

Guidance Policy

1. Introduction

Coláiste Muire is located in Cobh Co. Cork. It is a Catholic post-primary school, under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust.

The school was founded in 1976 as a result of an amalgamation of St. Mary's Secondary School managed by the Sisters of Mercy and Presentation College under the management of the Presentation Brothers. The school welcomes applications from girls and boys resident in Cobh and on Great Island, in accordance with Coláiste Muire Cobh Enrolment Policy. The school does not accept applications in respect of adult enrolment. In recent years, demand for places in the school has increased. Coláiste Muire supports the principles of inclusiveness. Also, it supports equality of access and participation, parental choice in respect of enrolment and a respect for diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life.

Coláiste Muire seeks to enable each student to develop his full potential. This Guidance Policy aims to assist the holistic development of all students so that they learn to know and value their talents and abilities and effectively manage their personal transitions while at the same time learn to value and respect others and make a positive contribution to society.

The Guidance Department works with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, the Religion Department, Special Educational Needs Team, including SNAs, SPHE teachers, auxiliary staff and external personnel (e.g., NEPS, etc.) to provide a support service for the students of Coláiste Muire.

It is the policy of Coláiste Muire to support all students in an appropriate manner through guidance and counselling. **This policy treats guidance as a whole school activity in this regard, of which counselling is a significant component.**

This Guidance Policy, which incorporates both guidance and counselling services, reflects respect for the individual in its student centred holistic approach. The enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of potential - academic, personal and emotional - leading to greater personal autonomy are its central goals.

1.1 Ethos

Coláiste Muire is a Christian community of students, staff, parents, chaplaincy and management who work together towards the common goal of preparing young people, for living life to the full, as committed Christians, as concerned and loving people and as responsible members of society. Coláiste Muire aims to provide the best possible education for students in a caring, Christian environment. The highest standards of teaching, learning and behaviour are expected at all times.

The school provides a comprehensive, holistic system of post-primary education for its students. This embraces spiritual, academic, practical and physical instruction, as specified by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The school also recognises the uniqueness of the individual and strives to cooperate with parents and the community in working towards our common goal.

Coláiste Muire is a Catholic co-educational school which seeks to reflect the vision of Catherine McAuley and Edmund Ignatious Rice founders of the Mercy Sisters and the Presentation Brothers.

Both Founders saw education as a means of giving meaning and enrichment to life. Our school is a Christian community of students, staff, parents, chaplaincy and management who work together towards the common goal of preparing young people for living life to the full, as committed Christians, as concerned and loving people and as responsible members of society.

1.2 Rationale

This Guidance Policy is guided by these principles and the school ethos and demonstrates a commitment to provide Pastoral Care, Guidance and Counselling services to the students and teachers of Coláiste Muire and to discharge its responsibility under the Education Act (1998), Section (9) Subsection (c) which states that “schools must ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”. The provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for schools under this Act. Guidance is defined as:

“a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to make choices (personal and social, educational and career) about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices.”

(NCGE Planning the School Guidance Programme, 1.1, p.8)

Circular 09/2012 refers to the need for schools to “ensure that the guidance counsellor has one to one time towards meeting the counselling needs of the students facing emotional difficulties and crisis” but states that “schools must manage guidance provision from within their standard staffing allocation”, removing the ex-quota status previously held by career guidance counsellors. As such, “guidance provision is to be managed by schools from within their standard staffing schedule allocation” (Circular 09/2012 section 4) and schools must work within their available resources to ensure the statutory provision of guidance and to meet the varied needs of the student population.

Guidance is now regarded as a core element of the school’s overall school development and

intersects, links and overlaps with elements of Pastoral Care, RE, SPHE, Anti-Bullying Policy, the Code of Behaviour, etc. and is provided through the school guidance plan which includes the guidance programme.

2. The School Guidance Plan

A School Guidance Plan provides an essential framework for delivery of the school's Guidance Programme. Successful planning ensures a structured response to the educational, vocational and personal and social development of the students. In Coláiste Muire we are committed to excellence and through reflective practice to continually improving the quality and provision of guidance and counselling and pastoral care. The Guidance Programme is an integral part of the school curriculum and as such involves the whole school community. The Guidance Counsellors consult and liaise with the following key personnel in the planning and development of the Programme: Principal, Deputy Principal, members of the Student Care Team, Programme Coordinators, SEN Coordinators and link teachers, SPHE teachers and RE teachers.

The School Guidance Plan:

- Provides a framework for the delivery of the school's guidance programme
- Ensures a structured response to student's personal, social, educational and career guidance needs
- Is inclusive, providing for the junior, senior, special education needs etc. of all students.
- Includes all guidance activities: classroom sessions, Vocational Guidance Interviews, attendance at career exhibitions, and open days etc., meeting with management, support agencies, personal counselling etc.

2.1 To whom will the plan apply?

Coláiste Muire seeks to enable each student to develop his or her full potential. Coláiste Muire's Guidance Plan aims to assist the holistic development of all students so that they learn to know and value their talents and abilities and effectively manage their personal transitions while at the same time learn to value and respect others and make a positive contribution to society. The plan addresses the guidance needs of all students at all levels within the school. As guidance is a whole school concern, the plan applies to school management and staff generally.

2.2 What is Guidance?

Guidance in second-level 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 (personal, social, educational and career) and decisions about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices. It is the policy of Coláiste Muire to support all students; the Guidance programme addresses the needs of students through a range of activities which incorporate the following three interlinked areas:

1. Personal and Social Education and Development
2. Educational Guidance
3. Vocational / Career Guidance

It is envisaged that the career/guidance department divides time between each area and is sensitive to the needs of all students and in particular those who need extra support. 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 may be seen as the empowerment of students to make decisions, solve problems, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties they be experiencing. Counselling may include personal counselling, educational counselling, career counselling or combinations of these.

2.3 Personal and Social Education / Development

Personal and social development and support in Coláiste Muire aims to help students to make decisions, solve problems, resolve difficulties and develop coping strategies that will empower them to live more fulfilled lives.

