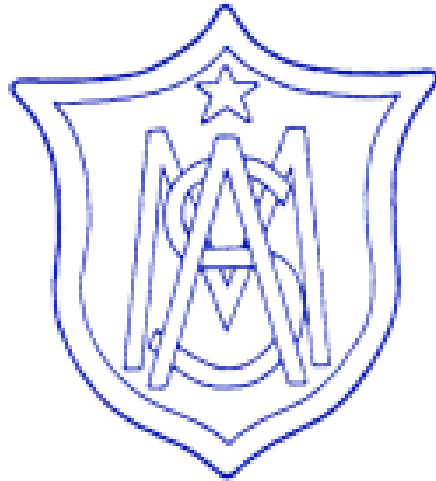


ARDSCOIL MHUIRE

WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLAN



Ardscoil Mhuire Mission Statement:

*Ardscoil Mhuire provides a
Christian environment
where all persons are
valued and assisted to
reach their full potential.*

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Background

Ardcoil Mhuire is an all girls voluntary secondary school in Limerick city, catering for 600 girls. It traces its roots back to the first Mercy convent founded by Catherine McAuley in 1883. The school is now under the trusteeship of CEIST. Ardcoil Mhuire has had designated disadvantaged status since 1994 as it is serving an area of disadvantage. The school has been a DEIS school since 2007.

The school guidance plan presents and specifies how the guidance needs of students are to be addressed in Ardcoil Mhuire. A collaborative approach has been utilised with all school stakeholders to ensure that this plan reflects and addresses the identified needs of all students. The guidance plan is viewed as a key part of the overall school development plan.

Ardcoil Mhuire Current Guidance Provision

The Board of Management, Senior Management and staff of Ardcoil Mhuire have a responsibility to ensure that the provision and practice of guidance in the school is of the highest possible standard. This includes managing the process of guidance planning, in cooperation with the Guidance Counsellor and all other stakeholders. This planning is conducted in line with the requirement to comply with the 1998 Education Act and ensures that all students are provided with “access to appropriate guidance”.

Appropriate guidance refers to a range of learning experiences that are provided, in a developmental sequence, in order to assist students to make informed choices about their lives and transitions consequent to these choices.

Guidance incorporates the following:

1. Personal and social development of students.
2. Educational monitoring and support of students.
3. Career information and advice for students.

The mission statement of Ardcoil Mhuire aims to help each student achieve her full potential, academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially in a happy, secure learning environment. In order to achieve this, the Guidance Counsellor plays an vital role in the area of counselling and guidance as well as through their involvement in the Pastoral Care team and Wellbeing Committee.

Guidance Counselling and Policy Development **Circulars**

Whole School Guidance in schools is clearly defined in section 9 of the Education Act (1998), Circular PPT12/05, Circular 007/2018 and Circular 0028/2024.

The Inspectorates identification of best practice also broadens the DES guidelines in a very tangible way.

Inclusivity & Diversity

Ardcoil Mhuire is a place of growth and learning that demonstrates a clear commitment to the promotion of equality, respect and inclusion. We embrace diversity and recognise that everyone is unique and has a positive contribution to make. Our school is a vibrant learning and teaching community where stakeholders are encouraged and supported to pursue the highest standards of development and achievement.

Guidance: A Whole School Activity

Guidance is not provided exclusively by any one individual or group. When one considers the three dimensions, personal, educational and career guidance provision, guidance has a whole school approach and is the responsibility of all partners in our school community. Whole School Guidance planning enables our school to identify, prioritise and respond to the guidance needs of students using the resources available. However, it is the responsibility of the Guidance Counsellor to coordinate the guidance programme under the direction of Senior Management.

Members of the school's Guidance Team include among others: Senior Management, Middle Leadership and Management Team, Year Heads, Class Teachers and Subject Teachers in addition the Special Needs Co-ordinator, Programme Coordinators, Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Officer, Special Needs Assistants, School Completion Programme (SCP) Staff and Support Personnel.

The School Guidance Planning Team

The team comprises the Guidance Counsellor, Wellbeing Coordinator, two API post holders and four other subject teachers. The Team meets to review Guidance and Counselling in the school and to plan for the academic year.

The Guidance Plan is a reflection of this teamwork.

Guidance in Árdcoil Mhuire is provided by:

- A full time Guidance Counsellor.
- Staff and teams involved in the cross curricular approach to Guidance.
- The Senior Management Team.
- The Middle Leadership Team - AP1 and AP2 post holders.
- Home School Community Liaison Officer and SCP Team.

- External agencies through consultation and collaboration.
- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).
- Health Service Executive (HSE).
- TUSLA.
- Social Services.
- National Education Welfare Board (NEWB).

Other services under the above umbrella services.

Aims of Guidance Plan

- To provide a framework for the school's Guidance Programme.
- To ensure a structured response to a student's personal, social, educational and career guidance needs.
- To develop the concept of Whole School Guidance which will involve the relevant members of the school community in the provision of the guidance service.
- To promote the educational, social and emotional development of all students by assisting them to reach their full potential.
- To outline all guidance activities i.e. classes, guidance counselling, attendance at Open Days, meetings with parents/guardians etc.
- To assist with the evaluation of the school's Guidance Service and the quality of same.

