



Malahide-Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School

Guidance Plan

Mission statement

Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School is committed to an inclusive student-centred educational experience based on collaboration, cooperation and creation. We strive to create a community of academic excellence which is welcoming, democratic, diverse and safe. Our vision is for students to become independent lifelong learners, who reach their full potential and become active members of society. In MPETSS we work to develop empathy and an understanding of difference in our ever-changing world.

COMMUNITY – COLLABORATION – CREATION

Introduction

This is the Guidance plan for Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School. It is a structured document which describes the school guidance programme and specifies how the guidance needs of the students are to be addressed and delivered. The plan reflects the uniqueness of the school in its own particular context and circumstances. This particular Guidance Plan refers to the subject ‘Guidance’ as it is delivered to students of this school and takes into consideration the needs of our students and the resources available to us to implement this plan. This plan forms part of the Whole School plan.

The Guidance plan recognises that current and future generations of young people will be faced with new and exciting challenges in an increasingly complex world and that the education system must prepare them to meet these challenges. It emphasises the importance of developing lifelong learning skills that will enable the graduates of Educate Together schools to be active and responsible citizens and reminds the reader that the guidance curriculum will be underpinned by the principles of democracy, participation, advocacy, inclusion and equality.

Rationale

This Guidance Plan meets the school’s obligations under the Education Act 1998 Section 9 (c) where schools are required to “ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their career choices”. Section 9 (d) also requires schools “to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students.” The Act refers to access to appropriate guidance i.e. a whole school response to meeting the guidance needs of all its students.

Definition of Guidance

Guidance refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, designed to assist students to make effective and informed choices about their lives and to make transitions to these choices. These learning experiences may be broken down into three very distinct but interlinked areas:

- Personal and social development
- Educational guidance
- Vocational guidance

Definition of Counselling

Counselling is a key and intrinsic part of the school guidance programme which is offered as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis. Counselling may come in the form of personal counselling, educational counselling, vocational counselling or combinations of the aforementioned. Counselling facilitates students in crisis by exploring a range of coping strategies and interventions in a caring and sensitive way appropriate to the individual's needs. Counselling can only take place in an atmosphere where the young person feels secure, accepted and understood. It facilitates individual students in a holistic way to realistically appraise their abilities, interests and aptitudes in order to make appropriate life choices and achieve personal happiness and fulfillment in life. The Guidance Counsellor can be involved in group, individual or peer counselling as is necessary.

Guidance Activities that Assist Students to make Informed Choices:

- **Counselling** includes personal counselling, educational counselling, vocational counselling or combinations of these. Counselling is a key part of the school Guidance Programme and is offered on an individual or group basis
- **Assessment** using psychometric instruments and inventories such as Cognitive Abilities Test (CATs), Differential Aptitude Tests (DATs), Interest and Personality Questionnaires
- **Career Information** in the classroom, personal vocational guidance interviews, attendance at career events, outside speakers, career notice board, career investigation
- **Skill Based Learning** through use of information technology e.g. Qualifax, Careers Portal websites, Reach+ programme etc.
- **Personal and Social** developmental programmes e.g. Sleep Programme, Wired for Wellbeing Programme
- **Study Skills /Exam Techniques**
- **Motivation**
- **Subject Choice information**
- **Stress Management**
- **Support /Procedures** on subject change or withdrawal
- **Support/ Procedures** on subject level change
- **EirQuest/My Future Choice** on subject choice and building my career
- **Presentations** on a wide range of topics
- **Liaising** formally and informally with students, parents, staff, management, outside agencies.
- **Referral** of an individual student to the Guidance Counsellor by Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Form Tutors, subject teachers, parents, Board of Management
- **Referral** by the Guidance Counsellor to other external agencies e.g. *The National Psychological Service (NEPS)*, *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)*, *Youth Reach* or other appropriate agencies.

Aims of the Guidance and Counselling Service

- To meet the social, personal, educational and vocational needs of each student within the school.
- To act as the administrator of all guidance and counselling services that operate within the school.
- To assist students in realising, accepting and developing their own unique talents, skills, aptitudes and abilities.
- To assist each student in making realistic, appropriate and informed career choices.
- To provide a model of counselling based on sound theoretical theory to any student who wishes to avail of such a service.