All students commencing their studies in Coláiste Muire are made aware of the counselling service available to them. The School Open Evening includes a presentation by the Principal and will refer to the Guidance structures in the school. Guidance Counsellors will visit primary schools towards the end of enrolled 6th class pupils school year. The 1st year school induction process will include a tour of the school, identifying offices (including Guidance Counselling offices).

Through subjects such as SPHE from 1st to 4th year, and RE in 5th and 6th year, the pastoral care structure in the school and the 'class teacher' system, help-seeking behaviour is encouraged. Students are encouraged to talk to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, if they are experiencing difficulty. Our aim is to provide a strongly supportive presence, in particular in times of personal difficulty. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted. The student pastoral care team, teaching and support personnel from a number of departments may collaborate and liaise with pupils' homes (e.g. Year Head).

The most appropriate supports and structures are discussed and put in place as appropriate; a referral to the guidance counsellor may often form part of the support plan. In addition, students can be referred for support at their own request, the request of parents and other teachers

(often through the Year head system) or if a friend or peer draws it to the attention of a member of staff that a student is encountering difficulties.

Counselling, on an individual or group basis, can be integral to supporting the personal and social development of our students. Personal counselling aims to assist students explore their thoughts and feelings, giving care and support to students learning to manage the various challenges and developments in growing and changing. Great emphasis is placed on endeavouring to raise and enhance pupils' self-esteem. Counselling support can only be put in place if a student is willing to participate,

At all times it is the policy of the Guidance & Counselling Department to respect and value a student who is receiving support and to provide the student with a safe, positive and accepting atmosphere. In line with best practice, students who are receiving external support will not attend both internal (school) and external counselling – to avoid conflict with the counselling process.

Many students may attend for a single counselling session, while others, in response to their individual needs and the concerns raised, may require additional counselling sessions.

If a student requires support which goes beyond the resources of the school or if a student requires targeted expertise intervention which is beyond the expertise and resources of the school (e.g. referral to CAMSH for self-harm and suicidal ideation) then a student will be referred for additional support, in consultation with the parents/guardians; the school counselling service will be seen as a 'holding service' in such cases – supporting students in the interim space between referral and external support.

2.4 Educational Guidance

"Guidance provision 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". (Resolution on Guidance, 2004).

The Guidance Plan recognises the critical importance of the provision of educational guidance at both junior and senior levels. Educational guidance includes empowering students in the areas of subject choice, study skills and examination skills, and consulting with parents about related matters.

This provision will be developmental in nature and will aspire above all to be empowering and motivating to the individual and groups, in harmony with the school ethos. It is our aim that our students will become aware of and confident in their unique giftedness and potential – classroom guidance and individual meetings underscored by self-evaluation by the student and reflection on the barriers to learning will support these aims. The provision of accurate and up-to-date information will form a significant part of these meetings and of Guidance classes.

Educational Guidance commences prior to a student's entry into Coláiste Muire. The Guidance Counsellor visits feeder schools and meets with sixth class teachers to identify students who may require support. In addition, incoming first year assessments are conducted prior to entry in March. These assessments in addition to contact with primary schools and parents (as appropriate) and the incoming 1st year student application forms (which include information on recent assessments, etc.) are used to generate mixed ability class groupings.

The Guidance Counsellors will liaise with the Special Educational Needs link teachers regarding evaluating these assessments in order to identify students who may require extra help (subject to available resources). Career interest inventories and online resources may be used in 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th year to support students with subject choice and career choice, as needed.

Information Evenings are provided by the Guidance Counsellor, in conjunction with the Principal and programme co-ordinators for parents of incoming 1st years, TY and 5th years.

2.5 Vocational / Career Guidance

Vocational/Career Guidance is an on-going process which commences when students enter the school and continues throughout their secondary school education. Vocational Guidance in Coláiste Muire recognises the enormity of the decisions facing the young adult leaving second-level education; it involves empowering students to recognise their talents and abilities and enabling them to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own futures. Our objective is to provide accurate information and assist the student with the choices he faces. All students will be encouraged to aim for the highest level of education/training achievable to them. They will be encouraged to see their education as life-long, and as a means to securing both employability and the fulfilment of their human potential. Students will be guided towards making informed, realistic choices about their future plans after their Leaving Certificate. This takes place during Careers classes and individual interviews.

Guidance activities that assist students to make informed choices include:

- Assessment using psychometric instruments and inventories
- Career information (in careers class TY, 5th and 6th year, attendance at career events and guest speakers)
- Use of online career resources e.g. Qualifax.ie and CareersPortal.ie – introduced in classroom guidance sessions
- Development of self-awareness
- Personal Vocational Guidance Interviews
- Decision making skills & Planning Skills (e.g. part of the SPHE programme)
- Information on Post Leaving Certificate Choices / Pathways to Further Education
- Work Experience (an integral part of the TY programme)

2.6 Goals & Aims

The Guidance Programme in **Coláiste Muire** aims to provide support for learners to enable them to make wise and informed personal, educational and career choices. Coláiste Muire's Guidance Department strives to be inclusive, providing for the needs of all students. The guidance counsellor has primary responsibility for the delivery of the College's Guidance and Counselling Programme. However, the important role of all other members of the staff is

acknowledged and their relevant contributions to the planning and delivery of many aspects of the programme; a whole school approach is essential in terms of delivery and in achieving the objectives:

- To enable pupils grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves
- To develop and explore an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities.
- To make informed choices about their lives and follow through on those choices.

The Guidance & Counselling Department in Coláiste Muire strives to help all students in the school to:

- develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities
- identify and explore opportunities
- provide support for learners to enable them to make informed personal, educational and career choices.
- grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves
- make informed choices about their lives and follow through on these choices
-

The **aims** of the Guidance programme are as follows:

- Foster a sense of personal responsibility for identifying future educational/vocational goals.
- Provide experiences that promote career development and prepare students for the transition to work/higher education.
- Focus on an individual's strength and potentials so as to create a strategy for promoting discussion of student's educational/careers development in order to discourage excuses for irresponsible action.
- Introduce and foster a process of evaluating realistically, attainable career/higher education goals.
- Encourage the pupils to define expectations.
- Overcome any information deficit on careers/education.