Objectives of Guidance Plan

- To develop an awareness and acceptance by the student of their abilities and talents.
- To identify and explore opportunities.
- To help students to make informed choices.
- To enable students to grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves.
- To target certain groups of students: The school Guidance Service is open and accessible to all students and parents/guardians. These groups include, but are not limited to:
 1. Leaving Certificate students in relation to College/Course choice.
 2. Students making programme/subject choices.
 3. Students undergoing a personal difficulty.
 4. Students with Special Educational Needs.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

- DEIS is a national programme/action plan aimed at addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. This programme was launched in 2005 by the (D.E) Department of Education
- Ardscoil Mhuire has been awarded designated disadvantaged status since 1994 as it is serving an area of disadvantage. The school has been a DEIS school since 2007.
- Schools that are part of the DEIS programme are required to devise, implement and monitor action plans for improvement under the DEIS themes. This is called the DEIS plan. Our school's DEIS action plan is also our School Improvement Plan for the purposes of School Self Evaluation (SSE). Our DEIS/SSE action planning, across the key themes of DEIS, is undertaken by utilising the SSE six-step process.

What is a DEIS Action Plan?

The DEIS Action Plan in Ardscoil Mhuire has eight priority areas. Through the development and implementation of the DEIS/SSE plan Ardscoil Mhuire is committed to bringing about improvements in these areas. The priority areas for improvement are:

- 1.Retention
- 2.Attendance
- 3.Literacy
- 4.Numeracy
- 5.Attainment
- 6.Transitions
- 7.Partnership with Parents
- 8.Partnership with Others

DEIS targets 2022 to 2025

Retention 2022 to 2025

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>To increase the school retention rate at LC</p> <p>To increase the school retention rate for LCA</p> <p>To increase the school retention rate for Junior Cycle</p>	<p>Follow up on Absenteeism</p> <p>Wellbeing programmes</p> <p>System of Check and Connect</p> <p>Guest Speakers</p> <p>Career focused trips</p> <p>Work experience linked to interests</p> <p>Differentiation in the classroom</p> <p>Positive reinforcement</p>	<p>Emphasis in Guidance classes on value of staying in school and progressing to further education</p> <p>Educational counselling to ensure programme and subject choice are best suited to a student's needs.</p> <p>Vocational guidance knowledge of access programmes and college supports to encourage career goals.</p> <p>Class visits from past pupils.</p>

Attendance

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>To increase overall student attendance</p> <p>To increase overall student attendance in 2nd year and in fifth year</p> <p>To increase attendance among Junior Cycle targeted students (Targeted students identified by HSCL Officer, Year Head, Attendance Officer & JCSP Coordinator.)</p> <p>To decrease the number of students who miss more than 20 days with unexplained absences</p>	<p>Monitoring of class attendance</p> <p>School App tracking attendance</p> <p>Attendance Initiatives HERO</p> <p>No tests on Friday</p>	<p>Participation in Career Related trips based on attendance</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor meets persistent late comers for a chat.</p> <p>One to one counselling for personal issues.</p>

Numeracy

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>To increase the percentage of students at Junior Cycle who can identify the use of numeracy in subjects, other than maths</p> <p>To increase the number of students at Junior Cycle who are linking numeracy in other subjects</p>	<p>Numeracy Deep Dive</p> <p>Numeracy week</p> <p>Merit Cards</p> <p>Teacher Collaboration for LCA tasks</p> <p>Integration of numeracy in to all subjects</p>	<p>Use of numeracy moments in Guidance i.e. calculating points for courses</p> <p>Calculating College budgets</p> <p>Encourage those eligible to apply for and access free grinds</p>

Literacy

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>To increase the spelling ability of targeted students with spelling difficulties</p> <p>The reading age of targeted students will increase by one year and they will read a book per term for pleasure.</p> <p>To improve Junior Cycle student comprehension of subject specific terminology</p> <p>100% of second years will achieve at least “In Line with Expectations” in their English CBA1 Oral Presentation</p>	<p>Accelerated Reader</p> <p>Teach Subject specific Terminology</p> <p>Subject Word Banks</p> <p>Exam Terminology in Journals</p> <p>Classroom Visuals</p>	<p>Encourage students to read college prospectuses</p> <p>Teach college terminology</p> <p>Use of college websites</p> <p>Students attendance and participation in class</p> <p>Encourage students to look up words they don't know</p>

Attainment.

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>In Junior Certificate, to increase the number of students studying higher level English and higher level Maths.</p> <p>To increase the number of our students doing 4 or more Higher level subjects in Leaving Certificate</p> <p>Increase the number of Leaving Cert Applied students who successfully attain more than 7 credits in tasks.</p>	<p>After school study</p> <p>Academic Awards</p> <p>Academic Tracking</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Academic Progress card</p> <p>UCT of success criteria for CBAs</p> <p>Reinforcement</p>	<p>Study Skills</p> <p>Individual study plans for those who require them</p> <p>One to one guidance meetings to support and encourage those who most in need</p>

Transitions.

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions
<p>To increase the percentage of First years who, in general, feel they have transitioned successfully into secondary school.</p> <p>To increase the number of students who avail of the support systems in place for return from absenteeism</p> <p>To increase the percentage of students who progress to further education and third level</p> <p>To increase the percentage of the fifth year cohort who, in general, have transitioned successfully into senior cycle</p>	<p>Wellbeing programmes</p> <p>System of Check and Connect</p> <p>Guest Speakers</p> <p>Career focused trips</p> <p>Work experience linked to interests</p> <p>Differentiation in the classroom</p> <p>Positive reinforcement</p>	<p>Emphasis in Guidance classes on the value of settling into school and entering a new cycle</p> <p>Educational counselling to ensure programme and subject choice are best suited to a student's needs</p> <p>Vocational guidance knowledge of access programmes and college supports to encourage career goals</p> <p>Class visits from past pupils.</p> <p>Guidance Counsellor available to meet with parents/guardians to answer any queries or address concerns</p>

Partnership with Parents.

