



Circular: 0041/2024

To: The Managerial Authorities of all Post-Primary Schools

Guidance in Post-Primary Schools

1. Introduction

[Section 9\(c\)](#) of The Education Act (1998) states that a school shall use its available resources to “ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”. This circular provides information to managerial authorities and principals in relation to whole-school guidance as the appropriate model of practice in contemporary post-primary schools.

This circular is written following publication of [the National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance](#) and accompanying [Strategic Action Plan \(2024-2030\)](#). Within the framework, four pillars and eight objectives underpin a clear vision for lifelong guidance in Ireland. This circular provides a foundation for the application of the concepts outlined in the framework, to support and strengthen guidance planning and practice within the post-primary sector.

2. Purpose of this circular

The purpose of this circular is to provide post-primary schools with information to support well-informed implementation of whole-school guidance planning and practice.

This circular on guidance is the first of its kind. Catalysed by evolutions in policy relating to lifelong guidance, Junior Cycle reform, redevelopment of Senior Cycle and publication of the [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#), this circular integrates and centralises policy relating to guidance in post-primary schools.

3. Whole-school guidance (WSG)

Guidance is, by definition, person-centred and holistic. Guidance supports students’ personal and social, educational and career development. Guidance facilitates and empowers students to make informed decisions and life choices. Guidance plays a significant role in supporting students’ wellbeing and contributes to building internal and external resilience.

WSG is the contemporary model for guidance in post-primary schools. WSG supports the implementation of a large and varied range of learning experiences provided to



students in a progressive sequence, and focus on personal/social development, educational development and career development. These experiences include classroom learning, group work and one-to-one meetings. The WSG programme is provided in order to meet the identified guidance needs of the school community (parents/guardians/carers and students). Each school should have a WSG plan in place. [Information Note 0001/2024](#) details all aspects of WSG and provides practical examples of how it may be operated in schools.

WSG is the responsibility of the entire school community. WSG activities should be based on the needs of the school. It may be planned for and implemented by a nominated guidance team, within which the guidance counsellor plays a pivotal role.

4. Guidance counsellors

Post-primary guidance counsellors hold a [dual qualification](#). They hold Teaching Council Route 2 registration and an appropriate qualification in guidance counselling. While the role of the guidance counsellor can vary from school to school, an outline of activities generally undertaken by the guidance counsellor are outlined in the [Programme Recognition Framework document \(2016\)](#). Guidance counsellors have specialist knowledge and training to support the personal/social development, educational development and career development of pupils with regard to WSG provision.

A guidance counsellor will undertake work with students in the classroom, in groups and through one-to-one sessions, as appropriate. A balanced approach to time management on behalf of the guidance counsellor will ensure that all guidance needs of students (personal, social, educational and careers) are met as effectively as possible. In general, it is recommended that one-third of a guidance counsellor's allocated time will be spent teaching classroom-guidance while two-thirds are made available for group work and one-to-one sessions. Guidance counsellors may need some time assigned in order to sit on the Student Support Team and complete associated tasks.

5. Student and parent guidance needs

As noted in point 3 above, a WSG plan documents the WSG activities of a school in a given academic year. It is evaluated, reviewed and updated annually. In creating a WSG plan, the identified needs of students and parents/guardians/carers are incorporated.

This data-informed approach to planning can be facilitated in many ways. A group of students may be surveyed for example, or reflective focus groups with parents/guardians/carers/students could be organised. A continuum of support ([guidance for all, for some and for a few](#)) based on students' needs is anticipated in advance of each academic year and reflected in the WSG Plan. Groups of students, individual students and parents/guardians/carers may have unique circumstances and

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requirements requiring particular support. Focusing on the disclosed needs of students and parents/guardians/carers on personal/social/education and career guidance can lead to innovation and efficiency within planning.

An inclusive approach, based on a continuum of support (guidance for all, for some and for a few) allows for an effective and efficient deployment of resources to meet the diverse guidance needs of the school community. A focus on a universally designed WSG programme will maximise inclusion and provide targeted supports for those in need, ensuring that appropriate guidance is accessible for students and parents/guardians/carers.

6. Career-management skills, employer engagement and pathways

As outlined in the [National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance and Strategic Action Plan \(2024-2030\)](#), a focus on career-management skills and lifelong career mobility will instill the language of skills development and a sense of empowerment in students as they engage with their post-primary education.

There are many opportunities within the formal, extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes whereby engagement with employers may be possible for post-primary students. Exposure to the world of work and reflections on learnings can maximise experiential learning and informed educational and career choices and can be initiated and developed as part of WSG.

Additionally, parity of esteem for the variety and broadening availability of pathways after post-primary education could be introduced early in a students' Junior Cycle experience. [Circular 0008/2023](#) provides schools with guidelines as to how personal, social, educational and career guidance can be incorporated into the programme of learning at Junior Cycle.

7. Allocation for Guidance

The allocation for guidance is outlined in detail in Appendix 3 of circulars [0008](#), [0009](#) and [0001/2024](#). Within these documents, it is noted that the WSG plan should demonstrate an appropriate balance between the time provided for individual student appointments, the provision of guidance lessons/modules, and other guidance-related activities.

The National Strategic Action Plan for Lifelong Guidance includes an action, that the Department of Education will consider the effectiveness of the guidance-allocation model in post-primary schools with a view to strengthening the quality of guidance counselling services.

8. Circular on guidance

This circular will be reviewed annually and updated in line with progress made under the strategic action plan for lifelong guidance.

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Please bring this circular to the attention of the guidance team, guidance counsellors, all members of the school community and the board of management.

Evelyn O' Connor,

Principal Officer,

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit

26/4/2024

Information Notes

0003/2024: Information Note for Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Teams in relation to the storage and transfer of guidance-counselling notes (2024)

0001/2024: Information Note for Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Teams in relation to Whole-School Guidance

0009/2023: Information Note for Principals, Guidance Counsellors, Guidance Teams in relation to Whole-School-Guidance Provision at Junior Cycle

0008/2023: Information Note for Schools in Relation to Personal and Social Guidance Counselling