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 issue of confidentiality is always discussed with students during the first session. This provides the opportunity to clarify any concerns that may arise. Counselling Service files are not attached to any academic records held within the school.

Limits to Confidentiality

In exceptional circumstances Guidance Counsellors may need to break confidentiality if they believe there is a real intent of serious harm or danger to a student or another individual. Such circumstances may pertain to issues relating to sexual abuse, rape, self-harm, suicidal ideation or

criminal activity. In as far as is possible, a full explanation will be given to the student regarding the necessary procedures that may need to be taken in such cases.

In a wider context, MPETSS Confidentiality Policy outlines information and procedures around confidentiality for all stakeholders within our school community. The Children First Guidelines (2017) are applied in our school as appropriate. All staff members are aware of the legal obligation to report information where a student's welfare is at risk.

Whole School Guidance Team

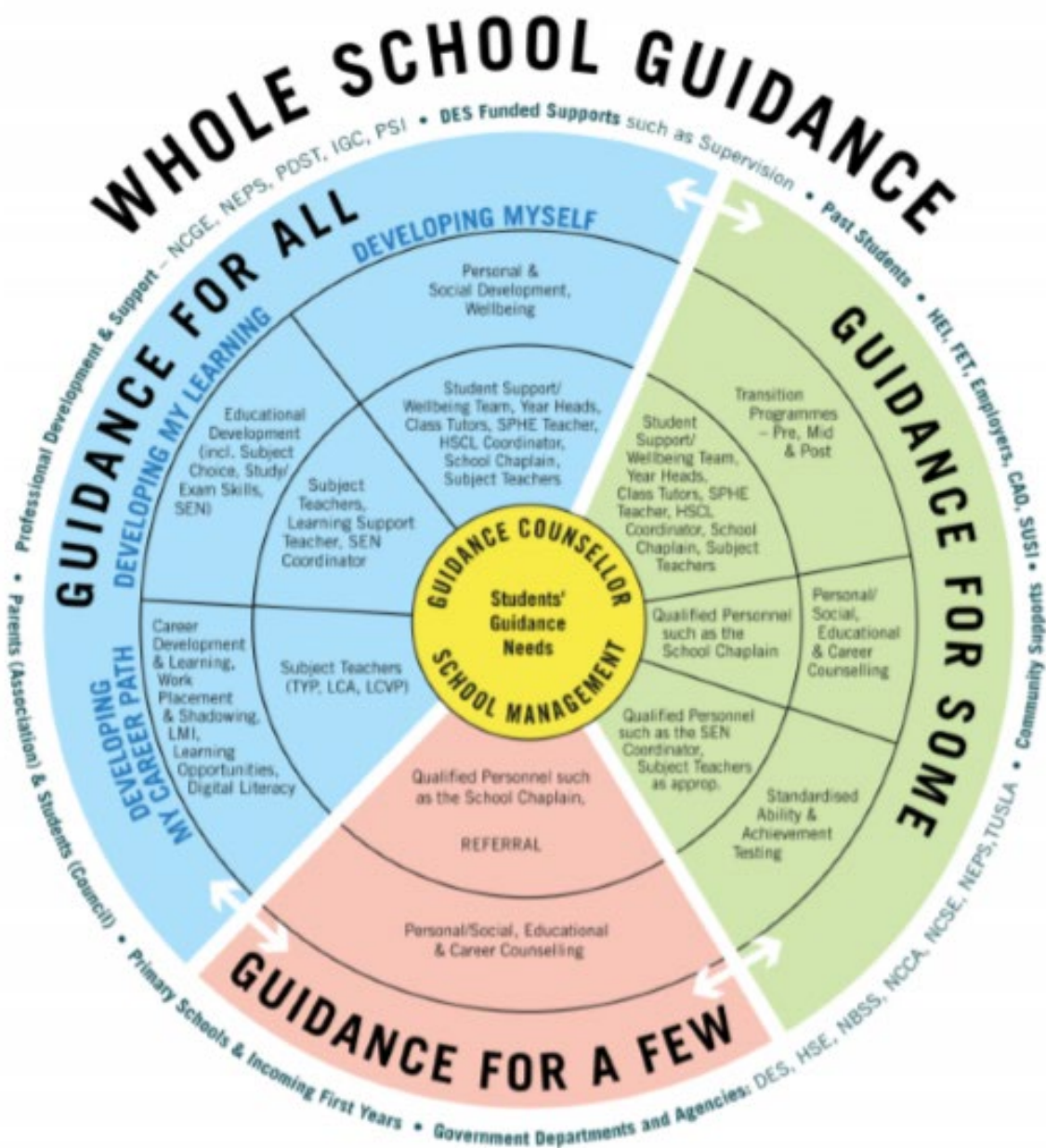
As stated previously, the provision of guidance and counselling is a statutory requirement for schools. The Guidelines for Second Level Schools, on the implications of section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 regard students' access to appropriate guidance as being a whole school responsibility. Thus, it is imperative that there is differentiation between the Guidance Counsellor's primary responsibility in the professional area of the guidance and counselling service, and his/her shared responsibility with other members of staff delivering the curricular elements of the guidance programme.

