St. Joseph's Patrician College

The Bish

Whole School Guidance Policy

Ratification Date:

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1	12th January 2026	10th February 2026
2		
3		

Next Review Date: As Required

This procedure complies with the Child Protection Procedures as adopted by the Board of Management. Teachers are reminded that they are mandated persons and must be familiar with their obligations under the *Children First: National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Children First Act 2015*

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2 Introduction

This Whole School Guidance policy supports the values of St Joseph's Patrician College as outlined in the Mission Statement:

Our Vision: "To create a vibrant and inclusive environment where the whole school community is empowered to embrace learning, live with integrity, lead with compassion, and make a positive impact in a diverse world."

Our Mission: "Our Mission is to foster an environment of respect, allowing students to grow, reach their full potential, and achieve educational excellence, guided by Catholic values while respecting all faiths and none."

Our Motto: "Love God, work hard and take care of one another"

2.1 Aims and Objectives

- Our aim is to provide a quality of education to each student that will help them to attain the academic standard necessary to embark on the career of their choice, in accordance with the policies and regulations of the Department of Education and Science.
- To combine the best of traditional and modern educational theory and developments in creating a learning environment which facilitates the intellectual and creative development of each student.
- To respond to the moral and spiritual development needs of students.
- To provide for the physical, emotional, social and personal development needs of all students by promoting and facilitating, on an inclusive basis, a wide range of sporting, cultural and other activities within the school, compatible with the resources of the school.
- To enrich the educational experience of students, as well as their future career development prospects, by establishing liaison procedures with other schools, with third level educational institutions and with other appropriate organisations in the social, cultural, economic and religious environment in which the school operates.
- To encourage the development of the Irish language, literature and music among students, staff and parents.
- To recognise that an effective student learning environment can only be created if the personal development needs of the Senior Leadership Team, teachers and staff are also benefiting from such a learning environment.
- To promote a partnership between our students, parents, teachers, Senior Leadership Team, trustees and the Department of Education in order to ensure the physical well-being of all students and staff in achieving these aims, in the management of the school and in planning its future development.

- To develop the organisational structures, the information management systems and the liaison procedures necessary to achieve the aims of the school, to evaluate the effectiveness of the school and to provide for the forward planning of the school.
- To broaden the minds of our students and to increase their understanding and respect for other cultures by organising inter-cultural activities, student exchanges with other countries and sporting and cultural visits abroad.

3 Whole School Guidance Rationale

At The Bish, we view guidance and counselling as a whole-school responsibility. It is essential that guidance is integrated across the curriculum and delivered collaboratively, with our guidance counsellors leading the way (DES 2012). Our goal is to ensure that guidance touches every part of school life, addressing the diverse needs of all students. Cooperation between teachers, staff, parents, employers, and the wider community is essential to ensure that guidance is meaningful and relevant to every student (DES 2012 & IGC 2008). We recognize the importance of positive student-teacher relationships in fostering students' well-being, which underpins their overall success in school and beyond.

3.1 Whole School Approach to Guidance

In Ireland, the provision of guidance counselling in post-primary education, as articulated in the 1998 Education Act (Section 9c), requires schools to "ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices" (Government of Ireland, 1998). It is aimed that guidance-related activities expose students to a range of learning experiences that will encourage them to develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities as well as to explore future possibilities and opportunities (Department of Education and Science 2005). Students are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, thereby assisting the development of self-management skills, aiding the facilitation of vocational and career, education and personal choices throughout the lifespan (Department of Education and Science 2005).

School Context – The Plan applies to the entire community of the Bish.

The school has two Guidance Counsellors with the responsibility of delivering guidance counselling and related activities, as listed in the previous section, to all students under our care.

The aim of the Guidance Department is to assist and support all students in achieving their full potential, thus gaining maximum benefit from the education system, and

subsequently achieving any and all personal, vocational, educational, and personal aspirations.

Guidance Counsellors aim to provide a professional and balanced service comprised of the three interlinked areas of personal/social, educational, and vocational guidance. It is recognised that adolescence is a particularly significant and unforgettable transition in a young person's life where the changes that are taking place can go on to impact on students' futures. With this in mind, guidance counsellors aim to provide support, understanding, and compassion whilst demonstrating a true belief in the capability of our students, as they work their way through their secondary school education.

Table 4 on P.25 provides a list of abbreviations used in this document.

4 Model Of Provision

The NCGE (2017) and Circular: 0001/2025 have drawn up a whole school guidance framework to support schools in planning and delivering a comprehensive whole school guidance programme. It presents a continuum of support model with Guidance for all, Guidance for some, and Guidance for a few relating to personal and social development (developing myself), educational opportunities (developing my learning), and career decision making (developing my career path). (Refer to the image in Figure 1). The framework has been used to determine and design the whole school guidance plan.

a) **Guidance for All** – provided to all students to support personal and social, educational, and career development, and students making transitions. This includes career education programmes, SPHE and Wellbeing in Junior Cycle, guidance modules and work experience/placement provided as part of senior cycle programmes (TYP, LCVP, L1LP1,2) (NCGE 2017).
b) **Guidance for Some** - provided to specific groups of students to support personal and social, educational and career development and transition making. Such groups of students will typically include, for example, students in senior cycle, especially 6th year, who will benefit from group and one-to-one guidance counselling to support educational and career decision making, and students who are making transitions. Transition points include primary school into first year of post-primary education, junior cycle to senior cycle, and school to higher/further education and training, apprenticeships, and employment (NCGE 2017).
c) **Guidance for Few** – Students may require support in meeting their developmental needs and when they experience personal crises. Some students may also require more intensive support as they make transitions and important decisions during their time in post-primary schools. If the student requires more intensive support, referral to external agencies and supports should be employed (NCGE 2017).