2.7 Whole School Approach

The Guidance Plan recognises the important role that the whole school community plays in supporting and implementing these aims, including the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Subject and Programme Co-ordinator (e.g. RE, SPHE, TY), SEN Co-ordinator and SEN link teachers, Resource Teachers, Learning Support Teachers, SNA's, the Board of Management/Trustees, Parents Council, Students Council, auxiliary staff including administration staff, the students themselves, and the local community.

The **Board of Management and School Management team** have a responsibility to ensure that provision and practice of guidance in the school is of the highest standard possible. This includes managing the process of guidance planning and provision in co-operation with the guidance school staff involved in guidance and other school partners such as parents.

The **Guidance Counsellor** communicates regularly with the Principal and Deputy Principal, and regularly meets the Principal, Deputy Principal and Care Team to discuss the educational, vocational, social and personal developmental of the students. These meetings allow for students at risk to be identified, allocate personal counselling duties and decide on referrals where necessary.

The **Principal** oversees the implementation of this Guidance Policy. The Principal is the Designated Liaison Person in the school. Immediate and direct contact is made with the DLP by the guidance counsellor and indeed all staff should there be a concern regarding Child Protection.

The **Principal & Deputy Principal** are heavily involved in both student welfare and student discipline in the school and, following communication with students and parents/guardians referrals may arise. For instance, students may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor following suspension or if there is a concern regarding early school leaving.

Regular formal and informal contact with the **Year Heads and TY Programme Coordinator** in the school is integral to the work of the guidance counsellor; the role of the Year Head demands greater contact and understanding of the students, their behaviour and their circumstances. The Year Head is an important point of contact for teachers with concerns regarding their students. Through their Year Head duties and contact with the students themselves and their parents/guardians as needed, a more thorough and focused referral process occurs, where interventions can be targeted and the best interests of the student are supported through team-work with the Guidance Counsellor and Year Head.

Programme Co-ordinators & Subject Teachers often have a key role in providing support to students and information and advice relating to their subject discipline and related careers. Some teachers have additional formal responsibilities through management, pastoral care roles, co-ordination roles and through participation in programmes such as RE and SPHE.

The guidance counsellor is in regular liaison with the **year heads, TY Coordinator and Deputy Principal** regarding scheduling and planning guidance activities and student welfare as needed. Arrangements are made to take students to relevant career events. Preparation, support and advice is offered for work experience – both formally through class contact and informally. Individual **subject teachers** may be sought out by students on an informal basis for advice and information. Teachers who interact with students outside the confines of the classroom (e.g. coaching, choir, etc.) may have a particular relationship with the student body which enables them to play an important role in the personal, social, moral and educational development of students. All staff members may consult with the Guidance Counsellor on the needs of an individual student and may refer a student to the Guidance Counsellor. As a matter of course the Principal must be informed by the Guidance Counsellor of all referrals as appropriate.

Parents have by far the most influence, directly or indirectly, on the choices made by young people. Parents have a major influence on the environment in which the young person lives including values, attitudes and lifestyle. Parents have an important role to play in helping to

establish the needs and priorities of the school guidance programme and in supporting the programme. Parents can also participate in guidance through:

- 2.7.1 Communication and consultation with the staff involved in guidance
- 2.7.2 Attendance at relevant information and other meetings at school
- 2.7.3 Contributing to the development and review of the school guidance plan when possible
- 2.7.4 Providing personal assistance to the school guidance programme

Students are the focus of the school guidance programme. Students (through the student council and informal consultation with students in Guidance classes and one-to-one guidance consultations) may be encouraged to identify and establish needs and priorities of the guidance programme. Students will often self-refer for counselling or consult with the guidance counsellor when concerned about a peer. Students are a valuable resource in the classroom and through classroom discussion, vocational preparation and personal development topics are developed and reinforced.

The **Local Community** through its agencies, organisations and institutions provides young people with resources for career exploration, information and other forms of assistance and support.

2.8 Key Personnel involved in the provision of Guidance

- Board of Management
- Principal: Fergus O'Brien
- Deputy Principal: Maureen Kenneally
- Year Heads:
- Link Class Teachers, which includes a designated role regarding supporting the Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School
- Guidance Counsellors:
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator(s)
- Class teachers
- Subject Teachers – in particular RE and SPHE teachers

Ancillary staff, particularly Main Office

3 Relevant Policies & Programmes

3.1 Policies which are relevant to Guidance

The plan addresses the guidance needs of all students at all levels within the school. As guidance is a whole school concern, the plan applies to school management and staff generally. The School Guidance Plan is part of Whole School Development Planning (currently in development in 2015) and intersects and interlinks with several policies including:

RSE Policy

RE Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Admissions Policy Child Protection Policy

Code of Behaviour

DES Child Protection Guidelines

Attendance Strategy

Dignity at Work Policy

Mobile Devices Policy Student ICT AUP

3.2 Existing Programmes & Activities

Existing programmes & activities that support the achievement of the aims of the school guidance plan include:

- Pastoral Care System
- Social, Personal and Health Education
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Religious Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- First Year Induction Programme
- Subject Choice Programme for Senior Cycle
- Transition Year Programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Extracurricular Activities

4 Guidance Activities & Procedures

The three key areas of the guidance programme (Personal and Social Development, Educational Guidance & Vocational / Career Guidance) are supported by the guidance counsellors' professional skills and training. They collaborate with the school management, teachers etc. in supporting the personal, social, educational and career development of students.

As noted by the DES, guidance is a whole-school activity and as such many of the activities & procedures listed below reflect the community initiative and community of cooperation adopted by Coláiste Muire.

4.1 Counselling

Counselling is offered on a one to one basis and is generally short-term in nature. The service operates on an appointment basis however priority will be given in the event of an emergency. During the course of one's school day many issues and concerns may present for students. Counselling offers the opportunity to discuss in private any such issues or concerns which impact on academic performance or personal well-being. It is a key role of the Guidance Counsellor to empower students to make decisions, solve problems, change behaviours and resolve issues in their lives. The focus of counselling may be on personal, educational and career issues, individually or in combination. The guidance counsellor may help the student explore alternatives and develop strategies for change or consider referral if appropriate. In a person-centred, caring environment students are empowered to self-actualise.