The key role of the Guidance Counsellor has two distinct but complementary elements:

- To meet students' needs as they emerge throughout the students' time in school
- To develop a curricular programme which is developmental, preventative, appropriate to the needs of the students and delivered in an integrated and proactive manner in a whole school context.

The Guidance Plan is based on the premise that guidance is both a whole school concern and a specialist area within education. Therefore, the Guidance Counsellor seeks to establish a Whole

School Guidance Team at the start of each academic year under the NCGE Whole School Guidance Framework. The whole school guidance programme aims to meet the needs of students along a continuum, from a whole school approach to group and individualised approaches – Guidance for All, Guidance for Some, Guidance for a Few.



Note: school programmes and staffing indicated are not meant to be exhaustive i.e. programmes/staff involved in whole school guidance will vary across schools. This intends to highlight programmes/staff which may be involved in the delivery of a whole school guidance programme.

Personnel involved in planning the Guidance Programme

All members of the school community are welcome to become involved in planning the guidance programme. Members involved in implementing, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the Guidance Plan include:

- Guidance Counsellor
- Principal/Deputy Principal
- Subject Teachers
- Student Support Team
- Support Education Teacher
- Learning Support teachers
- Class Tutors
- Teachers of S.P.H.E./R.S.E.
- Parents/Guardians
- Ancillary Staff
- Representatives of the Student Council
- Representatives of the Parents Association
- Board of Management

Formal Guidance

The Formal Guidance curriculum is delivered by employing a number of methodologies:

- Individual appointments with students
- Dyads
- Small groups
- Classroom guidance delivered in regular weekly classes/modular format or year group intervention as required.

Informal Guidance

The informal Guidance Programme consists of liaising with other teaching staff/management to promote cross curricular links: SPHE, Transition Year Co-ordinator, all teachers of subjects taught in MPETSS with a view to enhancing the development of a whole school policy in relation to the delivery of the Guidance Plan.

Links with staff can facilitate guest speakers and appropriately qualified past pupils. Subject teachers can assist students in subject choice through the provision of first-hand advice and coherent information on subject areas and career choices. Staff can support the Guidance Counsellor in identifying students with special aptitudes and interests. The collaborative links with SPHE assist in identifying developmental programmes to support the emerging needs of individual students and/or groups.

Informal links are created with parents at parent-teacher meetings and with parents of incoming first year students prior to entry. Student support service personnel (both external e.g. NEPS and internal e.g. staff involved in learning support, SPHE, RSE) also assist in identifying guidance needs.

Meetings and correspondence by phone, email, formal letter with parents/guardians and external agencies are an essential element of informal guidance. Attendance at weekly Student Support Team meetings facilitates support within a whole school context.