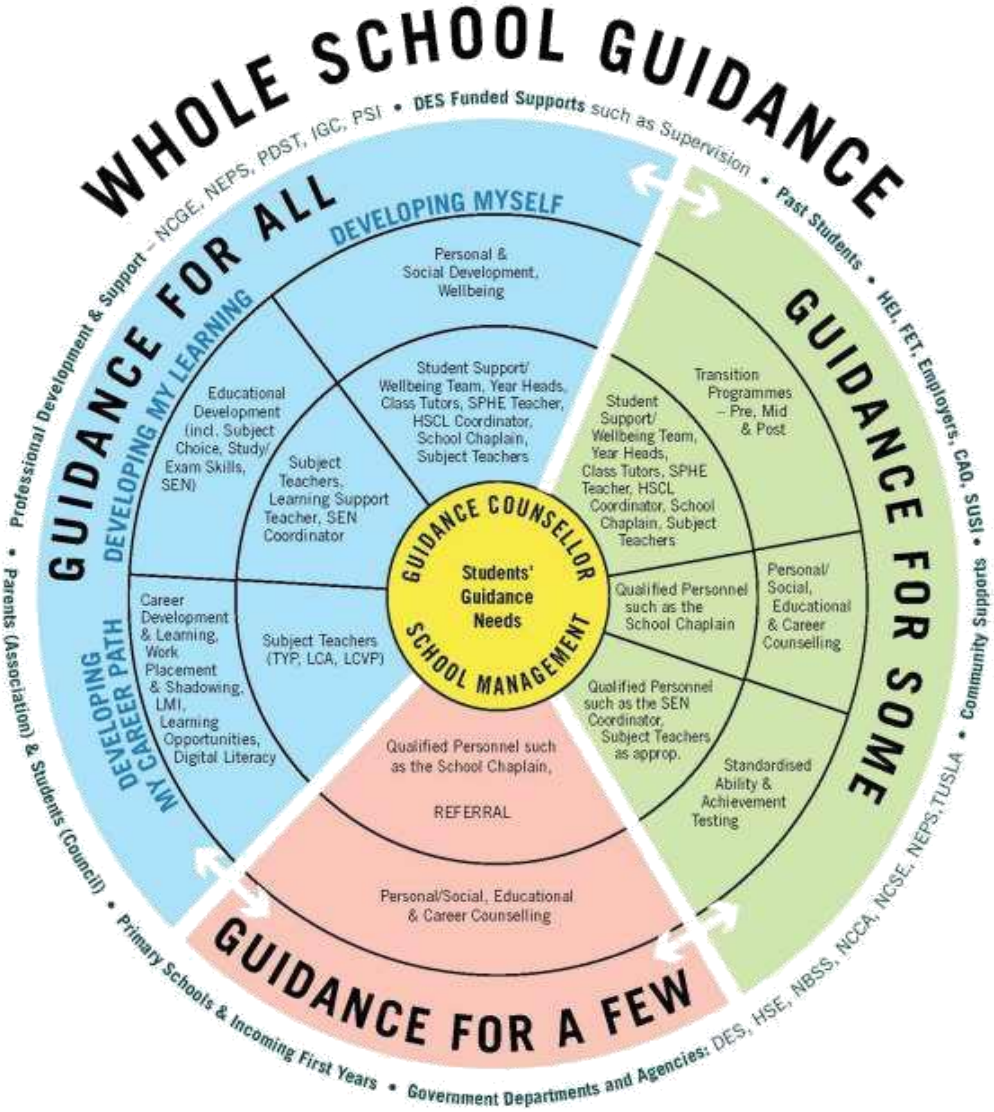

Figure 1: Whole School Guidance- Guidance for few, some and all. See appendices to see all WSG activities undertaken by Subject Departments.

5 Wellbeing

At St. Joseph's Patrician College, we prioritize the well-being of our students, integrating it throughout the school curriculum and community. We align our well-being initiatives with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines, ensuring that each student is supported in realizing their potential, maintaining their physical and emotional health, and finding a sense of belonging within the wider community. The key indicators of well-being—active, responsible, connected, resilient, respected, and aware—guide our approach, and are embedded in both our curricular and extracurricular programs.

In accordance with the guidelines, St. Joseph's Patrician College successfully delivers the mandated 400-hour well-being curriculum in the Junior Cycle. This program includes

guidance-related activities that foster personal growth and resilience, preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of life.

Table 1: Year group and corresponding link to Wellbeing Guidelines

Year group	Link to Wellbeing Guidelines
First Year 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of Wellbeing. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of SPHE. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of CSPE. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of PE.	SPHE, including the Junior Cycle Guidance 6 lessons. Well-Being Module, CSPE and PE
Second Year 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of Wellbeing. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of SPHE. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of CSPE. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of PE.	Wellbeing Module which has 6 6-week rotations: includes Digital Literacy, Meditation, Cooking and PE/Fitness and Guidance. They also have a weekly SPHE class, CSPE class and PE class.
Third Year 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of SPHE. 1 x 58-minute timetabled class per week of CSPE. 2 x 58-minute timetabled classes per week of PE	They have a weekly SPHE class, CSPE class and two PE class.