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions.
<p>To improve average attendance at PTMs (all year groups)</p> <p>To increase the number of parents who attend parents' classes</p> <p>To increase the number of parents involved in the parents' council</p>	<p>School App</p> <p>Home School Liaison Officer</p> <p>Promotion of the Parents Council</p> <p>Texts and emails home</p>	<p>Guidance Counsellor available to meet with parents/guardians to answer any queries or concerns.</p> <p>Assistance with SUSI grant and HEAR applications.</p>

Partnership with Others.

Targets	School Actions	Department Actions.
<p>To increase the number of STEM & Apprenticeship seminars from 3 to 5</p> <p>30. To increase the number of primary schools engaged with by ASM from 11 to 15</p>	<p>Increase the the number of STEM interactions</p> <p>Guest speakers</p> <p>Junior Achievement Initiative</p> <p>Links with more businesses in the community through visits and work experience</p> <p>Past students invited back</p>	<p>Visit from head of IT in TUS for all senior classes</p> <p>Visit from Science and Engineering departments in local colleges</p> <p>Increase uptake in summer schools</p> <p>All fifth year classes taking part in the Junior Achievement programme.</p>

Whole School Guidance activities linked with the DEIS targets include the following:

- Access programmes with UL for First and Second Year students.
- Careers Day for Transition Year students.
- Junior Achievement Ireland Programme (JAI) - First and Fifth Year students.
- Talks with female engineers from Irish Cement.
- Visit to Icon PLC Castletroy.
- LCVP visits to Cooke Medical and TUS
- College presentations.
- Mentoring of at risk students.
- Drama Club.
- Debating.
- Active School Flag.
- MAP for First Years.
- Wellbeing Committee.
- Supervised Study.
- Amber Flag Initiative.
- HEAR and DARE presentation by UL for parents/guardians.
- Career related work experience.

The Model of Provision

A continuum of support

Guidance For All: This is provided to all students in order to support their personal, social, educational and career development. Additionally, this also involves students engaged in the transition process (Incoming first years, Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle and from Senior Cycle into college or the world of work). The guidance counsellor has a key role to play in coordinating the planning and delivery of the whole school guidance programme and in the provision of guidance to students. A whole school approach is employed in delivering the learning and teaching activities of the school guidance programme which include:

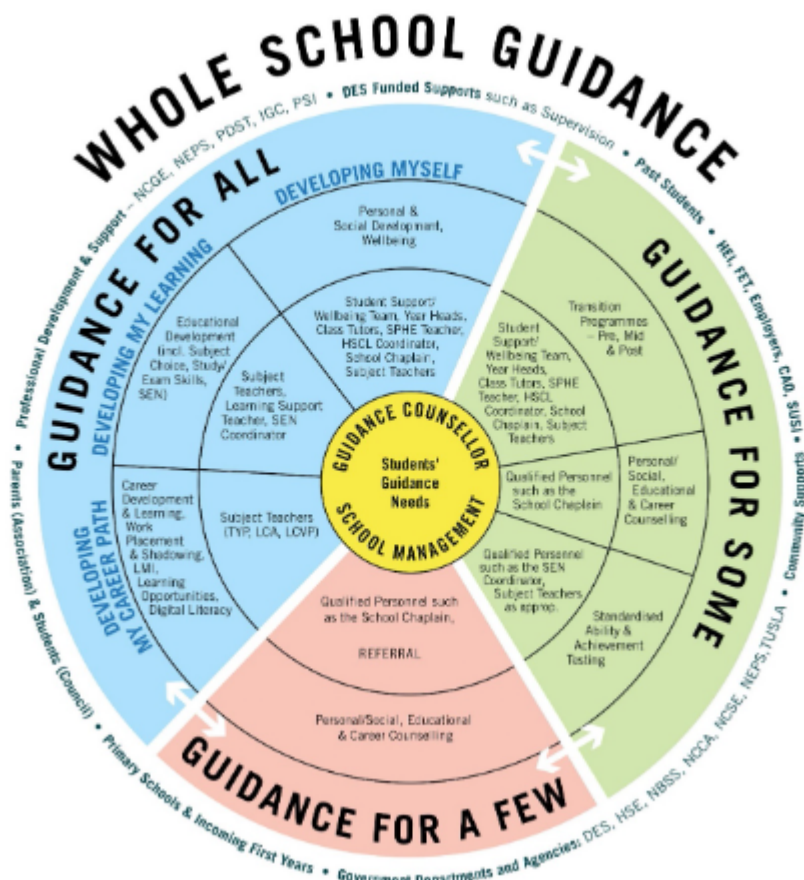
- Career classes for all Senior Cycle students.
- Guidance modules for 1st and 2nd Year students.
- Support regarding the management of the transition processes.
- Advice regarding subject and programme choice

Guidance for some: This is provided to specific groups of students to support their personal, social, educational and career development, in addition to those engaged in the transition process. Such groups of students will typically include those in Senior Cycle, in particular 6th Years. Many of the 6th Year students benefit from group and one-to-one guidance counselling to support them in the educational and career decision making process and the transition to their next stage. 1st and 5th Year students, who are making transitions, also benefit from support. 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. Some students may require additional and more intensive support in making the transition. Group/one-to-one guidance counselling requires the expertise of specialist school staff, such as the Guidance Counsellor or HSCL Officer working in collaboration with the CARE team, SPHE teacher, SEN Coordinator, Year Heads, class teachers, subject teachers and Senior Management. The NEPS publication 'A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers' (2010) outlines a Solution Oriented Framework that can be employed.

