care Team

The Care Team is made up of the Principal, the Deputy Principals, Special education teachers on a rotation basis and guidance counsellors. The NEPS psychologist attends a planning meeting at the beginning of the year. Referrals to the NEPS psychologist for educational or emotional reasons are agreed at the meeting. The Care Team meeting is timetabled for one class period weekly.

Visiting Counsellor

There is a counselling service available to students in the school weekly. This service is funded by Meath Community Drug Alcohol Response (MCDAR) and the Scoil Mhuire. The counselling is Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) person centred counselling. The counsellor is accredited by the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) and is a counselling supervisor. Garda clearance has been obtained and full professional indemnity insurance is in place. As well as individual counselling workshops are done with class groups.

Testing

- First Year students complete psychometric tests digitally in September as well as a reading test. Results are used in conjunction with information from primary schools to identify students needing additional supports.
- Results are entered on Athena to allow for efficient monitoring of student progress.
- CAT 4 results and NGRT results are available to teachers on student's VShare profile.
- Teachers are encouraged to use the test results in planning teaching style and in setting targets for students.
- **Assessment for Learning** is an integral part of all lessons and teachers have received up to date training in this area.
- **Assessment of Learning** is carried out in individual classes at the teachers' discretion. Whole school examinations are held in November (Winter Tests), Mock Examinations for 3rd and 6th Years in February and Summer Examinations for 1st, 2nd and 5th Year students in the last week of the school year.

Tracking

CAT 4 results and NGRT results are available on VShare for each student who completes the tests. The use of these test results is well established among staff.

Group results are available to teachers on 'All teachers' Available only when in school.

Athena introduced as a means of tracking student's progress. This was recently established and is in the developmental stage.

Survey of progression routes of previous years 6th years is carried out electronically by the guidance department. Results shared with staff. (Issues around data management in contacting students/parents)

A Mentoring Programme to help students set and reach targets has been developed and introduced at the end of 2021/'22.

Student Council

There is an active student council in the school, with representatives from each class and support of teachers. Along with highlighting issues of concern to students the student's council organise fund raising activities for chosen charities. Review and update of constitution carried out Spring 2022.

Parents Council

Following Covid re-establishing.

Book rental

The school operates a book rental scheme for 1st to 3rd years. This is convenient for families and reduces costs.

Canteen

There is a canteen in the school where students may purchase a range of foods. Students are encouraged to bring water to school and can also avail of bottled water in school.

Lockers

All students have use of a locker.

After school study

Students can avail of two hours of supervised after school study for a reasonable cost.

Co-curricular/ Extra-curricular Activities

All students are encouraged to be involved in extra-curricular activities. The benefits of extra-curricular activities are emphasised at parent/guardian meetings. A list of current extra-curricular

activities is available in the Guidance Folder. Following Covid 19 a targeted approach was taken to expand the range of activities available and to get students involved.

Erasmus

The school has a well-established Erasmus Programme which continues to grow and develop. Large numbers of students are involved in the various projects and have benefited from trips abroad. The programme has funded many initiatives within the school including outdoor seating areas and landscaping.

Community Links

There are strong links between the school and the local community.

- The school is used by a variety of community groups for various activities, notably for local plays and musicals.
- Many students obtain work experience in local businesses.
- Visits are made to local businesses and voluntary groups.
- Local businesses sponsor many events in the school through the donation of prizes. For example, the Credit Union sponsor prizes for the TY, LCVP, and LCA enterprise days at the Christmas Market and Spring Market.
- Collections are made for the local St Vincent de Paul.
- St Vincent de Paul provides 3rd level financial aid to students in need of financial help.
- Prosper Meath (Organisation for people with Intellectual Disabilities) visit school for disability awareness classes.
- The school has links with the OPW. School projects are exhibited there.
- The school has links with Trim GAA Club and makes use of the facilities there. GAA personnel provide workshops on disability issues.
- Aura Gym and swimming Pool are used for some modules.
- Links are generated with various community groups through the Young Social Innovators (YSI) initiative.
- Speakers, for example Voluntary Groups and entrepreneurs, are invited to speak to students and parents as appropriate.
- The School Choir and Gluais traditional music group perform locally. There is an annual Carol Service performed by the Choir.
- Meath County Council sponsor Gluais.
- The Community Guard is invited to give talks to class groups.

Future Planning

Having reviewed the Guidance Plan and carried out a survey of a random sample of students, parents/guardians and staff the following areas have been identified for review and development in the short, medium and long term. Interested individuals may wish to select an area of interest and work with others to review and progress that area.

Short term:

- ✓ More focused study skills provision.

- ✓ Equipping students to make informed subject choices for Leaving Certificate.
- ✓ Scheduling of Guidance Classes for different year groups.
- ✓ Scheduling of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) classes for senior cycle.
- ✓ Update of Anti-bullying policy and provision.
- ✓ Further development of extra-curricular provision.

Medium term:

- ✓ Language provision and support in context of Curriculum Review.
- ✓ Timetabling in First year in context of Curriculum Review
- ✓ Management of Time Capsules.
- ✓ Post-covid career visits and talks.
- ✓ Development of Mentoring Programme.
- ✓ Embedding Athena in the life of the student and teacher.
- ✓ Developing well-being with focus on mental health and internet safety.
- ✓ Review of school Mission Statement.

Long term:

- ✓ Range of subjects available in context of new school building.
- ✓ Facilities in context of new school building.

This Whole School Guidance Plan is a living document. Changes to the whole school guidance provision will be reflected in the plan as they occur. The Whole School Guidance Plan will be due for a full review in 4 years. (2026/'27)

Approved by the Board of Management: 16th September 2022