It has been found that students place a large emphasis on positive student-teacher relationships as impacting on their wellbeing and teaching and learning in school, which further highlights the important role that teachers have in promoting student welfare and wellbeing and their involvement in whole school guidance (Hearne and Galvin 2014). A number of policy/documents/recommendations available within the educational field outline the importance of viewing guidance as a whole school activity (NCGE 2017). These are summarised below and applied to our specific school context before giving more detail on our school context below the table. Link to the key documents. We follow all the latest circular and guidelines.

Table 2: Application of Whole School Guidance

Policy / Document / Organisation	Emphasis / Recommendation/ Link	Application to school context
JCT - Wellbeing	Enhance student's physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. Guidance must be	Guidance is being provided to Junior cycle students both within and outside of the wellbeing timetabled classes.

Policy / Document / Organisation	Emphasis / Recommendation/ Link	Application to school context
	included in the Junior Cycle programme.	Subject plans of each department reflect to link to the indicators of wellbeing in their specific curricular subjects.
Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025	Due to the changing nature of work, job roles and required skills career guidance and information is identified as 'essential' in supporting individuals in making appropriate choices and in improving retention on courses.	Educational progression and career information is provided to students in guidance classes as well as during talks/workshops and one-to one appointments with Guidance Counsellors.
Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020	Teaching, learning and assessment using ICT - provision for the school guidance programme and there are many opportunities for activities of the programme to be delivered using ICT.	ICT is incorporated where appropriate into the provision of wellbeing and guidance classes. ICT is a major tool for staff and students in relation to carrying out research on courses, colleges and careers. ICT is embraced by the teaching staff in our school and used in a variety of methods in various subjects. The school has a Digital Strategy Policy embedded.
Well-being in Post-primary Schools. Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)	The Guidelines present a whole school approach to mental health promotion and wellbeing. The whole school guidance plan is identified as an intervention that addresses the emotional health and wellbeing of young people.	The school runs a number of initiatives during the academic year which focus on student wellbeing encouraging students to look after their mental and emotional health as well as other areas. Certain classes such as SPHE and wellbeing focus specifically on these topics. The teaching staff in our school are committed to supporting the needs of our students both in and outside of the classroom. Some staff members have completed the ASIST suicide intervention training.

Policy / Document / Organisation	Emphasis / Recommendation/ Link	Application to school context
Action Plan for Education 2017	Goal 01: Improve the Learning Experience and the Success of Learners Goal 04: Build Stronger Bridges between Education and the Wider Community. Both of these goals relate to guidance through 'Wellbeing', 'better subject choice' and 'greater career choices'.	The school runs a number of initiatives during the academic year which focus on student wellbeing encouraging students to look after their mental and emotional health as well as other areas. Certain classes such as PE, CSPE, SPHE and wellbeing focus specifically on these topics. Student wellbeing is seen as a responsibility for all staff in our school and links to wellbeing exist in all curricular areas as set out in the JCT guidelines. Students are encouraged to begin the process of setting goals and planning for life after school whilst they are in the Junior cycle. It makes students aware of subject and programme options as well as college requirements.
DOE	Working as a Guidance Counsellor in Ireland, 2022	Structures and Requirements for Guidance Counsellors working in Post-primary schools
DOE	Continuation of Guidance Counselling Services, 2020	Response to Covid-19 and the adaptation of Guidance Counselling services to the blended nature of educational delivery, resulting from COVID-19
DOE	Looking At Our Schools 2022	Quality framework for PP schools

6 Whole School Student Support Participants

Guidance is viewed as a whole school activity in St Joseph's Patrician College. Guidance Counsellors play a central role in the design and delivery of the whole school guidance programme under the direction of the Senior Leadership Team. They work closely with the Senior Leadership Team, Year heads, the SEN co-ordinator, subject teachers and the

external community to deliver a wide range of activities and learning to support students' personal and social, educational and career development. No students should be overlooked or left behind, every learner deserves access to resources, supports and opportunities that they need to success. Education should be inclusive ensure that every student get the guidance they need to thrive. The school has a Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Each member of our school community plays a role in delivering comprehensive guidance. This includes the Board of Management, Senior Management, Guidance Counsellors, Care Team, Subject Teachers, Year Heads, Student Council, students and parents, each contributing uniquely to the personal, educational, and vocational development of our students. Guidance at St. Joseph's is seen as a shared responsibility that is deeply embedded within the culture of our school, ensuring every student receives the support they need to thrive.

6.1 Students

Each student in our school is entitled to access guidance in our school, be it in a class, group or one-to-one way. Our students are at the centre of our whole school guidance plan.

a) Prefects: represent the student body at official events. Parent Teacher meetings, funerals etc. Head Prefect and two Deputy Head Prefects are usually elected mirroring the structure of the Senior Leadership Team.
b) Students' council (decision making) .

The Student Council is made up of two representatives from each class group from First, Second and Third year. There are also representatives from Transition Year, Fifth year and Sixth year. This ensures that the student voice is heard in all years. It is facilitated by the Student Council Co-Ordinator.

Students are elected by their peers in their classrooms for Junior School or by Year Group for Senior Students. A ballot is held at the start of the school year and students with the most votes are elected.

Student Council meetings are held once a month. An agenda is drawn up and minutes of each meeting are taken and forwarded on to management. Students are given the opportunity to make suggestions at meetings or to discuss issues arising for their class/year group. They are also asked to be involved in policy formation and have examined draft policies for the school.

The Student Council is governed by a charter drawn up by the Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU) which recognises that students from a diverse range of

backgrounds are welcome in our school, awareness of other cultures is important and dignity and respect should be shown to all at all times.