Guidance for a Few: Students may require support in meeting their developmental needs and/or when experiencing personal crisis. Some students may also require more intensive support when engaged in the transition process and/or making important decisions throughout their time in post-primary education. This support will require the expertise of specialised school staff with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to respond to the needs of these students. Therefore the person involved will be the Guidance Counsellor, and other school staff who have the skill set and expertise to meet the needs of vulnerable students and/or those with additional needs. In the event that the

student requires more intensive support, a referral to external agencies is made where appropriate support can be accessed i.e. the GP, Jigsaw, NEPS and CAMHS. In the event of a protracted referral, the Guidance Counsellor may need to provide continued support to the student in the interim until outside help and support can be accessed.

Figure 1 below (courtesy of NCGE: A Whole School Guidance Framework, Page 14) shows the continuum of support model. This clearly outlines how our school approaches guidance provision. The Guidance Counsellor, in collaboration with School Management, staff, and external organisations/personnel, offer and deliver a wide range of activities and learning opportunities with the purpose of supporting students' personal, social, educational and career development. The Guidance Counsellor plays a central role in the design and delivery of the whole school guidance programme.



School activities which support Whole School Guidance

- Senior Management Team.
- Year Heads.
- Class Teachers.
- HSCL Officer.
- Guidance Counsellor.
- Chaplain.
- Care Team.
- SEN Team.
- School Completion Programme.
- Learning School Project.
- Check and Connect.
- School Trips.
- Students' Representative Council
- Prefects/ Mentors.
- Amber Flag.
- Active School Flag.
- Language Scholarships.
- Gaisce Awards.
- Green Schools.
- Academic Awards Ceremony.
- Transition Year Musical.
- Supervised Study.
- Third Level Scholarships.
- Homework Club.
- Extra Curricular Activities.
- Careers Day for TY students.
- Guest speakers (Social, Personal, Educational, Career related).
- Workshops targeting specific year groups (Wellbeing talks• Guidance Counsellor linking with Second year classes).

Whole School Guidance Roles and Responsibilities.

The Board of Management and School Management team have a responsibility to ensure that the 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 cooperation with the school Guidance Team and other school partners such as parents/guardians. The Guidance Counsellor communicates regularly with the Principal and Deputy Principals, and attends a weekly Care Team Meeting. These meetings allow for students at risk to be identified, personal counselling sessions to be allocated to those in need and decisions regarding referrals that are required to be made (e.g. to HSCL Officer, Guidance Counsellor, Principal, Deputy Principals, SCP Co-ordinator)

Principal & Deputy Principals The Principal and Deputy Principals are involved in safeguarding the welfare of all students. Meeting the academic and pastoral needs of each student is an important part of their role. Senior Management oversees the progress and welfare of each student throughout her time in the school. They work with Year Heads, class teachers, subject teachers, the Guidance Counsellor, Special Educational Needs team, Subject Coordinators, SNAs, parents/guardians etc. and make interventions where necessary. The Principal communicates with the Board of Management (BOM) regarding guidance provision in the school. The Principal, with the support of the Deputy Principals, is responsible for leading and coordinating all aspects of the school of which Guidance Counselling is an important component.

The Year Head The Year Head has overall responsibility for a particular year group, ensuring that together they maintain an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment. Attendance, academics, positive behaviour and pastoral care are their core focus. The Year Head monitors the overall progress of his/her students and liaises with parents/guardians, subject teachers, the SEN Co-ordinator, learning support teacher and Guidance Counsellor. The First Year Year Head oversees the transition of students from primary to post primary education supporting and assisting students to settle in, especially those who are finding it difficult to make the adjustment. All work is carried out in a pastoral manner.

Class teacher. In their capacity the class teacher strives to develop caring and supportive relationships with their students. They have a significant role to play in the students academic, social and personal development. They liaise regularly with Senior Management, the Year Head, subject teachers and the Guidance Counsellor.

All Subject Teachers: In their capacity as teachers, subject teachers interact with students in areas other than academics. Through their day to day interactions with students, teachers can have a very positive impact on a student's daily life. Co-Curricular and extra-curricular programmes, a vast variety of school initiatives and programmes in addition to the implementation of school policies, such as the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment and Anti Bullying Policy, support the student's well-being. Activities such as public speaking, debating teams, drama and book club, sporting activities and events, initiatives and outings etc. all improve the quality of relationships within the school and have a hugely positive impact on student wellbeing.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) The Social, Personal and Health Education Programme is part of the Wellbeing programme in the school. It provides students with a unique opportunity to develop personal skills and

competencies and to learn about themselves and others in their school community and the wider world. The programme enables students to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development in the confines of a caring and supportive classroom environment. SPHE teachers may liaise with a range of internal and external personnel whilst delivering the SPHE programme.