Conversations with the Guidance Counsellor are confidential. Students should feel comfortable that conversations with the guidance counsellor are private and confidential and this confidentiality will be maintained except in the following circumstances:

- a. Where a student is at risk or is considered to be putting themselves or others at risk
- b. Where an illegal activity is going to take place
- c. Where there are concerns regarding child protection.

4.2 Developmental Programmes & Vocational Preparation

These programmes are designed to help students to develop their social and personal skills and are met through the guidance programme, SPHE, RSE, RE & CSPE syllabi, speakers and developmental workshops (e.g. study skills, drug awareness, school awards) Developmental Programmes include programme options such as the Transition Year programme and Vocational Preparation activities, listed below.

4.3 Vocational Preparation / Preparation for Working Life (Personal/Social, Educational, Careers Guidance)

Students need some experience and preparation for the world of work and how to manage this transition. Work Experience is an integral part of the TY Programme in Coláiste Muire; during work experience the student learns valuable skills for work and gains insight for their own

career preferences. The guidance counsellor liaises with the TY co-ordinator and this function is met through work preparation modules (TY Careers). This experience informs students on career choices post leaving certificate Experiences that promote the career development of pupils and prepare them for the transition to work, training and higher education include:

- Job Seeking skills development (e.g. completing an application form, CV preparation, interview skills, communication techniques, etc.)
- Work Experience planning, investigation, scenario assessments, etc.
- Visits to workplaces, training institutions, Higher Education colleges, careers exhibitions
- Participation in presentations by visiting speaker

4.4 Information

Information is critical to decision making and in particular for career guidance and making informed lifestyle choices. The Guidance Counsellor helps pupils to acquire useful information to assist them in decision-making. This entails knowing what information pupils require: identifying sources of useful information; setting up systems for acquiring, storing and disseminating information; and showing pupils how to process and use information. Information can be provided by subject teachers on their own specialisms but also by outside bodies or individuals (guest speakers on a range of topics – careers, social, personal) and through the guidance service via the Guidance Notice Board. It is also important to empower the student to find and disseminate their own information; Use of CACG (Computer Assisted Career Guidance), e.g. Careersportal.ie and Qualifax, is useful in this. The guidance counsellor also regularly makes presentations to parents and students on a range of guidance topics (e.g. Study skills seminars, 5th year Subject Choice, 6th Year CAO Process).

4.5 Consultation Services (Personal/Social, Educational, Careers Guidance)

The Guidance Counsellor engages in a two-way process of consultation with parents, teachers, school management and referral agencies. Consultation may include advocacy by the Guidance Counsellor on behalf of a pupil. Open channels of communication, honesty, integrity and respect for all parties is essential. The guidance counsellor regularly consults with significant adults in the students' lives, both formally and informally, e.g. teachers, parents, principal, deputy principal, year heads, tutors, programme coordinators). This is achieved through presentations to parents, parent-teacher meetings, management meetings, pastoral care/student support meetings and informal consultation with colleagues (teachers, year-heads, etc). This process both enables these significant adults in young people's lives to be more effective supports for them and enhances the guidance service through targeted provision & indeed the valuable insight and advice often gleaned from parents/guardians and colleagues.

4.6 Consultation with Parents/Guardians

Parents are welcome to make an appointment to meet/speak with the Guidance Counsellor to afford them the opportunity to discuss their son's aptitudes, abilities and interests, in educational and occupational planning as well as issues of personal concern if so desired. The aim of the school guidance service is to support parents in their endeavours to help their son with his personal and social development and school progress.

4.7 Referral Services (Personal/Social)

Referrals covers two types of activity: referrals to the counsellor and referrals by the counsellor.

Referrals to the Counsellor:

The Guidance Counsellor may invite a student to come and visit them if they are referred by others. Referrals can be self-referral, parental referral, referral by management, Year Head, class tutors and subject teachers (often through the Year Head) or referral by a friend or peer. For instance, a friend or peer may draw it to the attention of a member of staff that a student is encountering difficulties. The voluntary participation in counselling of the referred pupil must be respected by all concerned. Students are encouraged to discuss their problems/worries with their parent/guardian where appropriate. However, confidentiality, with its limits, is respected at all times.

Year Heads & Teachers are asked to send a follow-up email when making a referral to support record keeping procedures and ensure appropriate counselling provision. Referrals are generally made by the Year Head or Deputy Principals following consultation with and/or referral by parents and/or teachers and discussion with students in order to glean a fuller picture of the student and the associated concerns. Students may also self-refer or be referred by his peers also.

Any member of staff who has a concern for a student which falls under Child Protection legislation (i.e. concern regarding physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect) should immediately contact the Designated Liaison Person, the Principal. Class groups are divided between both guidance counsellors to facilitate ease of referral and a more balanced approach; this information is on display in the staff room and a copy is given to each Year Head, Deputy Principal & Principal.

Referrals by the Counsellor:

The Guidance Counsellor may often make a referral if a student requires support that is beyond the resources and/or expertise of the school; for instance a student may need assistance from other qualified helpers outside of school or require intervention which is more intensive in duration and focus than the resources of the school can facilitate. The Guidance Counsellor liaises with the pupil, parents/guardians and the Principal when recommending external

referral, except in exceptional circumstances such as physical or sexual abuse or neglect by a member of the family – in such cases Child Protection and Department of Health Guidelines are followed.

The Guidance Counsellor, in links with appropriate agencies for referral. When recommending students for counselling it is the policy of the school to issue the parents/guardian with a list of accredited counsellors from the Directory of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy or advise parents/guardians to contact their local GP or provide information on local voluntary and state agencies who can provide further help as appropriate.

4.8 Testing & Assessment

The Guidance Counsellor may use a range of psychometric tests for a variety of purposes e.g. categorisation of occupational interests, assessment of behaviour, educational and career planning, personal and social development and, generally, to help students to obtain a better self-understanding. Information from these sources, supplemented by school records and public examination results enable the Guidance Counsellor to assist a pupil in decision-making, problem solving, behavioural change and life changes. Confidentiality will be respected at all times. The Guidance

Counsellor is responsible for the maintenance of professional standards in the administration, interpretation and dissemination of tests and their results.