The functions of the Student Council include reviewing policies, addressing student-based needs, fundraising, assisting at school events etc. Recent accomplishments by the Student Council include the setting up of a chess-club, wheelchair basketball workshop, a workshop with Médecins Sans Frontières and donations to local charities through money raised by Non-Uniform days.

6.2 Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians play an integral part in the personal, social, as well as the educational and career decisions of our students and also influence the student's attitude to school and plans for life after school.

6.3 Subject teachers

The subject teacher is the key in helping students to achieve their full potential and assists in identifying students who may be in need of support be it personal, educational or career related. Subject teachers have a key role in providing support to students and information and advice relating to their subject disciplines and related careers. Some teachers have additional responsibilities through posts, pastoral care roles, co-ordination roles and through participation in programmes such as CSPE, PE, SPHE and Wellbeing. Individual teachers may be sought out by students on an informal basis for advice and information. All teachers may consult with the guidance counsellor on the needs of an individual student and/or refer the student to the guidance counsellor following the referral procedures.

6.4 Class Masters

The class master teaches the class, provide a tutor role and create the seating plans and supports the year head.

6.5 Year Heads

The Year Head looks after the welfare of their relevant year group and remains in contact with their Class Teacher and subject teachers as well as parents throughout the year. The Year Head also has a disciplinary role within the school structure. The Guidance department recognises the importance of this system in our school and fosters a cooperative relationship with School Management, Year Heads, in order to best meet our student's needs.

6.6 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Special Needs Assistant (SNA) focus on supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) to access education and participate fully in school life. SNAs do not teach, but they play a critical supportive role under the direction of teachers and school management. Their work is directed by the needs outlined in the student's Support Plan.

6.7 Guidance Counsellor

Guidance counsellors because of their specialist training have a professional role in each of the main areas of guidance: personal and social, educational, and career which are now outlined in more detail:

- **Personal and social** – this is a key part of the guidance programme and can be offered on an individual or group basis.
    - Counselling aims to help students to explore their thoughts and feelings, and the choices open to them; giving care and support to students learning to cope with the many aspects of growing up" (NCGE, 2004).
    - 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. The types of difficulties or issues that the students may be experiencing but is by no means limited to include; family issues, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, poverty, LGBTQ+ issues, bullying, racism, violence and abuse.
    - The Guidance Counsellor is a mandated person and reacts according to the Children First Guidelines (2015) to any child protection concerns liaising with the DLP/DDLP.
- **Educational** – the Guidance team have a role in facilitating students with regard to motivation and learning, subject choices and programme choice, study skills and exam techniques and personal organisation (IGC 1995).
    - The educational role also puts responsibility on the Guidance team to work with the SENCO and our schools NEPS psychologist to ensure that identified student curricular needs are being met for example with subject or programme choice and to support students who may have difficulty accessing the curriculum.
- **Career/Vocational** – The Guidance team deliver classes in the school focusing on available post leaving certificate educational pathways, the CAO system, entry requirements and alternative pathways within the Junior Cycle wellbeing classes, TY and 5th year guidance classes.

The Guidance team also have the responsibility to ensure that plans are evaluated, reviewed and updated regularly. In addition, the guidance team have a key role in collaborating with school management in the development and review of the school Guidance plan and the integration of guidance into the curriculum.

6.8 Care Team

The DES Inspectorate Report (2009) referred to schools that had a pastoral care team as models of good practice. The aim of the pastoral care team is to support student's personal, social and emotional development. St Joseph's Patrician College has a care team which meet once a week to address the needs of students who are experiencing various difficulties. This is a forum for sharing information and concerns in a safe and confidential forum. Any follow up required is decided upon and assigned to a member of the team. Other teachers are made aware of students who may be experiencing difficulties in their personal lives, through our in-school, student support notice. Details are shared with staff outside of the care team on a 'need to know' basis only. The care team members include: Senior Leadership Team, SEN Department, Guidance Department.

6.9 SEN coordinator

To support students with special educational needs effectively in schools and to ensure consistency of approach, it is important that all teachers and the guidance team have access to relevant information from the student's support plan (www.education.ie). This will help staff to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students, and to set specific targets related to their subject areas. Guidance consistently meet, interact and plan in partnership with the schools SEN Team.

6.10 Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team controls the internal organisation and management of the school, and exercises supervision over the teaching and non-teaching staff. The Principal, Sarah Gleeson, is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for any child protection concerns and the deputy principal, Barry McDermott, is the deputy designated liaison person (DDLP). The Senior Leadership team have a responsibility to ensure that Whole School Guidance is of the highest possible standard. This includes managing the process of guidance planning in cooperation with the guidance counsellor, school staff and other school partners such as parents.

6.11 Board of Management

The Board of Management has a responsibility to ensure that the guidance provided to our students is of a high standard. 'The Education Act 1998 requires the Board of Management of a school to develop a school plan based on the needs of the school. The school guidance plan forms part of the school plan. Schools are required to "to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance".

6.12 School Administration and Care Takers

Cares for students, parents/guardians and any visitors to our school arriving to the office for various reasons.

6.13 Guest Speakers

Guest Speakers may provide presentations or workshops relating to the three dimensions of Guidance to augment and support existing provision. All Guest speakers must sign in at the office and be escorted when they are in the school building and follow school procedures in relation to visitors to our school and child protection.

6.14 Autism Centre

We have provision for two classrooms specifically for students on the Autistic Spectrum. Each classroom has a maximum capacity of 6 students. The Autism classes are there to cater for students with Autism within the school's catchment area (See Admissions Policy).

Enrolment to the Autism Classes for any student must meet with the approval of the SENO in collaboration with the school authorities who in turn provides teaching allocation and resources to the classes.