Guidance Counsellor: The Guidance Counsellor in collaboration with School Management, staff, and external organisations/personnel, deliver a wide range of activities and learning experiences to support the students' personal, social, educational and career development. The guidance counsellor, as the specialist, plays a central role in the design and delivery of the Whole School Guidance programme.

Care Team Meetings

The Care Team meetings are held once each week to share important information regarding students and to coordinate the various Pastoral Care activities and duties that are required to be undertaken to respond to these students' needs.

Attendance at meetings include:

1. Principal and Deputy Principals
2. Guidance Counsellor
3. HSCL Officer
4. SCP Co-ordinator
5. SEN Co-ordinator

Home School Community Liaison

The role of the HSCL Officer is to promote cooperation between home and school in the educational interest of the student. Attendance initiatives are organised and classes for parents/guardians take place in the school. Support is offered to target parents/guardians and they are encouraged and supported to become involved in their child's education. Through active collaboration between the school, families and the wider community, the HSCL Officer aims to help students at risk of leaving school early or those who are unable to participate fully in the education system. The HSCL Officer works directly with students, the school, parents/guardians and the wider community.

School Completion Programme: The SCP is a Department of Education programme that aims to have a significant positive impact on student retention levels in primary and post primary schools and on the number of students who successfully complete Senior Cycle or the equivalent. The SCP Project Workers mentor and advocate for target students. A co-operative approach is used in the hope that by working with students, parents/guardians, teachers, voluntary and statutory agencies, that they will be able to help to build better futures for the student. Some of the supports provided by the SCP include the following -

Transfer programme (from primary), Mentoring programme, Afterschool Homework and Fun Clubs, Attendance tracking, Summer Activities Programme.

SEN Coordinator: The SEN Coordinator, in collaboration with Senior Management, directs the provision and allocation of resources for students with special educational needs and/or specific learning difficulties. The SEN Coordinator liaises with the Principal, Deputy Principals, SEN Team, subject teachers, SNAs, students, parents/guardians and outside agencies. They assist in the application for resources including resource hours, Special Needs Assistants and assistive technology. Senior Management oversees timetables for students requiring learning support and additional assistance. The SEN Coordinator, Principal and Deputy Principal will liaise with Special Needs Assistants, the Guidance Counsellor, Year Heads and Subject Teachers, where necessary.

The Transition Year Coordinator: The Transition Year Coordinator promotes the personal, social, educational and vocational development of students in preparing them for their role as autonomous, participative, and responsible members of society. Schools providing the Transition Year programme have a responsibility to set appropriate goals and define the objectives necessary for their achievement. The work of the Transition Year coordinator involves liaising with Senior Management, all staff, students, parents/guardians, work providers and the wider community.

Leaving Certificate Applied Coordinator: The LCA Coordinator, in consultation with Senior Management, is responsible for the administration of credits and tasks, as well as planning and implementing the LCA curriculum. The coordinator also has a very pastoral dimension to their role, as much of their time is spent motivating and supporting students. The coordinator liaises frequently with the Care Team.

Junior Certificate Schools Programme Coordinator: The Junior Certificate School Programme aims to provide a curriculum framework that assists schools and teachers to make the Junior Cycle more accessible to those students who may be at risk of leaving school without formal qualifications. The JCSP coordinator is responsible for identifying students struggling with basic literacy, numeracy and social skills or inconsistent school attendance. They then provide these students with the support they require to confidently meet the challenges of the school curriculum.

Check and Connect

Check and Connect is an intervention designed to enhance a student's engagement with school and learning. Teachers volunteer to mentor a student. Each mentor links with one student, checking in regularly with that student to discuss how they are doing and offering support in a number of ways. For

example: Providing ongoing, consistent and timely monitoring of a student's behaviour for signs of withdrawal and disengagement - lates, absences, failing tests, falling behind with homework, issues with friends etc.

Restorative Practice

Restorative practice is used in Ardscoil Mhuire to foster an equitable and positive school culture. Restorative practices focus on strengthening relationships and connections between individuals in our school community. In order to build a Restorative community, right relationships need to be built and supported. Restorative practice is an approach to building 'Right relationships' in the school community. The restorative approach is encouraged to repair harm and restore relationships by being accountable and accepting responsibility. Strategies such as restorative questions, circle time and making amends are incorporated into the school's Code of Behaviour. A whole school approach will be promoted by encouraging all members of the school community to receive on-going training using restorative strategies. The most recent staff training in Restorative Practice took place in August 2023.

Study Skills

The Deputy Principal Laura Collins presents a Study Skills seminar to all year groups. This is followed up by individual teachers advising students how to study effectively in each of their subject areas.

Support at times of Transition

All first year students take part in the MAP (Moving Across Programme) during their first week of joining our school community. The First Year Year Head, class tutors and Guidance Counsellor deliver the programme. The SEN department organises school visits for a small number of students prior to entry, in particular those who are particularly anxious about the transition. Additionally SCP and the HSCL co-ordinator arrange school visits with local feeder DEIS primary schools in order to make the transition to post primary education as smooth and seamless as possible. A Transition to Senior Cycle programme is currently being developed by the Whole School Guidance Planning Team.

Support is also offered to students post Leaving Certificate results and post CAO offers. This involves the Guidance Counsellor making contact with each student individually. Students are encouraged to visit the school to discuss their options if they feel they need support. They are also encouraged to make contact with Access offices in third level institutions and with other local agencies who can support them in making the transition to college or work.