In addition, the SEN Department completes WRAT4 and CAT 4 assessments with students who may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in the certificate examinations (RACE) and for the purposes of Learning Support and NEPS assessment procedures as required.

The remit of the Guidance Counsellor in relation to testing is as follows:

- ***Performance tests and school reports:*** In order to engage in effective guidance and counselling of students the Guidance Counsellor has access to school reports and results of performance tests. Student files are stored securely in the Main Office and on the P-POD system.
- ***Individual and group tests of general ability:*** These are standardised tests and are administered to incoming first year students by the Guidance Counsellor. Testing usually takes place in March, in the year of entry to the school. Students and parents are briefed on this assessment at the School Open Night and the guidance counsellor also visits feeder primary schools in advance of the assessment. Incoming 1st years complete a range of assessments prior to entry in order to facilitate mixed ability groupings.

5 School based Identification Process

The initial screening processes that take place in Coláiste Muire are:

- a) Recommendations by parents/guardians on the School Open Night
- b) Entrance Assessment
- c) Information from Primary Schools

The purpose of the entrance assessment is to identify learning needs and to facilitate the organising of mixed ability classes in first year. As a follow on from the initial screening process, Guidance Counsellors and link SEN teachers meet with parents/guardians, where appropriate, to discuss the specific learning needs of their sons.

5.1 Student Support / Pastoral Care Team

A **Care Team** has been established within the school and plays an integral role in supporting the needs of the students in Coláiste Muire. Both Guidance Counsellors are members of the Student Support Team. Student Support Team meetings facilitate a space for relevant parties (e.g. Principal, Deputy Principal, relevant year-head, guidance counsellor, RE teacher, Resource Teacher, SEN Co-ordinator, etc.) to discuss concerns regarding particular students and to suggest methods to best support the student. A designated period is on the school timetable for key personnel in order to facilitate Student Support Meetings

The Role of the Care Team is:

- To focus on the support provided for all students in the school
- To provide a discussion forum for student support service related matters
- To take stock of what work is currently being done in this area
- To focus on areas that are in need of improvement and agree on the prioritisation of the work
- To arrange for the monitoring, implementation and evaluation of proposals aimed at improving the Support Services Programme

6 Guidance Curriculum

The Guidance curriculum may be divided into two components:

- Formal Guidance
- Informal Guidance

6.1 Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance curriculum is delivered using two forms of intervention employing a number of methodologies:

- 6.1.1 Individual contact of a personal counselling nature and careers/vocational guidance.
- 6.1.2 Classroom guidance delivered in regular weekly classes/ rotating modules/class group or year group intervention as required.

6.2 Informal Guidance

The Informal Guidance programme consists of liaising with other Teaching Staff and Management to promote cross curricular links and to enhance the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of Guidance. Meetings with Parents/Guardians and outside agencies form an integral part of informal guidance.

6.3 Method of Delivery of Guidance Programme

Formal Guidance classes (one period of Careers per week) are timetabled for transition year, fifth and sixth year students. In addition, the guidance counsellor liaises with subject teachers when delivering guidance interventions (e.g. study skills, 5th year subject choice).

6.4 Guidance Programmes and Levels

Appointments and referrals are arranged with students as requested and required. There are strong links between the Guidance Counsellors and the student support services team in Coláiste Muire to ensure that guidance is provided to all students i.e. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, SPHE Co-ordinator, Link Teachers and Class Teachers. The Guidance Counsellor links with parents to ensure that the emotional, educational, vocational and social needs of each student are met. Appointments are made with parents on request or through referral.

Below is a list of both Guidance specific activities and whole school/subject department activities which are in place to support the personal, social and career development of our students. This list is not exhaustive but serves to highlight the vital work departments such as RE, SPHE and indeed Guidance, do to support the students in Coláiste Muire.

Incoming 1st Year Students

- All parents and students attending the Open Evening are given an **Incoming 1st Year Presentation** which includes a summary of the Enrolment Policy, **Subject Choice** for 1st years, **Supporting the Transition** from Primary to Post-Primary school, the **Student Support system** in place in the school, the Incoming 1st Year Assessment and **organisation** tips for 1st year. An information meeting for Incoming 1st year Parents is held in early in the second term.

- The **Open Evening** also provides an important opportunity for students to take a tour of the school facilities and learn about the school's religious ethos and school achievements and the range of option subjects available to them. Parents & students have an opportunity to visit the different Subject Rooms and are given an outline of the option subjects by the relevant subject teachers.

- **Incoming 1st Year Assessments** occur in March to facilitate mixed ability class groupings and to identify any educational needs which may not have been already identified. A range of assessments examining verbal, non-verbal & numerical reasoning and comprehension are administered. The results of these assessments may prompt discussion with the SEN department and NEPS.

- The Guidance Counsellor(s) calls to feeder primary schools in advance of the Open Evening and Incoming 1st year Assessment and following the assessment to meet with 6th class students, teachers and management. The link between feeder primary schools and the Principal and Guidance Counsellor(s) is an important one which facilitates the transfer of accurate information on incoming students (Educational Passport). Such information includes standardised test scores. And the identification of children requiring resource / learning support.

In some cases, gaining personal information which may be pertinent to best supporting the students (e.g. recent/significant bereavement) – this information is held in the strictest confidence and on a strictly need-to-know basis, unless otherwise requested by the parents/guardians.

1st Year

- **1st year Induction Afternoon** incorporating an early return for 1st year students – allows students to familiarise themselves with the new school environment. The programme involves: meeting with their class-peers and class teacher, the school rules are discussed, timetable is explained and students are given a tour of the school (rooms associated with teachers they will have and offices/rooms to note such as the Principal's office, Deputy Principal's office, Main Office/Reception, Meeting Room, Prayer Room, areas which are out of bounds (Staffroom)).

- All 1st year students have a Journal specifically designed to support the transition to 1st year which includes information on the school history, ethos, code of behaviour, study skills, relevant procedures (e.g. illness, etc.) and goal setting, etc.