Parents/ Guardians are advised to meet with the Senior Leadership Team regarding the Autism classes a year in advance of applying and to consult with the SENO regarding the most suitable educational environment for their child.

6.15 Community Links

Table 3 provides relevant community links.

Table 3 : Community Links of organisations, resources and services

TUSLA	Support for parents and students
JIGSAW	Support for parents and students
CAMHS	Support for parents and students
Pieta House	Support for parents and students
Hope Space	Support for parents and students
NEPS	Psychological Support Services Support for parents and students

7 Other Considerations

7.1 Appointments and Referrals

Students are encouraged to seek support from any staff member at any time. We have an open-door policy for students. The school journal and website detail how to make contact with Guidance via email. We encourage them to reach out to us in person or via email. The guidance counsellors make themselves visible in the school throughout the day. Staff members can refer students to the guidance counselling service, and peers are also welcome to raise concerns for the well-being of their classmates. Appointments can be made directly with the Guidance Counsellor or through school communication channels. Our system ensures that students receive timely and appropriate support for personal, social, or academic concerns, in a safe and caring environment.

Once the Guidance Counsellor receives a referral, they will schedule an appointment with the student at their earliest convenience. Students are asked to obtain the permission of the teacher that they have at the time of the appointment. Students will be marked present by the Guidance Counsellor on Compass.

Follow-up appointments are organised when necessary. Parents/Guardians can make appointments through the school office, or the Guidance Counsellor may ring the parents/guardians directly to arrange this. Appointments are conducted during the school day where possible, and all parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation is necessary. The Guidance team may request another staff member e.g Principal, Deputy Principal, Yearhead or class teacher, to be present at a meeting.

External referral - Assistance for students will be sought from other qualified professionals and organisations (for e.g., Jigsaw, CAMHS, GP, NEPs) outside the school, for areas of concern such as learning difficulties, stress, anxiety, suicidal feelings, substance abuse, bereavement, when it is considered necessary and appropriate for the student. The guidance counsellor will advise parents/guardians on the available local supports for their child's needs.

7.2 Confidentiality

At St. Joseph's, we are committed to safeguarding student confidentiality. The student is informed of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of a session. If it is felt it is in the student's best interests to inform a Teacher/Parent/Guardian of a particular difficulty, this is only done with the knowledge and ideally the agreement of the student. The school may look for the advice and direction from the duty care social worker, if necessary, as per the School Safeguarding Statement. Child protection guidelines are adhered to during the reporting process.

The guidance team operates within strict ethical guidelines, maintaining student privacy unless there is a clear and immediate risk to the individual or others. All data is managed in compliance with the school's data protection policy, ensuring that information is stored securely and only shared when necessary for the well-being of the student.

7.3 Data Protection and Record Keeping

The Guidance team will collect and store data in line with the school's data protection policy as well as the Data Protection Guidelines for Guidance Counsellors published in 2018 by the NCGE. The school adheres to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which emphasises transparency, accountability, and security in handling personal data. Schools are required to have a data protection policy that outlines how they collect, use, and protect students' personal information. All data is managed in compliance with the school's data protection policy, ensuring that information is stored securely and only shared when necessary for the well-being of the student.

7.4 Ethical Considerations

The Guidance team are committed to following the four overall ethical principles of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in their daily work which are detailed below:

7.5 Respect for the rights and dignity of the client

Guidance counsellors honour and promote the fundamental rights, moral and cultural values, dignity and worth of clients. They respect clients' rights to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy, consistent with the law. As far as possible, they ensure that the client understands and consents to whatever professional action they propose.

7.6 Competence

Guidance counsellors maintain and update their professional skills. They recognise the limits of their expertise, engage in self-care, and seek support and supervision to maintain the standard of their work. They offer only those services for which they are qualified by education, training and experience.

7.7 Responsibility

Guidance counsellors are aware of their professional responsibility to act in a trustworthy, reputable and accountable manner towards clients, colleagues and the community in which they work and live. They avoid doing harm, take responsibility for their professional actions, and adopt a systematic approach to resolving ethical dilemmas.

7.8 Integrity

Guidance counsellors seek to promote integrity in their practice. They represent themselves accurately and treat others with honesty, straightforwardness and fairness. They deal actively with conflicts of interest, avoid exploiting others, and are alert to inappropriate behaviour on the part of colleagues. (IGC 2012)

8 Communication, monitoring, review and evaluation

To promote the inclusion of all students within the school community, a strong culture of continuous communication is maintained between the guidance department and key stakeholders. This includes regular engagement with teachers, year heads, parents, school management, and most importantly the students themselves. Through structured feedback mechanisms such as surveys, meetings, and informal check-ins, the guidance team gathers insights into students' academic, social, and emotional needs. This collaborative approach ensures that the whole-school guidance programme remains dynamic, inclusive, and responsive to emerging challenges. By actively involving all voices in the review process, the school fosters a supportive environment where every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

These reviews will give the Guidance Team an opportunity to report to the Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Management about the strengths of the service as well as the areas that need to be improved upon, included, or updated. The school guidance policy and plan will undergo constant review by the whole school guidance team and subsequently ratified by the Board of Management.

9 Testing and Assessments

St. Joseph's Patrician College utilises a number of tests and assessments in order to support student's career, vocational and educational development.

Our first-year cohort undertake two online tests from the Educational Research Centre in Drumcondra prior to the October midterm. The first test is the Drumcondra Reasoning Test (DRT) which is our regular norm referenced aptitude test in Literacy and Numeracy, developed in Ireland, for use in Irish schools. The test is specifically aimed at pupils making the transition to post-primary school.