Blue Box Creative Arts Therapy Centre

Blue Box Creative Arts Therapy Centre works with schools and families in Limerick City and its environs. Blue box provides a safe space for students and is facilitated by trained Creative Arts Therapists. They work with students who need support at school or home and help guide them through difficult times. Our

Bluebox therapist visits the school once a week to work with students in need of support.

Digital Learning and Guidance

- The Career Guidance office contains a Desktop and printer for use during one to one meetings with students.
- The school offers access to chrome books which are used extensively by students in Guidance classes i.e. to research college courses and take self evaluation tests.
- All Senior Cycle students have a google classroom for guidance specific to their class group.
- All students and staff have a school email account.
- All students have digital literacy classes in the First Year in order to improve and develop their digital skills.

Student Voice:

Ardcoil Mhuire actively encourages students to participate fully in the life of the school. Our school has a vibrant and busy Student Representative Council (SRC). The SRC is a representative structure through which students in Ardcoil Mhuire can become involved in the affairs of the school. Under the guidance of a member of our teaching staff, and working with the Deputy Principal/Principal and Board of Management, the SRC provides students with an active voice in the policy making process in our school. Representatives from all years are elected by the student body to sit on the Council for an academic year. These are called prefects. A Sixth Year Head Girl is elected every year by the school community to represent students both in the school and within the wider community. The Council promotes opportunities for leadership, teamwork and active citizenship.

Some objectives of the SRC include:

- To enhance/improve communication between students, management, staff and parents
- To promote an environment conducive to /to bring about educational and personal development.
- To promote friendship and respect among pupils.
- To support the management and staff in the development of the school.
- To represent the views of all the students on matters of general concern to them.

Collaboration with St Munchin's College:

St Munchin's College is an all-boys secondary school in close proximity to Ardscoil Mhuire. Ardscoil Mhuire and St Munchin's College work collaboratively on many aspects of school life including subject options i.e. Physics is offered to our students in St Munchin's College while Home economics is available to their students in Ardscoil Mhuire. The highly anticipated and hugely significant joint musical production with St Munchin's College also takes place annually.

Extra Curricular activities and Co curricular activities:

As part of its commitment to the development of the whole person, Ardscoil Mhuire has a strong tradition of extra-curricular activities. Students are encouraged to participate in some of the many activities offered in our school. Sport plays a major part in the life of the school. Our school offers a wide range of sports such as Soccer, Camogie, Gaelic Football, Basketball, Tag, Sevens and Full Contact Rugby, Badminton and Hockey. All classes receive timetabled Physical Education instruction. Ardscoil Mhuire has access to a state of the art Sports Complex at Grove Island Corbally for its Physical Education classes. Transition Year has an intensive sports programme that includes Yoga, Pilates and Fitness classes. The school organises day/overnight trips to multi-activity outdoor pursuit centers. This also forms part of our first year orientation programme.

Engage in Education

Engage in Education provides extra tuition to Senior Cycle students who live in an area unrepresented in Third Level. Students apply by means of a personal statement. The support also continues to be offered throughout their time in Third Level.

STEM Activities

Stem activities include:

- Visits to Businesses
- College visits
- Participation in Sci Fest
- Guest speakers
- Past pupil visits
- Encouragement to take on STEM subjects
- Maths Week
- College Awareness

Current Guidance Procedures

Personal Counselling

The Guidance Counsellor works under the IGC Code of Ethics when counselling students. To be effective in the role of Guidance Counsellor they must be qualified in this area, ensure that the confidentiality of the student is preserved (within agreed limits) and have acquired the consent of the student who is engaging in professional/personal/educational/vocational counselling.

Guidance Counselling is offered to students where necessary by the Guidance Department. When required, the Guidance Counsellor will refer the student to the other appropriate persons i.e. Senior Management, DLP or the parent/guardian advising them to make a doctor's appointment for their child so that a referral to an outside agency can be made.

The counselling style used is person centered. The Counsellor tries to see the student as they currently view themselves and give them a space to discuss issues without judgment. Students attending the Guidance Counsellor will be informed of the limitations of confidentiality.

The counselling duties can be summed up as follows:

- to assist students through a temporary crisis.
- to help students work through normal adolescent problems.
- to support teachers who are helping individuals in their care.
- to refer to other agencies' - students requiring specialist treatment..

Protocol for meetings with Guidance Counsellor

Meetings are by appointment. Senior students make appointments during class time. Subject teachers have the right to refuse a student permission to leave their class if it interferes with their teaching. The appointment is then rescheduled. Students are signed out by the subject teacher using the appointment slip.

Parents/Guardians make appointments by telephoning/emailing the school. Every effort is made to accommodate parents/guardians requests for a meeting at a time that suits both parties. On occasion the Guidance Counsellor may request that another member of staff be present at the meeting (Year Head, Principal, Deputy Principal, Learning Support Teacher) and the student is invited for the whole/part of the meeting with the approval of Parents/Guardians.

Career Guidance Appointments

Career Guidance can be defined as empowering students to recognise their talents and abilities, to make informed choices and also to take responsibility for their own futures. Priority is given to Sixth year students for career appointments. Appointments for Fifth year students are scheduled from February onwards.

Career appointments typically include the following:

- Analysis of the exam results to date.
- Analysis of Pathway Survey.
- CAO points predictions.
- Discussion around suitable courses from results of Pathway survey.