- A teacher has a responsibility to support the transition for students into secondary school. The **Meitheal Team Mentor** support 1st year students by coordinating the Meitheal Team. They are a group of trained 5th year students who organise events for 1st years (e.g. quizzes, movie afternoons and the end of year trip).

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- The **SPHE Programme** for 1st years which has a specific focus on topics such as settling into a new school environment, belonging & integration, coping with change, planning and organising your time, study techniques, making friends/friendship, self-esteem, etc. SPHE programme outline & timeline suggestions, available in the SPHE Subject Planning Box and Guidance Programme file, were created by the guidance counsellor to target SPHE topics in 1st year which were developmental in nature.

- 1st year students may make **individual guidance appointments or be referred to the guidance counsellor – generally by the Year Head using the Student Referral Form.** Counselling is available to all students.

- 1st year students do not have a timetabled class for guidance, however the Guidance Counsellors liaise with class teachers (e.g. SPHE teachers) to meet with 1st year class groups as needed. 1st year students have two periods of wellbeing. These periods are used for the 'Friends for Life' Programme and the Digital Safety Programme.

- In addition, the 1st Year Head attends the Year Head meeting with the Guidance Counsellors and Management. They meet with the Guidance Counsellors as needed to discuss student referrals.

2nd Year

- Study skills are incorporated into the SPHE programme and resources are available in the SPHE Subject Box.

- 2nd year students may make **individual guidance appointments.**

- Continuing development of self-knowledge, personality, qualities and potential through SPHE.

- Multidisciplinary approach building on 1st year topics such as Study Skills/Planning, Organisation, career journey. Encourage students to set goals to help achieve success. These skills are developed through all subject programmes.

3rd Year

- Study skills are incorporated into the SPHE programme and resources are available in the SPHE Subject Box.

- 3rd year students may make **individual guidance appointments.**

- There is no formal class contact for 3rd year students. However, a number of Guidance classes are organised with the cooperation of the SPHE and subject teachers at

the time when students are making subject and programme choices and as part of a 3rd year Study Skills programme which focuses on exam technique, time management, note-taking & life balance

- 3rd year SPHE topics include: Decision making, conflict resolution, friends/peers, etc.
- Development of self-concept heightening awareness of skills, interests and potential delivered within SPHE and RE classes.
- Guidance Counsellors meet with the 3rd year and Transition Year class groups to discuss 5th year subject options – a presentation on the different subjects and subject implications for 3rd level courses / colleges is presented. These Guidance classes are organised with the cooperation of the SPHE (and other subject teachers if timetable restrictions apply) teachers when students are making 5th year Programme and Subject Choice decisions. Topics specifically discussed include: matriculation, college and course specific requirements, the points system, the individual subjects available and how the Subject Choice form should be completed.
- An Information Evening for parents of 3rd year and Transition Year students is presented by the Guidance Counsellor and TY on Senior the school's Cycle Programme options (including Transition Year and 5th year Subject Choice options). The Information Evening is held in early February.
- Introduction to career guidance information available on the internet Careersportal.ie and Qualifax.ie. In addition a **5th Year Options Parents information night**
- Individual career appointments are available for any 3rd year students to assist with decisions re going into 5th year/TY and subject choice specifically.

Transition Year

TY students have a single Careers class each week throughout TY.

- The Careers module incorporates the following:
 - Introduction to Post Leaving Certificate destinations
 - Introduction to the National Framework of Qualifications
 - Using elements of the Be Real game – for the use of role play, scenarios, CV preparation, job applications.
 - **Job Search skills** which includes CV preparation (examples of CV template, action verbs, does & don'ts, etc.), writing a Cover Letter, completing an Application Form and Interview Preparation & Practice.
 - Introduction to the **World of Work**: types of work including voluntary work, relevant employment laws (e.g. legal requirements regarding working hours for secondary school students), workers' rights, unions, employment trends (including an insight into the National Skills Shortages & the impact of the recession on our landscape).

- **Careers Research** – including the use of websites such as qualifax.ie, careersportal.ie, jobs.ie, publicjobs.ie, lit.ie / job profiles to investigate and explore different careers of interest. Students will complete a Career Investigation as part of this module.
- **Course Investigations** – including the use of websites such as qualifax.ie, individual college websites, e.g. ucc.ie with a focus on course modules, graduate profiles and entry requirements (including points trend) & learning how to read a prospectus.
- **Subject Choice Research** – including the use of websites such as qualifax.ie and the 'Minimum Subjects Requirements' search tool, skool.ie, examinations.ie and ncca.ie to gain an understanding of different subjects at senior cycle, and careersportal.ie and individual college websites to gain an understanding of the subjects which would prove the most useful for future studies of interest.
- In addition a **5th Year Options Parents information night** is held in early February; Parents are informed via text and / or email.
- Subject choice process is online and conducted after the TY PTM .

▪ **Work Experience Preparation** – All Transition Year students complete three one-week work experience placements. Work Experience Preparation includes discussion of work place scenarios, responsibilities to the employer/business, getting the most out of the experience, dress code, communication, organisation of their work experience, reflection on work experience, evaluation of personal performance and perceptions of the career and self-assessment.

▪ **Self Assessment** can include: reflection on TY modules (e.g. different subject options, Youth Leadership module) and TY experiences (e.g. work experience); use of various interest, personality and vocational assessments (paper and online) such as Careersportal.ie personality test & interest assessment, Qualifax.ie interest assessment, Rothwell Miller Interest test, John Holland interest test, etc.

- Transition year students may make **individual guidance appointments**. Individual counselling / guidance meetings are available by referral or on request

- Personal Development modules in TY include pastoral care activities such as volunteering in the local retirement home.

- The Transition Year programme provides opportunities for students to explore a range of different subjects, learn about different career sectors and professions (e.g. MiniMed),

- In addition, local colleges & universities may visit the school and present on various courses, etc.

- All TY students may apply for the Mini-med programme, which is run in conjunction with the RCSI and Cobh Regional Hospital; however, there are a limited number of places for this course (generally 2 students may attend) so selection is based on a random lottery.

- Several Subject Departments organise events and curriculum topics to highlight both senior cycle topics and career areas associated with their subjects.

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5th year

- There is a single careers classes timetabled for 5th years.