Referral Procedures

Students experiencing difficulties in areas around their personal, social, educational, vocational lives are referred to the Guidance Counsellor. A referral form is available in both digital and paper

format. Referrals may also be made verbally, followed by written documentation. Referrals to the Guidance Counsellor can be made by the following stakeholders:

- Students can self-refer to the service
- Parents/Guardians
- Staff: Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers, Class Tutors, SNAs, Board of Management
- Student Support Team
- School Secretary
- Peer referral e.g. a friend or fellow student
- Ancillary staff
- Outside agency

When a referral has been made, the Guidance Counsellor will meet the student, parent or relevant stakeholder by appointment at the earliest available time, or as an immediate response in times of crisis. The voluntary participation in counselling is respected by all concerned.

Referral by the Guidance Counsellor

Guidance Counselling includes working with students on an individual basis and liaising with parents/guardians and external agencies as appropriate, e.g. NEPS, HSE, CAMHS. The Guidance Counsellor recognises that an individual student may need assistance from other qualified professionals outside of school and may liaise with school management and parents/guardians as appropriate in supporting that referral.

Assessment Procedures

Assessment for first year students comes under the remit of the Guidance Counsellor in conjunction with the Support Education Teacher, for example the Cognitive Abilities Tests (CAT4 Level E). The assessments in question look at verbal, quantitative and non-verbal reasoning and aspects of language and thinking that are not fully represented in the earlier stages of learning in reading and mathematics.

Cognitive Abilities Tests (CAT4 Level G) or EirQuest are administered to Transition Year students by the Guidance Counsellor. These tests are digitally scored and feedback is given to all students and parents/guardians by the Guidance Counsellor prior to senior cycle subject decisions. A range of interest inventories in the Reach+ programme also facilitate subject choice decisions. See Aptitude Testing Policy for more information.

Record Keeping Procedures

The Guidance Counsellor operates the following record-keeping procedures:

Detailed records of all personal counselling and vocational guidance interviews are kept securely in the school for 7 years after the students have left.

Reporting Procedures

In both the Personal Counselling and Vocational Guidance Interviews the confidentiality rule is adhered to i.e. school management, class teacher, year head and/or parents/guardians are informed if it is felt that the student is a danger to him/herself and/or to others. As noted above, the student is informed of matters pertaining to confidentiality but also of the limits of confidentiality. This is done at the beginning of the initial session. If the Guidance Counsellor feels that it is in the best interests of the student to inform a Teacher/Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal/Parent/Guardian of a particular difficulty, this is only done with the knowledge and

hopefully agreement of the student. This policy acknowledges that Guidance is a whole school issue and as such it is the responsibility of all staff of the school to adhere to the Child Protection Guidelines and report their concerns about a child to the Designated Liaison Person, in our case the school Principal or in the event of her absence, the Deputy Principal (See Limits to Confidentiality section above).

School Protocol for Meetings/Appointments

1. Meeting with students

Students may make an appointment to see the Guidance Counsellor at any time. An appointment will be arranged as soon as possible. Self-referral to the service is encouraged and a referral form is available in both digital and paper format. The Guidance Counsellor will work closely with members of the Student Support Team to support all students.

2. Meetings with parents/guardians

The Guidance Counsellor will meet parents or guardians on an individual basis. The Guidance Counsellor's contact details are posted on the school website. Appointments are usually conducted during school hours but may in certain circumstances be arranged before/after school. All parties are requested to inform each other if a cancellation proves necessary. On occasion the Guidance Counsellor may request that another member of staff be present at a particular meeting e.g. Year Head, subject teacher and/or Principal/Deputy Principal. The student may be invited in for part or all of the meeting with approval of the Parents/Guardians. This allows the student to take personal responsibility and be included in the meeting outcomes. Notes of all meetings shall be kept securely by the Guidance Counsellor.