CAO Appointments

The choice of career path is the responsibility of each individual student. It is the policy of this school that each student should be adequately prepared to make this choice. The Education Act 1998 states that a school shall use its resources to “Section 9 (c) ..ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices” In complying with this, each student is encouraged to develop to her full potential and make a career choice that reflects her goals. Where a student chooses to apply for Third Level education to a CAO affiliated college, it is the policy of the school that each student is supported through the CAO application process. While it is the ultimate responsibility of each student to make the actual application, the school will endeavor to support each student through this process.

Confidentiality

The Guidance Counsellor will take all reasonable steps to preserve confidentiality bearing in mind the legal limits that exist. During career classes and one to one appointments, students are informed that notes will be kept in their career portfolio. Any data gathered is stored in a locked filing cabinet. Data is recorded in order to ensure that the personal, educational and career guidance offered to students facilitates their needs. Data will only be shared with third party organisations (such as employers, universities, social workers) in order to fulfill obligations to the student.

Record Keeping

The Guidance Counsellor operates the robust record-keeping procedures: Detailed records of all personal counselling and careers/vocational guidance interviews are kept as follows:

- Guidance records are kept for 7 years after the student leaves school.
- The detailed records of personal counseling sessions contain some of the actual words and phrases used by the student.

- The student is informed of all matters pertaining to confidentiality between the counsellor and the student.
- The counsellor writes up notes as soon as possible after the session to ensure accuracy and precision.

Assessment of incoming First Years

The SEN team and Guidance Counsellor assess incoming First Year students prior to starting in the school. This test gives the school an indication of the strengths of incoming students in the areas of verbal and numerical reasoning and perceptual understanding. The Cognitive Abilities Test is administered to all incoming First Year students in April, prior to entry. Additionally the SEN Coordinator contacts feeder primary schools in order to identify the particular needs of students. The Year Head liaises with the Special Needs Coordinator in relation to students with additional needs. The Special Needs Co-ordinator meets with all the relevant parties prior to the allocation of resource hours.

Responding to Child Protection Issues.

Ms. Brid Herbert, Principal, is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) Ms. Laura Collins, Deputy Principal, is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL P). Any child protection concerns are immediately referred to the school's DLP. The DDL P will be contacted if the DLP is not available. Child Protection refresher training is provided to all staff at the beginning of each academic year.

Students with Special Needs

The Guidance Counsellor liaises with the SEN department in relation to students who qualify for RACE. Students are also informed of supplementary college admission routes such as Access and the Dare/Hear schemes. Assistance is provided regarding form filling etc. if required.

Sixth Year Analysis of Results

It is the policy of the school to gather information regarding the career choices made by the students after the Leaving Certificate results have been released. This is a reflection of the level of care and concern that the school develops for all students. In August, students are asked by the Guidance Counsellor for permission to contact them in order to find out what career choices they made regarding further education, immediate employment or the deferring of their course. In October this information is collated by the Counsellor and is presented to staff. This presentation outlines the colleges that students are attending, courses that were selected and careers that were opted for, in addition to information regarding students who chose to take a year out before attending Third Level. This data is also integral to the measurement of DEIS targets in the area of transitions.

Speakers

It is normal for speakers from individual colleges to give talks to Senior class groups. These talks are both informative and useful, as they not only give the students an overview of the courses available in different colleges, but also offer an insight into how Third Level education operates. A variety of speakers such as past students, college representatives and those offering wellbeing advice come to the school. Other speakers are arranged subject to demand and in consultation with the students, staff and Senior Management. Students are asked for feedback after each event.

New Students

In relation to new students that have transferred from other schools the Year Head compiles a report on the student's progress within their first term in the school. This process is to assist the school in determining how effective the transition process has been for them and to ascertain if she requires additional support or guidance.

Parents Information Evenings:

1. Subject Choice Evening for 1st Year Parents/Guardians.
2. Senior Cycle Programme and Subject Choice Evening for 3rd and Transition Year Parents/Guardians.
3. Registration Night for Incoming First Years Parents/Guardians.
4. 6th Year Information Night - CAO, PLC, Apprenticeships, Studying abroad, Presentation by the UL Access Office on DARE/HEAR.

Assessment Tracking

Senior Management, Year Heads, the SEN Coordinator and subject teachers track the performance of our students. Currently students who are underachieving are identified by one or more of the following - Senior Management, subject teachers, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, Care team, the SEN team and parentS/guardians. Interventions are put in place to guide our students in their learning, if necessary. After in-house exams have taken place a review of all students' progress is discussed at Year Head meetings, Care meetings and by the SEN team. A teacher, who is a member of the Academic Council, in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor, engages in Senior Cycle academic tracking. This is an invaluable process which enables the monitoring of each student's academic progress, in addition to empowering the student to set realistic and achievable academic targets.

Wellbeing in Junior Cycle

It is important that the whole school community shares a common understanding of wellbeing, especially of what we mean when we talk about student wellbeing. Ardscoil Mhuire began the process of looking at Wellbeing in Junior Cycle and the school at large in August 2017. All stakeholders were involved in this process.

The Wellbeing Guidelines state that “Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community” (NCCA, 2017; p. 17). The Guidelines highlight wellbeing as a whole school endeavour. Six indicators of wellbeing are presented in the guidelines - ‘active’, ‘responsible’, ‘connected’, ‘resilient’, ‘respected’, and ‘aware’. Guidance is highlighted as supporting ‘learning about wellbeing and learning for wellbeing’ for all students in Junior Cycle and is regarded as one of the main pillars in the development of the Wellbeing Programme (NCCA, 2017; pg. 46 & 48).