The second test is a new test we have been selected to pilot and is designed as a companion test of the DRT and called the Spatial and Abstract Reasoning Test (SAR) which measures strengths and options and potential for success particularly in the STEM fields of study and application.

Current tools utilised include WRAT5 testing used to support incoming 1st year students. Data derived from this testing is used to:

- Support allocation of educational support for incoming 1st year students
- Highlight any need for further investigation by the SEN department
- Support subject and programme choices in both junior and senior cycles
- Assist later career and course choices for students' vocational decisions

9.1 Inclusion of All students

St. Joseph's Patrician College recognises that each student is unique with different talents and needs. Our focus is to support all student to reach their potential in an inclusive environment without prejudice and within which individual difference is celebrated. We promote and facilitate a whole school approach and so create a community of learning. We offer an inclusive curriculum, which is relevant, realistic, and co-operative, and we do so in active partnership with pupils, parents' staff, and all stakeholders.

To ensure the same quality of educational experience for all students, irrespective of ability or need, some students need to avail of Additional Educational Support in order to access our broad and balanced curriculum commensurate with their talents and abilities.

The aim of Additional Educational Needs support is to help students meet their physical, intellectual, and emotional needs through our student focused support programmes to encourages students and enable them to monitor their own learning and become as independent a learner as possible.

We have a dedicated staff who work as and with specialised Special Educational Teachers to ensure that all our students with an Additional Educational Need have access to a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum and may include Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs), Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs).

The SEN team support students also through the deployment of skilled and dedicated Special Needs Assistants in the school (SNA). We acknowledge students' strengths as well as their complexities. For those students who have Additional Educational Needs we endeavour to ensure that their needs are met. St. Joseph's College provides AEN support via high quality teaching and learning and empower students to take responsibility for their own learning, thereby enabling them to experience success at school and beyond.

We identify specific supports for the individual student and the SEN team determines the level of support required under the Continuum of Support structures. A smooth transition from Primary to Post-Primary is of utmost importance followed on by regular

support and review through Student Support Plans. When recommended the Bish will apply for assistive technology. We also test and apply for Reasonable Accommodations in the State Examinations. In Leaving Cert year applications for DARE/HEAR for College are also applied for.

9.2 Differentiation

• If the student already has a Professional report, we try to meet the recommendations of the report as best we can and regularly include observations from teachers and class tests using our school software.

• All students undertake ability and attainment testing in numeracy and literacy in Year 1. We follow up with more specific testing takes place for those students presenting with challenging results. These include Cognitive Ability Testing; GL Dyslexia Screening Testing; Dyscalculia Screening Testing; NGRT (New Group Reading Test) Literacy and Reading Ability test.

• When concerns are raised by outside Agencies, we will follow up on them i.e., the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS); Occupational Therapists; Speech and Language Therapists etc.

• Term and annual review for SEN students through their Student Support Plans.

• Referrals from Primary Feeder Schools

• The SEN team support HSE referrals to Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists and refer directly to the National Educational Psychological Service.

9.3 Transition

Transition from Primary schools is facilitated through:

- An Induction Evening
- Induction Brochures and Welcome Packs distributed to parents and pupils
- AEN students are facilitated by the SEN team from transition to leaving the school
- SNAs may visit schools to work with students in preparation for transition. Students who require an SNA will have a Care Plan in place.
- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) may visit Primary Schools or facilitate visits to the school with Teachers/Parents from Primary with the student.
- Guidance counsellors visit each First-Year class to explain their role in the school. They also meet students in small groups each week for a relaxed hot-chocolate session. These meetings ensure that every First Year has the chance to meet the guidance

counsellors and to mix with students from other classes in a casual, informal setting. It provides a comfortable space to ask questions, offer feedback, and get to know one another. This time also allows the guidance counsellor to check in with students and identify any concerns they may have.

- In-class support through Team-Teaching and Support Teaching
- Small group classes
- Individual (1:1) support
- Literacy & Numeracy Intervention
- Handwriting development intervention & ICT Skills development
- Friendship and social skills development programmes
- Buddy system: 5th year prefects offer mentorship and advice to first years this is facilitated by the year head.
- After School Study

9.4 Regular review

The SEN Team meet and review and forward plan each month. Then SEN team comprises of the Principal, Deputy Principal(s), SENCO, Autism Co-Ordinator and Specialised AEN teachers. Year Heads and Mainstream Teachers become aware in real time of the changing needs of students through the school software programme and direct contact from the SENCO on behalf of the SEN team.

9.5 State examination supports

The schools will also test and apply for Reasonable Accommodations in the State Examinations (Junior and Leaving Certificate) for students who meet the criteria for a Spelling and Grammar Waiver; Reading Assistance; Separate Centre; Scribe; Use of Assistive Technology (Laptop) etc. This is applied for in October of their Junior Certificate year and again in October Leaving Certificate year. The school will also apply for Assistive Technology Grants to the NCSE for students who meet the criteria on receipt of Occupational Therapy or Educational Psychology Reports. The Bish works closely also with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE); Enable Ireland; the Visiting Teacher for the Blind/visually impaired service; Visiting Teacher for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing service.