Guidance and Counselling in the Junior Cycle

First Years

- Administration of Cognitive Abilities Tests (CAT4 Level E) for identifying levels of achievement and support needs during the Spring term of sixth class
- Information evening for prospective students and parents: information on school structure, roles of key personnel, subject choice, methods of communication between home and school
- Work with school management and administration to issue Education Passport Information Request forms to the relevant primary schools
- Formal communication with primary school teachers from established feeder schools to:
 - gain an accurate profile of the incoming students
 - identify children requiring resource/learning support
 - gain personal information of family situation e.g. bereavements, non-resident parents etc.
 - formal disclosure of information to relevant teaching personnel
- Visit feeder schools and meet with teachers
- Welcome morning for First Year students, introduction to school personnel
- Formal introduction to Guidance Counsellor in a classroom setting to inform students of the role of the Counsellor and to explain the services offered
- Ensure that every First Year student has been interviewed by the Guidance Counsellor to establish a strong rapport at this time and help with any issues that may arise during the transition from primary school. This is dependent on the allocation of hours.
- Personal Counselling by request or referral by staff/SST/parents/self-referral by students
- Liaise with Student Support Team to ensure a smooth transition has been made by all students by mid-term
- Liaise with S.P.H.E. team on implementation of Induction Programme. A core part of this programme is an induction book called *You Are Here* published by Examcraft.
- Liaise with Jigsaw re organisation of mental health workshop
- Mental Health Week activities
- Appointments with parents by request

- Be available during parent - teacher meeting
- Initiate referral to outside agencies as appropriate e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, National Educational Psychological Service, Jigsaw.

Second Years

- Personal counselling as needed by request or referral
- Educational counselling by request or referral
- Interviews with parents by request
- Meeting with Student Support Team and pastoral care team to discuss individual students needs
- Liaise with S.P.H.E. team
- Liaise with Jigsaw re organisation of mental health workshop
- Mental Health Week activities
- Be available during parent - teacher meeting
- Initiate referral to outside agencies as appropriate e.g. CAMHS, NEPS, Jigsaw

Third Years

- Organise a Study Skills seminar
- Liaise with S.P.H.E. team
- Educational Counselling by request or referral
- Meet with Student Support Team and pastoral care team to ensure needs of individual students are met
- Parent appointments as needed
- Personal Counselling by request or referral
- Be available during parent - teacher meeting
- Liaise with Jigsaw re organisation of exam stress workshop
- Mental Health Week activities
- Initiate referral to outside agencies as appropriate e.g. CAMHS, NEPS, Jigsaw

- Information evening for prospective Transition Year students and parents: information on TY Programme, roles of key personnel, core subjects, modular subjects, one-off activities, school trips

Classroom guidance in MPETSS takes place in the form of modules due to the limited allocation of Guidance hours in a developing school. First and Third Years were provided with 10 hours of classroom guidance covering a range of personal, social and vocational guidance topics outlined below:

Programme outline for First and Third Year Guidance Modules

First Year 1A	First Year 1B	Third Year
BLOCK 2 Oct-Nov Transition: Concluding induction programme using <i>Stepping Up</i> for the transition into 1st Year. Meditation. Breathing exercises Study skills: Creating a study timetable for revision in prep for Dec exams. Creating a study space Examples of note taking Setting goals Learning styles theory BLOCK 5 Feb-Apr (swapped with 1B) Wired for Wellbeing programme- Neuroplasticity, Sleep,	BLOCK 3 Nov-Jan Transition: Concluding induction programme using <i>Stepping Up</i> for the transition into 1st Year. Meditation. Breathing exercises Study skills: Creating a study timetable for revision in prep for Dec exams. Creating a study space Examples of note taking Setting goals Learning styles theory BLOCK 6 Apr-May (swapped with 1A) Wired for Wellbeing programme- Neuroplasticity, Sleep,	BLOCK 1 Sept-Oct Study Skills: Self-identity Setting goals Creating a study space Study timetable The Forgetting Curve Learning styles theory SMART study Examples of note taking Sleep Programme: Meditations Sleep knowledge quiz Sleep diary Consequences for lack of sleep Sleep architecture Sleep hygiene tips Exercise & diet BLOCK 4 Jan-Feb Exam stress:

Positivity, Kindness, Self-care, Growth mindset, Critical inner thoughts. Jigsaw Workshop 20/4/21	Positivity, Kindness, Self-care, Growth mindset, Critical inner thoughts. Jigsaw workshop 21/4/21	Jigsaw workshop (20/1) followed by Q&A (27/1) - did not proceed due to remote learning. Careers: Growth Mindset My Career Exploration My Balanced Life My Skills My Options after School Presenting Me
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Guidance and Counselling in the Senior Cycle