Ardscoil Mhuire has developed a comprehensive Wellbeing programme within which Guidance is a core component. Guidance provision is offered to 1st Year students during their timetabled LIFE class. This involves the delivery of the ‘Looking to the Future’ programme which is undertaken in partnership with the University of Limerick Access Office. In 2nd Year guidance provision is offered to students for a number of class periods. This involves the delivery of the ‘Broadening Horizons Programme. which is undertaken in partnership with the University of Limerick Access Office. The Guidance Counsellor is also available to offer personal support to students during difficult times as well as guidance during periods of transition.

Subject Options

Junior Cycle

A comprehensive Junior Cycle curriculum is offered in Ardscoil Mhuire. This underpins our school's vision which revolves around supporting and assisting all students to reach their full academic and personal potential. Students take a broad range of subjects in First Year, most but not all of which are taken to the end of Third Year. First Year students undertake four option subjects - Visual Art, Music, Business and Home Economics. In the month of December in first year, students make their subject option choice. Students must at this stage choose two out of the four option subjects to continue to pursue. Sampling subjects until December affords students the opportunity to experience the option subjects for half the academic year thus enabling them to make an informed choice regarding the subject they would like to continue with. Prior to the Christmas holidays a Parent Information Meeting is held for 1st year parents/guardians and students whereby teachers from each department provide an overview of their subject area. This information is essential so that parents and students alike can make informed choices regarding the subject option that they choose.

Valuable learning experiences are also afforded to students through the delivery of the school's Well-Being Programme i.e. CSPE, SPHE, PE, digital learning, Transitions Programme, guidance modules etc.

Additionally the Junior Cycle Team meets on a weekly basis to support the implementation of key aspects of the Junior Cycle programme – Timetabling of CBAs to avoid overloading students, devising CBA submissions guidelines, gathering and collating information for the JCPA – OALs and OAW.

The school timetable is constructed in a manner so as to ensure that each subject is allocated time, which is in excess of the minimum time requirement guidelines.

All subjects timetabled are taught by teachers with qualifications in these subject areas.

Senior Cycle

Transition Year

Transition Year is a one year optional programme within our school. Our programme encourages personal and social development and allows students the opportunity to develop self-directed learning styles and engage in a wide variety of experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. We encourage students to rise to new challenges and to explore new and exciting opportunities. Students are afforded the opportunity to acquire new skills while continuing to study core academic subjects. They are also introduced to subjects which will be made available to them at Leaving Certificate level. This enables them to make a more informed choice. The TY programme is enhanced by a wide range of activities such as Work Experience, the Joint Musical production with St. Munchin's College, Young Social Innovators, Steer Clear Driving Course, Irish Red Cross First Aid Course, Sign Language Course, President's Gaisce Awards, Junk Kouture, Enterprise competitions, and much more. Students are not guaranteed entry to the programme. Each student must fill out an application form followed by an interview with the Transition Year coordinator. This is to ascertain if the student is suitable for the programme and will benefit from participating in it.

Established 5th Year

The Senior Cycle is two years in duration. 3rd Year students moving directly from 3rd Year to 5th Year and Transition Year students moving into 5th year, select their subject options through VSware. For these students making the transition to Senior Cycle, choosing subjects proves daunting. To combat this challenge and to alleviate the stress associated with subject choice, the school coordinates subject information talks for all students making the transition to Senior Cycle. A representative teacher from each subject department speaks to the students, delivering important information pertaining to each individual subject option. The teacher outlines the following information:

- The skills involved/ required in choosing this subject.
- The presence/ absence of coursework in this subject and the assessment weighting of that coursework.
- The consistent nature of the work required to study this option i.e. homework/coursework must be completed on a regular basis so as to ensure that a particular skill set, as well as knowledge and understanding reaches the optimum level for every student.
- The teacher invites students to ask questions at the talk. For those students who may be uncomfortable asking questions in a public forum, the teacher assures the group that they can call to their classroom at any

time, stop them in the corridor or leave a note in their classroom, should any student have any lingering questions or queries about that particular subject.

- To assist parents/guardians in this whole process a 5th year Programme and Subject Option Information evening is undertaken by the Principal, Programme Co-ordinators and Guidance Counsellor. Feedback from parents/guardians has highlighted that this information evening is invaluable in assisting parents/guardians to take an active role in their daughter's education and future career choices.

All of the above strategies lead to students choosing subjects that they enjoy and can excel at.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) Link modules is an additional subject all students may undertake over the two years of Senior Cycle, in addition to the seven subjects they select. Students who undertake the LCVP Link modules will complete a portfolio worth 60% in addition to a written examination which will be completed in early May of 6th Year.

Guidance Related School Policies Ardscoil Mhuire

In Árdcoil Mhuire, school Guidance is both a whole school concern and a specialist area within education. It follows then that a number of policies are related to Guidance. These policies consist of:

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Critical Incident Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Data Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Expulsion and Suspension Policy
- Extra-Curricular Activities
- Homework Policy
- Health and Safety Statement
- DEIS Plan
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Substance Abuse Policy

Guidance CPD

2008 to date	Supervision and inservice IGC	Monthly
2002 to date	Yearly CPD at IGC conference	Yearly
2020	Trained as a Life Coach	Positive Success Group
2022	NCGE Guidance Planning	Carol Guildea

Signed: Sr. Ena Quinlivan
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 29th May 2024