10 Whole School Guidance Improvement Planning 2025/26

The current focus of the St Joseph's Patrician WSG team:

- Embed the whole school approach to guidance, with the whole school staff aware of the role they play in guidance delivery
- Generate enhanced awareness of the world of work within the student body, with an ability to identify future career opportunities

- Continue to support students' wellbeing through myriad of supports, school events, talks, and awareness weeks.
- Enhance the whole-school understanding of the guidance role, ensuring that all staff members are informed and actively contribute to the delivery of guidance.
- Develop a centralized, secure system for the storage of guidance-related notes and student data.
- Increase student awareness of the mental health and well-being initiatives within the school.
- Improve the visibility and accessibility of guidance resources for students.
- Strengthen study skills and examination preparation strategies to support academic achievement.
- Planning updates: Guidance Plan and WSG Policy
- Improve our visibility of Guidance Referrals and meeting within the school, Assembly and classroom meetings.
- Tie together the WSG school improvement from each subject department.
- Introduce more guest speakers from industry
- Career day to include national learning network and guidance from Occupational Guidance Officer from the HSE.

11 Policies and Procedures linked to Whole School Guidance

The Bish has extensive policies and procedures which can be accessed on the school website here. These include Bí Cineálta Policy, Critical Incident Policy, Confidentiality, School Policies, etc. How are students supported, SEN, Code of Behaviour, Admissions Policy, TY Policy, etc., Below are some of the policies that have informed this development of this Guidance Policy.

https://oide.ie/post-primary/home/guidance/general-guidance/key-documents/

https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/guidance/

- Department of Education and Science (2005) Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9(c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to student's access to appropriate guidance. Inspectorate Report.
- Department of Education and Skills (2012) Circular 0009/2-12 Staffing Arrangements in post-primary schools. Inspectorate Report.
- Department of Education and Skills (2016) Programme Recognition Framework: Guidance Counselling accessed from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Programme-Recognition-Framework-Guidance-Counselling.pdf
- Government of Ireland (1998) *Education Act*. Retrieved from http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/print.html
- Hearne, L. and Galvin, J. (2014) 'The role of the regular teacher in a whole school approach to guidance counselling in Ireland', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 43(2), 229-240.
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors (circa 1995) Guidance and Counselling Service in Second Level Schools and The Role of the Guidance Counsellor, Dublin: IGC.
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2008) A whole school guidance and counselling service and curriculum: Roles and Relationships; A policy Paper of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2012) Code of Ethics of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (2004) Planning the School Guidance Programme.
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (2017) A whole school Guidance framework
- National Centre for Guidance in Education (2018) Data Protection for the Guidance Counsellor Compliant Data Management Author: Hugh Jones
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2017) Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines
- Department of Education and Skills (2020) Continuation of Guidance Counselling Services
- Department of Education and Skills (2022) The work of the Guidance Counsellor

- Department of Education and Skills (2022) Looking at Our Schools
- Department of Education, 2024. Circular 0008/2025: Staffing Circular Post-Primary. Government of Ireland. https://assets.gov.ie/268022/3c0f970f-a051-4cbb-87e3-77ddf290a7e7.pdf
- Department of Education, 2024. Information Note TC 0001/2024: Whole-School Guidance. Government of Ireland. https://assets.gov.ie/24725/07cc07626f6a426eb6eab4c523fb2ee2.pdf
- Department of Education, 2023. Information Note TC 0008/2023: Social and Personal Guidance Counselling. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5891b-informationnote-for-schools-in-relation-to-personal-and-social-guidance-counselling
- Department of Education, 2023. Information Note 0009/2023: Junior Cycle Guidance. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/cb454-arrangements-for-the-implementation-ofthe-framework-for-junior-cycle-with-particular-reference-to-the-school-year-20232024
- Department of Education, 2025. Circular 0001/2025: Guidance in Post-Primary Schools. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/02452-guidance-in-schools/

12 Appendix 1

Template distributed to all staff members to ascertain their understanding of their role in Whole School Guidance. There is a folder containing all the subject department input in WSG.

12.1 Abbreviations used in this document

Table 4: Abbreviations used in this document

Abbreviation	Elaboration
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
DES	Department of Education and Skills
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
BFL	Behaviour for Learning
LGBTI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Intersex +
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
CAO	Central Applications Office
TY	Transition Year
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
NCSE	National Centre for Special Education Needs

12.2 Appendix 2 Whole School Overview

The tables below provide an overview of some of the activities that take place in the school. These are subject to change. The activities **are offered and available to all students**, but not all students decide to participate.

Table 5: Personal and Social Activities

Personal and Social Activities	Staff Involved
Personal 1:1 support	Guidance
Kindness week	Various teachers
Cycle Against Suicide	Various teachers
Wellbeing Week	Various teachers
Friendship Week	Various teachers
Catholic Schools Week	Ethos Team
Temple Street Dress-up	Various teachers
Bish Bash for whole school	Various teachers
Darkness into Light	Various teachers
School Ski Trip	Various teachers
School Cultural Trip	Various teachers
Erasmus Mobility Trips	Various teachers
Lunchtime clubs - cooking club, chess club, debating, table tennis Various Teams and clubs: Athletics, Soccer, Rugby, Hurling, Rowing, Gaelic Football	Various teachers
Leaving Certificate Hackathon	Computer Science teachers
Model United Nations at University of Galway	Ms. Dobbin
Ezine (School Magazine)	TY students and Ms. Matthews
Whole School Mass	Religious Education and Music teachers
Christmas Jumper Day	Various teachers
School Bank	TY students and various teachers
Young Saint Vincent dePaul Society	TY students and teachers
Sports Awards Night	Various teachers