Transition Year: Aims of Programme

- To help students prepare for vocational maturity
- To help students become aware of their own unique strengths and talents
- To help students develop effective decision making skills
- To help students prepare for entry to the world of work
- To help students gain the necessary practical skills to help them in their pursuit of work experience and paid part time/summer employment
- To help students develop the above skills and build their own personal profile in the Reach+ digital programme
- Complete a Career Investigation project
- Liase with Jigsaw re organisation of peer mentor programme
- Mental Health Week activities
- Initiate referral to outside agencies as appropriate e.g. CAMHS, NEPS
- Personal Counselling by referral or request
- Parent appointments as needed

Topics to be covered

- Application Forms
- Letters of Application
- Curriculum Vitae
- Interview Skills
- Coaching for initial telephone contact with prospective employers
- Preparation for Work Experience
- Evaluation of Work Experience
- Research Skills
- Project Work - Career Investigation

Key Elements

- Administration of the Cognitive Abilities Tests (CAT4 Level G) or EirQuest, Interest Inventories, Personality testing to facilitate senior cycle subject decisions.
- Provide feedback to all students and parents/guardians to enable subject choice. Information evening for students and parents/guardians on subject choice in fifth year: information on subject content, minimum entry and course specific entry requirements.

Collaboration with Jigsaw, the service for youth mental health

MPETSS began collaborating with Jigsaw in September 2019 when we joined the One Good School pilot project. Each year, we meet several times a year to plan and review the activities based on the needs of the school. Each year group completes a mental health workshop, or in the case of Third Years, an exam stress workshop. Workshops are also held in the evenings for parents whilst staff have completed an online certified course as part of the One Good School project. We hope to roll out a course for staff called Self Care as part of our wellbeing programme and begin our peer mentor programme for the first time with Transition Year students.

A Guidance & Counselling response to LGBTQ+ in Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School

Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School strives to be supportive of all students and ensure that they are happy and safe. Unlike other aspects of identity, sexual orientation is not necessarily a visible or apparent attribute; it is for the person himself/herself to come to an understanding of their identity. Therefore, it is important that pupils *are not* asked about their sexual orientation unless they volunteer such information themselves. As this can be a very challenging time for young LGBTQ+ students, it is important that if they do speak to someone about their concerns, that this person will have their best interests at heart. Equally, it should not be assumed that a young person who is lesbian, gay or bisexual is necessarily troubled by their sexual orientation.

If a student chooses to ‘come out’ to the Guidance Counsellor, the Counsellor will communicate to the young person that they are valued equally, will be treated equally to other students, and that the school leadership will ensure their safety and support. It is critical that a young LGBTQ+ person discovering their sexual orientation feels supported and valued, regardless of whether they disclose their sexual orientation. This is critical in order to safeguarding the young person’s mental health and well-being; it can also, it is hoped, lessen the fear of the young person eventually disclosing to his/her family and friends.

If a student chooses to change their first name, parents/guardians and the student will be invited to a meeting to discuss the decision and the relevant supports required. This is considered best practice under the advice of TENI, the Transgender Equality Network of Ireland.

The Guidance Counsellor will:

- Identify relevant resources and supports such as information leaflets and organisations (BelongTo, TENI) that could be of assistance to the young person and parents as necessary.
- Consult with relevant support groups for all stakeholders
- Organise guest speakers and workshops for Stand Up Awareness Week
- Consult with the young person on how they would like the school to deal with their ‘coming out’ if, at all.
- Advise staff members on what they should do if a student tells them he or she is questioning their sexual orientation and feels a connection to the LGBTQ+ community. This includes a willingness to listen to the student, offering support relative to his/her needs and avoiding assumptions that a student is going through a phase or is too young to make such a discovery.

Review Procedures

The Guidance Plan will be reviewed and evaluated in the light of experience and feedback from relevant stakeholders.

Date plan ratified by BOM:

Date for review of plan:

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____

Principal