- 5th year students may make **individual guidance appointments** through self-referral or may be referred for a meeting with the guidance counsellor.

- Additional speakers and seminars are organised (e.g. Study Skills, Motivation) in consultation with management, 5th year Head, guidance counsellors and members of the pastoral care team.

- Guidance Counsellor meets with all 5th year students who are intending to apply through UCAS or other colleges abroad post-Easter of 5th year. Students are given a range of relevant information (often through email) in order to stimulate the application process in advance of the summer holidays. Students are made aware of items such as the UCAS Personal Statement and the requirement for additional assessments (e.g. UKCAT).

6th Year

- ***6th year Career guidance vocational interviews. Key Periods: Sept – Feb 1st.*** It is the responsibility of each 6th year student to make a career guidance appointment with one of the school guidance counsellors.

- During the individual guidance meeting, students may discuss 5th year grades and set targets for individual subjects, discuss college and course options, the CAO process, options such as UCAS and study skills as appropriate. Various course / college options and career areas are discussed and additional information is often forwarded to the student via email as appropriate.

- ***UCAS. Key dates are Oct 15th & January 15th.*** Students are advised at the beginning of the academic year in 6th year & at the end of 5th year to make contact with one of the guidance counsellors to make guidance appointments as necessary.

- ***CAO Application Process. Key Period: January. Key Dates: January 20th & February 1st.*** In addition to individual vocational guidance interviews and the CAO Information Sheet, 6th year students are timetabled for 1 Careers classes per week in the guidance counsellor focusing on the CAO process in particular Counsellor. The 6th year Career Guidance programme includes:

▪ Introduction to Post Leaving Certificate destinations, CAO, PLC,

▪ Introduction to the Framework of Qualifications

▪ Explanation of the CAO application process including practicing the 'demo' version, course search, key dates, understanding how the CAO system, offers, etc. works.

- Exploration of the UCAS application process, course search, requirements, key dates, etc. Examining the PLC application process, course search, interview preparation & practice, progression routes and key dates
Course Research & Career Research form an integral part of the 6th year Career Guidance programme and the use of CACG is fundamental in this regard.
- Use of Qualifax.ie forms a key component of 6th year careers, students can investigate courses, research college open days, discover entry requirements and points trends, examine course content and graduate options.
- Websites such as: careersportal.ie, the lit.ie jobs profiles website, gradireland.ie, public jobs.ie and jobs.ie are useful resources to assist students in their career research. Students learn how to examine job profiles, desirable qualities and mandatory experience and qualifications and reflect on this information in light of their own understanding of self.
- Introduction to the SUSI grant application website, process and requirements – studentfinance.ie & susi.ie.
- Introduction to the DARE & HEAR application systems – access college.ie.
- Students will learn the importance of and how to research the specific modules in courses they are interested in using the College Calendars and Book of Modules sections of various college websites; students will also investigate the assessment procedures and the mandatory and elective module options in their chosen courses.
- All 6th year students have the opportunity to attend the UCC and CIT open days.

Furthermore, in January both guidance counsellors facilitate after-school / lunch time sessions in the computer room for 6th year students to complete the ‘demo’ and the actual CAO application form prior to the January 20th ‘early bird’ deadline. Students may complete PLC application forms also. Students are informed of the above via notices to all, 6th year Assembly and the Career Guidance notice board.

PLC Courses, Key periods: January – May. In addition to individual vocational guidance interviews and the 7 double period Careers classes 6th year students attend which do focus on PLC courses in a session, students interested in attended St John’s College, Cork College of Commerce, Coláiste Stiophan Naofa, in particular attend their open days. Online applications are facilitated for students to complete the online form; students are informed of these sessions via the Career Guidance notice board. Students may also meet with the guidance counsellor to practice their interview skills ahead of their PLC course interview via appointment. Students will receive a presentation on the PLC application process & courses through their Careers classes.

- ***Open Days. Key Date: 2nd Tuesday in December (typically).*** 6th year Students attend the UCC and CIT open days, held in early December In addition a **list of all the college open days** are available from outside the guidance counsellors.
- Topics such as transition from school, life choices, coping with the unexpected, support agencies, personal responsibility and motivation addressed during RE classes.

7 Organisation & Administration of the Guidance Service

This section can be divided into the following areas:

- Administration
- Time Allocation & Timetabling
- Record Keeping
- Protocols/procedures for meetings with parents/guardians
- Assessment Procedures / Evaluation

7.1 Administration

All meetings are by appointment, except in the case of emergency referrals. Students make appointments during the break/lunch time (times are listed on the guidance notice board) or after guidance classes. It is the responsibility of each student to inform their teacher in advance of their appointment and to request permission to attend the appointment. Subject teachers have the right to refuse a student to attend the Guidance Counsellor if it interferes with their teaching. For instance, if a student cannot attend their appointment as there is a test scheduled for the appointment time then it is the student's responsibility to communicate this in advance to the guidance counsellor and organise an alternative time for their appointment.

Certain periods in the school year (particularly prior to UCAS & CAO deadlines: Oct 15th, Jan 15th, Jan 20th & Feb 1st) are very busy and a waiting list may be in place for appointments so it is imperative that students give the guidance counsellor advance notice in so far as possible if they are unable to attend so that their appointment time can be given to another student.

7.2 Time Allocation & Timetabling

For the school year 2020-2021 the school allocated 30 periods of 40 minutes each to guidance, between two guidance counsellors, of which 13 periods have been allocated to careers classes (4th 5th and 6th year) and the remainder for career, educational, social and personal counselling. The Guidance Counsellors are members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and engages in continuous professional development and counselling supervision with the Cork branch of the IGC

7.3 Record Keeping

The Guidance Counsellor operates the following record-keeping procedures.

- Detailed records of all personal counselling and careers/vocational guidance interviews are kept:

- Guidance records are kept for 7 years after the students leave school
- The detailed records of personal counselling sessions should contain some of the actual words and phrases used by the student and the student should be informed of all matters pertaining to confidentiality between the counsellor and the student.
- The Counsellor should ideally write up notes as soon as possible after the meeting to ensure accuracy and precision.
- Notes should be brief.
- Details on all appointments are recorded in the Guidance Counsellor's Yearbook Diary.