12.3 Appendix 3 Tables detailing Whole School Guidance Provision

Table 6: Junior Guidance - Educational Guidance Provision

Educational Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Induction Programme	Successfully transition Students from Primary school into secondary	Guidance, Year Head, subject teachers, Senior Leadership Team
Study Skill sessions	Study and homework skills covered with all years	Guidance and some teachers
First Year Activities Week	Team building, learn new skills and interests	Year head and various teachers
Wellbeing	To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities To promote self-esteem and self-confidence To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being	Guidance, Subject teachers
SPHE	Addressing social, personal and health needs (see guidance plan)	Specific staff
Organisation and Time Management	Students referred for 1:1 support regarding the transition from primary school or to senior cycle	Guidance
Subject choice and Programme choice sessions	Junior Cert and TY students supported in decisions for upcoming leaving certificate programme and subject choices	Guidance, Whole School Staff (outlined in the Guidance Subject Plan)
Subject and Programme Choice 1:1	Students struggling with subject and programme choice decisions will be met 1:1	Guidance
Parent teacher meetings	Available to meet students regarding educational concerns	Whole Staff
Subject Level Choices	Assist students in decision making regarding subject levels (often Teacher referred)	Guidance, Whole staff
WRAT5 and DATS	Cognitive Testing: 1st years, Supports subject and programme choices	SEN

Table 7: Junior Cycle – Vocational Career Guidance

Vocational Career Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Career Guidance Talk's	Evening for parents and students on subject/programme choice; implications of choices on careers outlined. Subject requirements for courses outlined. Students and parents instructed on means of researching course / entry requirements for 3rd level	Guidance, Senior Leadership Team
Subject choice talks and subject choice fair with all subject teachers.	Third Year students; subject check in relation to future aspirations	Guidance, Subject teacher and Senior students

Table 8: Junior Cycle - Personal and Social Guidance

Personal and Social Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Friends for life	1st year Wellbeing: addressing anxiety and emotional regulation within students	Guidance
Personal 1:1 support	Assisting students with personal difficulties (see guidance plan)	Guidance, Senior Leadership Team, Care team
Headstrong Committee	Multiple workshops, talks, experiences organised for students, parents and teachers involving positive mental health or 'Healthy Mind'	Whole school staff
Wellbeing Week	Week long run of events, targeting students holistic health	Whole Staff
First Year Hot Chocolate and check-in		
Retreats		Specific staff

Table 9: Transition Year - Educational and Vocational Guidance

Educational and Vocational Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
TY year guidance curriculum	TY year guidance curriculum	Guidance and TY teachers
Study skills and learning styles, time management and personal development	Study skills and learning styles, time management	Guidance
Work Experience		TY Co-ordinator
Educational support	Educational support	
Parent Teacher Meetings	Parent Teacher Meetings	All
Subject Choice support classes and subject choice fair.	Subject Choice support	Guidance and all teacher
The world of work, Interest tests, personality test, career investigations, interview skills and CVs		Guidance
Career Fairs, Open Days, college taster days		Guidance and TY teachers
Guest Speaker		Guidance and TY teachers

Table 10: Transition Year - Personal and Social Guidance

Personal and Social Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Personal 1:1 support	Assisting students with personal difficulties (see guidance plan)	Guidance, Senior Leadership Team, Care team
SPHE	Addressing social, personal and health needs (see guidance plan)	Guidance, whole school staff
Headstrong committee	Multiple workshops, talks, experiences organised for students, parents and teachers involving positive mental health or 'Healthy Mind'	Whole school staff
Wellbeing Week	Week long run of events, targeting students holistic health	Whole Staff
Friendship Week	Week Long run of events, promoting friendship and positivity	Whole Staff
GAISCE		
Retreats		Specific staff

Table 11: Senior Cycle 5th and 6th years – Educational and Vocational Guidance

Career Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Guidance curriculum	Students cover all aspects of educational and career guidance through class	Guidance and LCVP
College Talks	Specific colleges brought in to outline progression options and available courses: In person & Online	Guidance, Guest speakers
Career specific talks	Often through student requests e.g: Psychology, Science, Engineering, Apprenticeships	Guidance, outside speakers
Work Experience	Students participate in work experience relevant to suitability and interest	Guidance, LCVP teachers, TY Coordinator
Mock Interviews for 5th Years and LCVP	Assisting students in interview preparation for course entry, apprenticeship application	Guest Interviewers Guidance counsellor
Aptitude, interest, values testing	Assisting students in gaining greater self-understanding, thus boosting career and life choices	Guidance
CAO, PLC, Apprenticeships, UCAS, EUNICAS, College in the USA applications	Assisting students with applications	Guidance, whole school staff
Personal Statements	UCAS application specific	Guidance
LCVP Career investigations	Assisting students with career investigations	LCVP teacher, guidance
1:1 Guidance appointments	All leaving certificate students receive 1:1 career guidance interview	Guidance
SUSI Applications	Assisting students with SUSI applications	Guidance
SUSI Talk – Leaving Certs	All students introduced to SUSI applications process	Guidance
HEAR / DARE talk	All students reintroduced to HEAR / DARE application and requirements	Guidance
HEAR and DARE support	Individual support in regard to HEAR / DARE applications	Guidance and SENCO
Career Fair	All students allowed attend career exhibitions	Guidance, supporting staff
Open days	All students provided opportunity to attend college open days (Including Fetac colleges)	Guidance
Parents CAO Talk		

Table 12 : Senior cycle - Personal and Social Guidance

Personal and Social Guidance	Outcome of Provision	Staff Involved
Personal 1:1 support	Individual support for students through request or referral	Guidance, Care Team
RSE		Various teachers
Retreats		Various teachers
Breakfast Morning for 6th years		Various teachers
Graduation Mass and awards		Various teachers