7.4 Protocols/procedures for meetings with parents/guardians:

The Guidance Counsellor is available to meet with parents at the regular parent- teacher meetings. Parents are seen on a first come basis. If parents are unable to see the Guidance Counsellor during these meetings, they are invited to make an appointment for another time. Parents are welcome to ring the school at any time to make an appointment to meet with the Guidance Counsellor. A request for a meeting will be acknowledged and will be arranged for the soonest available time

- In certain circumstances the Guidance Counsellor may need to contact the parents/guardians in order to request a meeting with them. Contact is made with the parent directly by phone to arrange a mutually convenient time for the meeting. If appropriate, the parents/guardians are informed over the phone of the reason for the meeting.

Protocol for Meetings

Parents/Guardians make appointments with the Guidance Counsellor by telephoning the school. Appointments are conducted during the school day or during the Parent Teacher meetings by arrangement. All parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation is necessary. On occasion, the Guidance Counsellor may request another staff member e.g. class tutor, subject teacher or/and management to be present at a meeting. Meetings may be conducted over the phone also. Notes are kept of all meetings by the Guidance Counsellor.

Professional Standards & Duties

This section can be divided into the following areas:

- Ethical Requirements
- Counselling & Confidentiality
- Confidentiality & Testing
- In-Career Development
- Evaluation & Review

7.5 Ethical Requirements

Ethical awareness is a prerequisite for the school Guidance Counsellor. The Guidance Counsellor is obliged to operate, in policy, process and practice in an ethical manner. The Guidance Counsellor is bound by the Code of Ethics as outlined by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2002 – see Appendix XVI). The Guidance Counsellor's primary focus is the welfare of the student and he/she is ethically bound to act in the best interest of the student. The counsellor must act within the law and within the ethical guidelines as outlined by his/her profession. The Guidance Counsellor is expected to be competent in and mindful of the legal and ethical responsibilities of his/her work. Furthermore, the Guidance Counsellor is ethically obliged to seek out new developments in the personal, educational and vocational fields with a view to improving the overall counselling service to the student

The Guidance Counsellor receives professional support by means of regular meetings with a trained counselling supervisor through 'Supervision' which is organised by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) at a regional level and occurs at least five times per year. In addition, regional IGC branch meetings occur monthly and support professional development.

7.6 Counselling and Confidentiality

The Guidance & Counselling Service is a professional counselling service, which abides by a strict code of ethics and confidentiality policy as outlined by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. Confidentiality is a central and integral part of the counselling process and is assured to each student who avails of the Counselling Service. It offers safety and privacy to those who choose to discuss personal and private concerns. The guidance counsellor takes all reasonable steps to ensure that consultation takes place in an appropriately private environment and to preserve the confidentiality of information about the student. Students should feel comfortable that conversations with the guidance counsellor are private and confidential.

However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and this is explained to the student at the onset of counselling and student are reminded of this limited confidentiality. It is explained to the student that the guidance counsellor cannot guarantee confidentiality if:

- i) The life or safety of the student is in danger -
- ii) The life or safety of others is in danger
- iii) There are concerns regarding Child Protection
- iv) A crime is about to be committed

If such a situation arises where confidentiality cannot be kept, the guidance counsellor will contact the school's designated liaison person (the Principal) to seek help and safety for the student. In so far as is possible, in such cases, confidentiality is broken following discussion (and hopefully agreement) with the student and a full explanation will be given regarding the necessary procedures that may need to be taken.

7.7 Confidentiality & Testing

Psychometric Testing: Confidentiality, Feedback & Storage

- **Feedback**

Results of standardised tests administered are given to students in a confidential manner. A one to one feedback discussion is approached in such a way as to ensure in as far as possible that it is a thoroughly rewarding experience for the student. A test result will not be taken in isolation but will be viewed in context of the development of the whole individual. Feedback will be oriented towards the immediate objective of the testing e.g. what have the test results highlighted for discussion that can help the student plan their career/choose their academic route?

- **Access to test results and data held:**

Access is restricted to those with a need to know. Persons that are untrained will not be allowed access to raw data from tests but only to clearly described interpretations. Individuals do change and develop and therefore psychometric data can become less accurate over time. Tests can provide well-constructed measures of aspects of individuals at a point in time, but this does not preclude a degree of subsequent change and development. Parents on request may be given a copy of the results of the DAT (if administered) and the Guidance Counsellor will discuss the findings of the test accordingly. Procedures adhered to (in accordance with best practice guidelines: British Psychological Society) are as follows:

7.7.1 Appropriate parties who may legitimately receive test results as well as the Guidance Counsellor are: the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Year Head, and the SEN co-ordinators. Oral reports will be given to these parties and when necessary and if requested written reports will be supplied also.

7.7.2 Class Tutors and subject teachers may, when appropriate, be given general oral qualitative descriptions but will not have access to actual test data results or to written reports of data.

7.7.3 Levels of confidentiality are explained to individuals and groups before tests are administered.

7.7.4 Data kept on file is protected so that only those who have a right of access can obtain them.

7.7.5 Test data will not be kept on file longer than two years after the student has completed her education in the school.

7.8 In Career Development

To maintain qualified membership of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors a chartered Member must complete training annually (IGC Constitution and Code of Ethics 2004). In-Career

development is essential to the work of the Guidance Counsellor. Regular attendance at local IGC meetings and Counselling Supervision is facilitated by the school through sensitive timetabling. The IGC AGM provides a range of in-service through the provision of workshops and presentations relevant to our work. Additional in-service is organised at local or/and at national level and is open to all registered current members of the IGC.

7.9 Evaluation & Review

Critical reflection and evaluation is a very important part of the school Guidance Programme. It is necessary to review the plan in order to measure the strengths and weaknesses of guidance within the school and to assess whether it is meeting the needs of the students. It is also important to employ strategies for a whole school approach to guidance. Subject Development and Planning hours facilitate the evaluation and review process.

In addition, the Guidance Plan in its entirety will be reviewed biennially.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 30th June 2020

Signed: _____
Sean Culhane Chairperson BOM

Signed: _____
Fergus O'Brien Prin

